

**Beauty
Treatments
for the
Bride**

Christine Beadsworth

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Dedication

*To all who hunger and thirst for His
presence and are making themselves ready*

*And to my heavenly Bridegroom - thank
you for the honor of being a part of Your
beautiful Bride*

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come"

Foreword

Rev 21:2 And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband.

The idea that the church is the Bride of Christ is one of the great metaphors of figurative language found in the Bible. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Christine presents the reader with a veritable feast on the meat of the Word. Here you will learn not only how the church is considered the Bride, but a primary emphasis on the changes that must happen for the Church, as we know it today, to become the Bride.

This book is very well done, drawing heavily on the meanings of names and places in the original Hebrew or Greek. Presenting us with profound character studies of a host of biblical personalities, Christine provides keen insight into scriptural lessons and how they apply to the end times transition from the church.

I am sure you will find, as I did, that this book is wonderfully uplifting and encouraging. You are sure to be greatly blessed by it.

Bill Somers - End Time Prophetic Vision

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Introduction

The photograph on the cover of the book is of a banner made by myself, following a vision given to me by the Lord. I saw a menorah lifted up in the earth, radiant with the glory of God and the light of the sevenfold Holy Spirit.

In the vision it was constructed using the ingredients of the holy anointing oil described in Exodus 30:23. This oil was used to anoint the set-apart vessels in the Tabernacle and the priests. The Lord said to me that this was a picture of His Bride, arrayed in the beauty of holiness and covered in the glory of God, standing as a light to the nations of the world.

I made the lamp stand using solid myrrh for the base and cinnamon for the center stand. The branches are made of calamus and cassia. The whole lamp stand is covered in gold, depicting the glory. The cups are a greenish gold depicting virgin olive oil, the oil of the Holy Spirit, and the lamps have been lit with the fire and glory of God.

This is what He desires His Bride to look like in the earth. May the following chapters give you an insight into the process He uses to bring us to this place of beauty and honour.

Chapter One

A Bride for the Son

The Father of heaven and earth is busy preparing Himself a bride for His Son. He has sent forth the Holy Spirit into the earth to search for those whose hearts are willing to be fashioned and formed into an offering which will bring pleasure to the Heir of all things, Jesus. Eve was fashioned out of a rib, part of the body of the first Adam and Christ's bride will be fashioned and brought forth out of His Body.

In just the same way as God the Father, Abraham sent his faithful servant, Eliezer, to search out a bride for Isaac from among his own people. There are certain things the servant was looking for in this potential bride; a servant-heart, beauty, generosity, humility and the willingness to go the extra mile. Rebekah had all these qualities and Eliezer was impatient to know if she would fulfill the final requirement - a willingness to be led by him to a place she did not know, to wed a man she had never set eyes upon!

Are we willing to be led by the Spirit on a journey of which we know nothing except the final destination?

This servant comes bearing gifts for her and for her family. The first things Eliezer gives Rebekah are a nose-ring and bracelets.

Gen 24:22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man brought out gifts, a gold nose ring weighing a little over a quarter of an ounce and two arm bracelets weighing about four ounces, and gave them to her.

The Hebrew word for 'bracelet' means 'to link, to fasten, to join self'. Here we see the beginning of the betrothal process. She has been singled out and chosen as the potential bride, should she be willing and also if her father is willing to accept the bridal price paid. However, first the servant has a question:

Gen 24:23MSG He asked her, "Tell me about your family? Whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father's house for us to stay the night?"

In just the same way as Mary and Joseph knocked at the innkeeper's door and asked if there was room for Christ to be born in his inn, so too the Holy Spirit is knocking at the door of our fellowships, asking if there is room for Him to bring forth the Bride in our midst.

Gen 24:24MSG She said, "I'm the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah and Nahor. And there's plenty of room in our house for you to stay--and lots of straw and feed besides."

Rebekah opens wide her home for this servant and puts everything at his disposal. This is the response the Holy Spirit is looking for. We often sing, "You are welcome in this place, Holy Spirit" but do not allow Him freedom in every department of our lives. Sometimes we are willing to entertain Him alone but we want His camels to be fed and watered elsewhere. Camels are beasts of burden. They depict intercessory burdens that the Spirit wants us to attend to. He is looking for a house that is willing to feel what the heart of God feels; to have our hearts broken by what breaks God's heart. The Bride will gladly welcome both the Spirit of God and all He brings with Him, no matter the discomfort or inconvenience or how it looks to those outside.

Rebekah's grandmother's name was Milcah, which comes from a root word meaning 'to ascend the throne, to reign, to induct as queen'. This bride-to-be had royal blood! What Rebekah was saying prophetically when she explained her bloodline, is that this was her heritage; this is where she had come from and where she was going to. She had been born for this purpose, to become queen – and this is the purpose of the Bride of Christ, to ascend to the place prepared for her, to rule and reign with the King of Kings.

In John 13:3 it tells us that Jesus, knowing who He was, where He had come from and where He was going to, did a strange thing. He girded Himself with a servant's

towel and began to wash the disciple's feet. So too, the Bride, secure in the knowledge of her royal heritage and destiny, will take on the form of a servant and begin to wash the dusty feet of those around her. She will minister gently to those who have traveled hard stony paths, washing away their weariness and the debris of the journey with the water of the Word.

Rebekah had a brother named Laban, which means 'to be white, to make bricks'. When he saw the bracelets on her arms, He quickly welcomed Eliezer in the name of the Lord. This all seems very hospitable on the surface. However, Laban's eyes were on the jewelry. He was welcoming the servant because of the potential wealth he saw coming the family's way. In the same way, there are those in the Body of Christ who make a show of welcoming the Holy Spirit, but there are dollar signs in their eyes so to speak. They want to build for themselves and profit from the gospel. They are whitewashed but inside, they are full of the bones of those who have been sacrificed on the altar of their spiritual ambitions. They may be related to the Bride but their hearts are vastly different. Not everyone in the house gets to go on this journey with the Holy Spirit!

In verse 33 we read that the family wanted Eliezer to enjoy a meal with them but he would not do so until He had fulfilled His master's wishes and found a Bride. In the same way, we invite the Holy Spirit to feast with

us at our meetings. We want to fellowship with Him, relax, and enjoy His presence. We do not comprehend that this is not the reason why He has come to us. There is an urgency in the heart of the Holy Spirit to complete His assignment.

**He has come to call out a Bride from among
God's people, not to eat, drink and be merry
with the people of God!**

We speak so often of banqueting and feasting on all God has prepared for us and sometimes we go ahead and start eating, unaware that the Holy Spirit is not joining us. He has come for an explicit purpose and will not eat with us until we hear what He has to say - until we receive a revelation of the Father's desire for a Bride for His Son and release her to journey with the Holy Spirit to her destiny.

The tragic thing is that many will be unwilling to do this. I encourage those who have mentored and fathered people in the house of God, to be quick to release any that the Holy Spirit has marked and is calling. When you hear how God has divinely dovetailed arrangements, seen His divine networking, acknowledge the hand of God and work with Him, not against Him. For those who resist the Holy Spirit's invitation, He is no longer required to tarry with them. Abraham told Eliezer:

Gen 24:41MSG If you go to my family and they won't give her to you, you will also be free from the oath.'

If we do not respond to the wooing of the Holy Spirit at this time, He will leave and move on to search for those with willing hearts.

**He is not bound to remain where people
resist His requests.**

Rebekah's family recognized that the servant was sharing truth and released her to his care. In just the same way, John the Baptist encouraged people to stop following him and follow Jesus. We must recognize when our time of mentoring and preparing people has collided with the next chapter in God's purpose for their lives.

Gen 24:5,51MSG Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is totally from GOD. We have no say in the matter, either yes or no. Rebekah is yours: Take her and go; let her be the wife of your master's son, as GOD has made plain."

When they surrendered to the will of the servant, he responded by giving gifts:

Gen 24:53MSG Then he brought out gifts of silver and gold and clothing and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive gifts to her brother and mother.

These are the betrothal gifts for the Bride, and her family are also showered with presents. God is no man's debtor. When we surrender to His purposes and release that which is precious to be used for His glory, He generously pours out gifts upon the family of God. The Bride in turn receives garments, which represent mantles and anointings to equip her for the road ahead.

Once again we see the heart of Laban the next morning. He has seen the garments and jewelry bestowed on the Bride and now wants to hold her back from her destiny for selfish purposes. His desire is to cause her to miss the wedding because he wants her to stay with them so they can benefit from what the Father has bestowed upon her. Laban represents those moving in a religious spirit – this spirit always seeks to harness the giftings of people for its own ends.

Listen to me, Bride of Christ: there is a strategy unleashed against you to cause you to miss your appointment with the Bridegroom. The voice of comfort and familiarity are wooing you, urging you to remain a little longer in the place you stand. Your garments and giftings have been noted and there are those near and dear to you who do not really want to let you go. They are saying, it is just a small delay for old time's sake, not a cancellation of your travel plans. After all, who knows when we will see each other

again? I implore you at this point to hear the urgent tone in the Holy Spirit's voice:

Gen 24:56 MSG He said, "Oh, don't make me wait! GOD has worked everything out so well--send me off to my master."

Time is short, the Bridegroom is waiting and the end of the age is at hand. The great cloud of witnesses surrounds us, those who in ages past yielded to this same invitation, and they are also hasty for they do not come to perfection apart from us.

You face a journey you have not been on before. You do not know what is around the next bend but you have this certainty; Jesus, your Bridegroom is waiting to see the fruit of the travail of His soul. He longs to catch sight of the face of the one He paid such a high bridal price for. As the Holy Spirit comes to each of us individually and asks if we are willing to go with Him on a journey of preparation and purification, may our answer be that of Rebekah:

Gen 24:58 And they called Rebekah, and said to her, Will you go with this man? And she said, I will go.

Don't allow the comfort of familiarity to rob you and the seductive voices of those who wish to keep you back for their own ends, to lull you into a slumber. If we lose our lives for His sake, we shall find them.

Rebekah means 'strongly bound or fettered'. Are we willing to be strongly bound and at the mercy of Him who leads us or do we still want to be able to run wild and free and have our own way? If so, the Holy Spirit will not force us to go anywhere. Rebekah's father's name was Bethuel, which means 'destroyed by God'- our old associations will be dead to us if we are willing to leave and cleave. Psalm 45 says this:

'hear O daughter , consider, submit to my instruction; forget also your own people and your father's house; so will the king desire your beauty; for he is your lord; reverence and honor him.'

God is asking each of us to make this choice because the Holy Spirit is hasty and time is running out. Those close to us will always want to hold on to us a little longer - will we answer like Rebekah or will we have excuses and reasons to prolong our stay in our comfort zones? Rebekah did not look back; she was asked the question and all she said was, "I will go". She asked no questions or expressed any doubts. This is the kind of bride the Holy Spirit is looking for in these days; one who will say, "here am I, Lord. Send me"; someone single-minded, one who doesn't look to the left or the right but fixes her eye on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of her faith; the Bridegroom she has never seen with her natural eye but whom she loves. 1 Peter 1:8 says:

'Having not seen Him, we love Him'

She is willing to trust His representative, the Holy Spirit and put her hand and heart in His hand and allow Him to lead her by a way she does not know because He has demonstrated the character of her Groom by the gifts He has brought. The gifts of the Spirit to the Body of Christ show us the kind of Bridegroom we are going to meet. He is generous, loving, wealthy and kind. What more do we need to know? Perhaps only the character of the servant we are to travel with - Eliezer means ' God of help and protection' - so we know that our safety on the journey is guaranteed.

Let us look at the place where Rebekah had been living up until that point. It was called Haran at Padam Aran in Mesopotamia. This means ' parched plateau in the highlands of prosperity'! Is this where you find yourself; in a place where you are thirsty for more and your life is no longer climbing higher in God but has just kind of plateaued out and nothing you do brings change? The prospective bride, Rebekah was in a dry place spiritually and what was worse is that her grandfather's name means 'snoring'!! Prosperity had caused a state of slumber to come upon the inhabitants of that place; they were going nowhere spiritually. But praise God for His servant, The God of Help, who came and invited Rebekah to leave that place. She chose to die to self, to comfort, to predictability and to

count everything else as rubbish compared to knowing her groom.

Eliezer told her she was going to live in Canaan, which means 'to bend the knee, to humble or subdue'. She chose to bow her knee and to allow herself to be fettered and led by this servant to a destination of God's choosing, even if it meant being humbled. Rebekah lived out psalm 45:10 years before it was even written, as a picture for you and me to learn how to respond to the invitation of the Holy Spirit when He asks us to come with Him.

In the heart of God's Word is a love-letter to the Bride; it is called Song of Songs and herein lies the call of His heart to us. He wants us to know that along with being the Creator and Architect of all things, He is also a Lover and an Incurable Romantic. Romance is not something that the secular world thought up to sell movies. Romance was birthed in the heart of God before the foundation of the world when He began to plan a Bride for His Son. Listen to the cry of His heart:

'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away' Songs 2:10

'Arise, my love, and come away' Songs 2:13

'Come away with me from Lebanon, my promised bride, come with me. Descend from the top of Amana, from the

peak of Senir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountain of the leopards' Songs 4:8

Lebanon speaks of the heart. This is a heart issue; it is not about doing something you fully understand with your head. The Lord is asking for a response of the heart.

Amana means 'covenant, faithfulness'. God is saying He is a God of covenant, He is faithful, you can trust Him.

Hermon comes from the root word meaning ' to seclude and devote to religious purposes, to consecrate'. So the Lord is calling us to a further consecration that goes beyond our original salvation experience. He is asking for a deliberate setting apart of your heart in betrothal to this Groom, forsaking all others; a choice to take the journey He has mapped out for you that will prepare you as a Bride for your Husband.

He is calling you to descend, away from the places of the lions' dens and the leopards. The word 'lion' in Hebrew means ' to pluck and pierce' and 'leopard' means ' to spot and stain by dripping'. So God is calling you to follow and come away from those things in your life that pierce and hurt you, from the things that mark and stain your garment of pure white. If you will respond and obey with trust in your heart, He will

move you away from this place you have been in that has been damaging to your soul and testimony. Trust Him - Rebekah did!

In Song of Solomon 4:6, the shepherd girl says she must go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense until the day breaks and the shadows flee. This is the place where the Bride must remain until the morning of this Third Day in which we are living. This is the place prepared for us so that we may be prepared for Him.

Chapter Two

Set-Apart Vessels

In Exodus 30:23, the God gives Moses instruction to make the holy anointing oil -

'Also take for yourself chief spices - 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, 500 shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil.'

It was used to anoint all the utensils and vessels of the tabernacle and the priests so that they would be holy, set-apart for the Lord's purposes alone. There was to be no imitation and it was not to be poured on the flesh or on an outsider. Disobedience to this command resulted in death.

This anointing oil for the set-apart vessels is a picture of the complete work of the Holy Spirit in preparing a Bride without spot or wrinkle. I always used to think that the wrinkles were on the dress of the bride and that there was some ironing that needed to be done but lately I have come to understand that the garment of the Bride is already prepared and perfectly embroidered and pressed.

The spots and the wrinkles are on the face of the Bride!!

These are not as easy to remove and Jesus is coming for a Bride without blemishes and signs of aging. Spots and blemishes on the surface are caused by internal impurities and they are a sign of the cleansing necessary on the inside.

God's Bride does not have cellulite either, which is made up of pockets of toxins under the surface of the skin and is caused by poor diet, not enough water or exercise and bad circulation. So just as there is treatment for these conditions in the natural, the Lord has his beauty treatments for His Bride. God was using aromatherapy long before the New Age-ers cottoned on to it. So what does He use to deal with spiritual cellulite and His Bride's blemish-covered face? All the ingredients are to be found in the anointing oil recipe He gave to Moses.

Esther was prepared in just the same way before she went in to the King. She was treated for six months with oil of Myrrh and for six months with sweet spices, which are the other ingredients of the holy anointing oil made by Moses. Lets look at the Hebrew word meanings so that we may understand the types and shadows of the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the Bride for her wedding night:

Myrrh

'distilling in drops, bitter, grief'(Strong's 4753)

Myrrh is always associated with death and burial. It was used to embalm dead bodies in preparation for burial and by soldiers to heal wounds on the battlefield and to draw out impurities. The Israelite women also used myrrh as a deodorant as they traveled through the wilderness. It has very strong anti fungal and antibacterial properties. It makes a good gargle and mouthwash and is used for coughs, asthma and other chest problems.

So an application of the oil of myrrh spiritually, brings death to self and a deep purifying of the heart. It speaks of suffering – remember Jesus was made perfect through suffering. We have to conform to His death if we are to share His glory. It also brings healing to our wounded hearts. Its application for breathing problems refers to a restoring of our prayer life and communion with God.

Cinnamon

'to raise up, stand, erect (Strong's 7026)

This is a type of the resurrection, the raising up of Jesus from the grave. Once the oil of myrrh has done its work, God wants to endue us with resurrection power.

Cinnamon is also a sweet spice, associated with romance and intimacy, and is used to improve the flavor of bitter substances. The Lord wants to raise us up to a higher place and draw us into intimacy with Himself. It also speaks of the sweetness of the grace of God in our lives, and because only the bark is fragrant, it is a type of the robe of righteousness that we wear, which, as the outer covering, bears the fragrance of Christ.

Calamus

'redeemed, bought, owned (Strong's 7070)

It also means 'reed, branch or measuring rod'. It represents government and divine order as the reed or rod pictures the king's scepter. From the place of intimacy, we are equipped to rule and establish His judgments in the earth. God wants His bride to exercise dominion and rule in righteousness in the earth. She is His scepter in the earth and He desires to anoint her to do this in His authority. Calamus scents the air while growing and was used in the richest perfumes. In the same way our lives should express the fragrance of Christ even while we are growing spiritually from day to day. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches; so calamus is also a picture of the life-giving vital connection between us and Christ as we abide in the vine and rule as His righteous Branch in the earth. If we abide in Him, we shall bear much fruit.

Cassia

'to bow down in deference (to someone greater than yourself), to cleave' (Strong's 6916)

This is a picture of humility and worship, of two becoming one by the process of cleaving. The bride of Christ casts down her crowns and cries, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain". She gives all the glory to her Bridegroom and takes none for herself. Cassia is a cousin of Cinnamon but has purple flowers and grows at a very high altitude. Whereas in cinnamon, only the bark is scented; in cassia the whole tree, including the leaves, are fragrant. Cassia was used to scent garments. Cassia represents the fragrance of Christ permeating our whole being and God wants His fragrance to permeate our garments or ministries as well. We go from glory to glory as we worship and bow before the King of Kings.

Instead of the anointing just coming upon us, it abides within us! We function out of who God has made us to be and not just out of works that we do. The true essence of worship is sacrifice and surrender and as we die to self, the fragrance of cassia is released through our lives.

Purple speaks of royalty. Christ's kingly anointing is manifested in us as cassia does its work. Genuine humility brings promotion to kingship; if we will have

the mind of Christ, which is humility, then the same anointing that scented the garments of the Bridegroom, will descend upon His Bride. This portion of the anointing is only found once we have scaled the heights and overcome (cassia is only found in the high places).

Cassia also speaks of cleaving and if we will persevere and cleave to Him in intimacy and worship in every circumstance, his anointing will be poured in even greater measure - until we reach the place of receiving the Spirit without measure. It is only out of true intimacy that real fruitfulness comes. A quick kiss never made anybody pregnant!

Olive Oil

'an olive, the tree, the branch or the berry as yielding illuminating oil'(Strong's 2132)

This is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It was the oil that allowed the ingredients to mix and flow together, activating and carrying their perfume. This oil is a type of anointing and revelation of the Spirit. We need to be continually soaked in the Spirit and seek God for the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.

There are five ingredients in this anointing oil. Five is the number of grace or favor. God's Bride in this third day will be clothed and covered in the favor of God

and kings will come to the brightness of her rising. Though there will be dense darkness in the earth and on the peoples, the glory of the Lord will be upon her.

Jesus is the divine Perfumer and Apothecary who is mixing this heavenly anointing which will accomplish His purpose in each one who will submit to His beauty treatments.

Different proportions of each spice were used in the recipe for a very definite reason. There is a hidden message to be heard by those who have ears to hear. Myrrh and cinnamon were in the ratio 2:1 because this is God's pattern for death and resurrection. Hosea 6 tells us that there will be two days in the grave and on the third day He will raise us up to live before His face, in His presence. Although many have been in a time of suffering, the grave and the tomb, there is coming very shortly a time when the manifest presence of God will be seen within the church, with signs and wonders and an outpouring of His healing virtue.

Calamus and cassia are in the ratio 1:2 because to the measure you will allow the government and order of God to be imposed upon your life, according to that measure (which you choose by your willingness to yield to His workings) you will receive a double portion of anointing as you worship and cleave to your Beloved. Those who sow in tears are going to reap with

songs of joy as they see the fruit of their intimacy with the Lord.

There is a time of darkness coming upon the earth but the Bride will stand, radiant with His glory.

We must submit to the preparations of the keeper of the House and trust him to do a thorough and complete work so that when the hour of trial comes, we may be able to say, "the prince of this world has nothing in me" and go forth and glorify His Name.

It is a serious thing to be set apart for holy use, to be a vessel of honor and it is for those who are willing to be cleansed and purified. We cannot play games with God anymore. Our God is a consuming fire, and He comes to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Esther went through a period of six months preparation with oil of myrrh. Half of her preparation time was for death to self and refining, a time for drawing out impurities which caused blemishes, of anti fungal and antibacterial treatment to destroy anything in her being that was causing infection or difficulty in breathing (her prayer life).

So don't get discouraged and feel that the Lord's dealings and applications of myrrh seem to go on forever. There is a determined season of death and the

application of myrrh and then it is replaced by a season of sweet spices, which are a preparation for love and intimacy and union -the wedding night!

The Hebrew word for 'perfume' (Strong's 5130) means 'to turn into fragrance by fire as an act of worship, to vibrate, to rock, to wave, to shake or to sprinkle'. The other Hebrew word for 'perfume' means 'to fumigate and cleanse, to drive out (Strong's 7004)'. We are currently seeing a great move of the Spirit in purifying and purging and taking us to greater heights of worship, which are preparing the Bride for greater intimacy. The Holy Spirit is the Keeper of the House and, like Heggai, is applying to Esther the designer perfume He knows will make the Bridegroom weak at the knees! The Lord gave me the words of a song one morning and I finally understood that the anointing is not our destination, but only a tool to get us to our destination; which is beyond the veil in the secret place of the bedchamber, with our Bridegroom:

Come and perfume us for the presence of our King

Holy Spirit, we cannot go in without your anointing

For no-one knows the heart of God as intimately as you

No-one knows the King's desire without consulting you

So come pour your fragrant oils on this yielded offering

Come and perfume us for the presence of our King.

The aromatherapy treatments deal with the spots and blemishes but what about the wrinkles? Nowadays laser treatment is used to remove wrinkles. What is a laser except a concentrated beam of light applied to remove layers of dead and distorted skin cells in order to reveal the new young skin underneath. God, in these days, will be applying concentrated beams of the light of His Word upon the face of your heart. It will feel raw for a few days afterwards. You will be tender and sensitive in that area but afterward you will discover that your heart has a new elasticity and youthfulness in that area where His Word burnt you. He is taking out the heart of stone and giving you a heart of flesh - no scar tissue, no warped, sun-damaged layers; age-spots or the like; just smooth young flesh. So lets not flinch under the beam of His searchlight as He deals with the thoughts and intents of our hearts. It's beauty treatment time! Periodically another laser treatment is required whenever signs of aging or hardening of the heart is evident!

There is another precious perfume that Mary poured over Jesus when she anointed him for His burial - spikenard. The Greek word for this is 'pistikos' which means 'genuine, trustworthy', the root word meaning

'moral conviction of religious truth or a religious teacher, especially reliance upon Christ for salvation'. So when she poured this perfume over Jesus she was making a prophetic declaration," You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". She was declaring that He was the True Genuine Light that had come into the world and the fragrance (the release of her revelation of truth) filled the whole house.

Spikenard was one of the spices found in Solomon's garden, which is a picture of our heart. There also were calamus, cinnamon, myrrh and all the chief spices. Are we breaking our alabaster boxes and pouring out such a declaration over Him? What Mary did was a prophetic act, an anointing for burial before it took place.

God also anoints us for burial prophetically in the same way by declaring and pouring over us a Word that declares who we are in the Spirit and what He will accomplish through us. Who are we? We are those of the True Light, Sons of the Light - and the fragrance of this truth will fill the whole house as we allow ourselves to be broken and poured out for Him. As we remain in this place of death to self, the fragrance continues to go forth from our broken vessel.

I wonder if any of you are familiar with pomanders or perhaps have even made one. They are such good illustrations of the process of God's dealings with us.

Before the release of the fragrance comes the piercing and the impregnation with spices. Then the orange is put away and shrinks and dries. Only then is it taken out, full of fragrance and used to perfume clothing and repel fish-moths.

Romans 8:17 says that we have to share His sufferings before we share His glory. The alabaster box has to be broken and we have to decrease so that He can increase. There are things in us that have to die (the juice in the sap cells has to dry up), the flesh has to reduce and as a result the orange gets smaller.

The first step is the piercing; this involves pain, actually multiple pains, and then the cloves like little nails are pressed in. There is a process of crucifying of our wills and our soul nature. We must take up our cross daily to be a disciple.

Suffering always precedes glory.

Once all the cloves are in place, a special mixture of spices with a fixative is sprinkled over and the orange is wrapped up and put away. This is a picture of Jesus' death and his body being treated with spices and wrapped in linen cloths and put in the tomb. There is a time of death, when you are hidden and the Lord is dealing and dealing with you and you are shrinking and decreasing just like that orange.

Sometimes one wonders if there will be anything left after the Lord's dealings but be encouraged, the tomb is no longer just a place of death because of what Jesus did for us, but it is now a place of preparation for fruitfulness.

The word 'tomb' means 'to heap up a stack of sheaves' !(Strong's 1430).

So there is fruit coming from your place of death, there is a resurrection day coming when those grave clothes are going to be unwrapped and that orange is going to be taken out and displayed. There will not be much of you showing but it will have a concentrated fragrance that lasts because it has permeated the whole fruit and no flesh is showing!!

God has started a process that will result in His Church being endued with His resurrection power and His fragrance. Are we willing to die that He may live through us? In a pomander only the cloves are visible, there is no longer any of the orange visible. God wants us to decrease so that only what He has done in our lives is visible because then He alone will get all the glory

Chapter Three

Crossing The Jordan

Many people in the Church today are still waiting for the fulfillment of the promises of God as regards their calling and destiny. We were not saved out of the world only to go to Heaven, but for a specific calling and purpose in just the same way as the Israelites were not delivered from Egypt to live in the wilderness forever. It was only part of the journey to their destiny in the Promised Land. Corporately, the church is in a time of transition, of crossing over from the wilderness into the Land of Promise. Chronologically we are already in the Third day since the coming of Christ (a day is like a thousand years and we have entered the third thousand year period since the birth of Christ) and the first light of dawn is just beginning to spread across the sky.

So what exactly does this coming out of the wilderness mean for us? Song of Solomon 8:5 says that the Bride of Christ comes up out of the wilderness leaning on her Beloved. So there is intimacy between the Bride and her Groom, a greater dependency, caused by what has been experienced in the wilderness.

The wilderness is a time of training and of testing to show us what was in our hearts, a time of refining.

The Bride and the Bridegroom come out of the wilderness together and therefore go into the Promised Land side by side. Now the Jordan is before us and where we are going, the church has not been before. The leadership of Moses is over and it is those with the Joshua anointing who will lead God's people into the fullness of their inheritance.

Joshua had spent much time lingering before the ark of God and it is those who have been much in His presence who God will raise up in this hour. Many unknown people who have been quietly serving in the shadow of great men of God, just as Joshua served Moses, will now be rewarded openly for that which has been sown in the secret of their prayer closets.

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea their enemies were behind them, watching them leave. When they crossed the Jordan their enemies were in front of them, watching them arrive! Realize that living on your promised land are enemies who do not want to give up this territory to you and they are watching your progress toward them. What you need to remember is that God has promised this land to you and to your

children and the document is signed and sealed in the blood of the Lamb, against which no court of law can argue.

Within your heart there has to rise up a determination to go in and possess the fullness of your inheritance.

Do not be like the spies who came back and reported that the giants were too big to overcome. Look at them and remember they are squatters on the land designated to YOU and that you hold the documents of ownership.

The Israelites crossed the Jordan on the 10th of the first month. Ten is the number of trial and testing, of measuring and restoration. Are you going through an intense trial at this time? Do you almost feel tried beyond what you can bear? 1 Peter 4:12 says we should not be amazed at the fiery trial that is taking place to test our quality. It does not feel to you like you are crossing over into a new place of possessing your inheritance because the heat of the trial is so great that you are not able to see what God is doing in your life right now. Yet God's refining furnace always has a purpose which is only seen after it has run its course. Don't give up at this point for you will surely reap in due season!

Let us look at the beautiful picture that God hid in the portrayal of this crossing. When the Israelites came to the edge of the Jordan they camped in the plains of Moab. Numbers 33:49 tells us they stretched from Beth-jeshimoth to Shittim.

Beth-jeshimoth means 'house of desolations'. Is this where you find yourself camping? Do you feel a great sense of loss, that much has been laid waste in your life? Are you mourning the death of dreams and plans you held dear? Well, I have good news for you! You are on the brink of breakthrough. Not one word of His good promise to you is going to fail. God is about to do something miraculous in your life. He is the same today as He was all those years ago and He still rolls back floodwaters. Even though you feel you have reached a dead end with no way through, God is going to lead you over on dry ground in full view of your enemies.

Shittim means 'acacia trees' and the root word for this is 'to pierce, flog and scourge'. It is a picture of the death of Jesus. The Word says they will look upon the One whom they have pierced. Are you in a place where you are being asked to die to self? This is not a sentimental mental action but something that causes great wrestling's and pain in the soul. Jesus sweated drops of blood as He chose to lay down His own will. You may be experiencing the whip of someone's cruel words or betrayal and isolation from those you love,

just as Christ did. It is at this time that we are being counted worthy to share in His sufferings and in Jesus' own words, "Blessed are you when people persecute and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on My account..... be joyful for your reward in Heaven is great!" Some of us are in a position where we are suffering on an ongoing basis and no matter how we have rebuked the enemy, it has continued. Perhaps this is actually God's appointed furnace for us and we need to surrender to God's refining purpose in it. God is the One who makes the blacksmith and the fire that forges metal into a weapon fit for His use. Remember, Paul spoke in Philippians 3:10 of fellowshipping in His sufferings so as to be conformed into His likeness.

**Have you asked to be made like Jesus? Well,
God is answering your prayers!**

At the threshold of the Promised Land, the Lord is asking for a new level of surrender. Joshua had new responsibilities on his shoulders. He had to let go of less important things and focus on God's purpose for his life. He had to surrender relationships that were not vital to his calling. He had to die to any plans of his own and embrace God's. This is easier to do if we remember that God's plans are infinitely better than ours and it is only in fulfilling His will, that we find fulfillment because that is what we were created to do!

From Shittim, the Israelites moved down into the Jordan River. The word 'Jordan' means 'to descend, bring down or cast down'. In Ephesians 4:9 it speaks of Jesus descending and taking captivity captive. When did He do this? It was during the three days in the grave. Therefore this portion of their journey depicts the death and burial of Jesus and what was accomplished through it. This Jordan was also the place where John baptized people unto repentance. So the River Jordan is a place of humbling unto death to our own desires, of repentance. Yet it is also a place where through these very heart changes God begins to bring down the strongholds in our lives and take captivity captive!

The Lord is saying that as we come into this place of humbling ourselves and being conformed to His death; as we respond to the intense pressure and fiery trial by repenting for the things we discover are in our hearts, there will be a casting down of principalities and powers in our lives; areas previously under bondage will be set free and once again the Lord will lead away a train of vanquished foes. Remember that all that Jesus accomplished during His three days in the grave was hidden until the third day when He rose. In the same way, this delivering work will be a hidden work of the heart, dealing with the deep foundations of our being as we embrace the finished work of Christ in every area He puts His finger on. The fruit of this work will only be seen later. Resurrection power is only

manifested on the morning of the Third day, just as it was when Jesus rose.

The priests bearing the ark stood firm in the Jordan opposite Jericho (Joshua 3:16). They were facing the first portion of their inheritance that God would later give supernaturally into their hands. To them it looked like a huge fortified city but they did not quake, they stood firm on dry ground (v17), experiencing the supernatural power of God holding back the floodwaters for a long distance. I want to say to you today, "stand firm!" No matter what you are going through, don't give up. When the enemy comes in, like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him. Remember that all things are working together for good because you are called according to His purpose to be transformed into the image of Jesus. This trial that is stretching you to breaking point is accomplishing God's purpose in you and the enemy living on your promised land can see what God is accomplishing in your life through this trial and he is terrified.

The people of Jericho watched as the children of Israel crossed over and they knew their days were numbered. The Bad News Grapevine immediately started broadcasting the news to the other kings and princes in the region and they were all so fearful, it says that there was no spirit in them anymore!! (Josh 5:1) So just picture it - as the enemy observes the character of

Christ emerging in you through the fiery trial, he panics and soon the news is spreading like wildfire through the kingdom of darkness..."we've had it! We may as well pack up right now and go quietly." In fact, Joshua 2:10 tells us that panic had already set in when they heard the tales of the crossing of the Red Sea! The enemy had been progressively growing more fearful for 40 years as the Israelites went round and round in the wilderness - imagine their heart palpitations when the Jordan River opened up as well and the huge company of people crossed over! Joshua 4:13 says that 40 000 of the Israelites were dressed for war. What a terrifying sight it must have been. The enemy is more scared of you than you are of him!

**So lift up your head and allow Christ the
Champion to emerge in you!**

The Hebrew word for 'firm' means 'to be erect, to establish, to render prosperous'. So let us grasp the concept of what God is doing in our lives through this crossing. Yes, the enemy is active but 1 Peter 5:9, 10 says you are to withstand him and be FIRM in the faith, knowing that the rest of the Body is undergoing the same appointed suffering; and 'after you have suffered a little while, the God of eternal grace Who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen and

settle you.' (Amplified version) So your destination is glory in Christ Jesus. This place you find yourself in is only the street through which you are moving to your destiny! God is working in secret to lift you up, establish and make you prosperous!

Joshua 3:16 tells us that the waters rose up in a heap at Adam beside Zarethan. Why did God specifically choose to drive the waters back to this place? Nothing is a coincidence with our God. He was saying something through this visual picture.

'Adam' refers to the first man God made. 'Zarethan' means 'to pierce and puncture' and is therefore a type of Christ, 'Him who they have pierced' (1 Cor 15:22). Every legal document that is written must be signed by two witnesses and here we see the first Adam and the last Adam standing side by side as the two witnesses to the people of God passing over into their full inheritance. What God was declaring to Heaven and earth and every principality and power watching was "it is finished!" It was forever settled in the courts of Heaven that God's people would enter into the fullness of all that was purchased on the cross of Calvary; that the sin of the first Adam was completely atoned for by the sacrifice of the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, it was proclaimed that it would not be by our own might or the strength of our own arm that we would cross over but because of the abiding presence

of God's manifest power on the boundary line. This is symbolized by the ark held firm by the priests in the middle of the river. What a masterpiece God painted through this scene for all the ages to see! The word 'heap' comes from a root word in the Hebrew meaning 'to flee, to disappear'. These waters fled at the presence of God and years later David wrote psalm 114 about it:

'Judah became God's sanctuary and Israel His dominion. The Sea looked and fled; the Jordan was turned back.....what ails you, O sea that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob'

This crossing is sending a different message to the crossing of the Red Sea. The Red Sea crossing was declaring deliverance out of the kingdom of darkness.

The Jordan crossing was declaring an entrance into their full inheritance.

It is almost like a child who receives an inheritance on the death of his parent but the inheritance is held in trust until the child comes to maturity; then he enters into the fullness of his inheritance. Egypt can also be seen as a kind of womb, with the wilderness as the birth canal and the Promised Land as the beginning of life after birth for the fully formed mature baby or man-child.

Psalm 110 speaks of the Sons of God springing from the womb of the morning, offering themselves willingly in holy array. This obviously refers to the morning of the Third Day. We have entered the third thousand years since Christ was born and corporately the Church is coming into an experience of their inheritance that has not been seen before in church history. The Church has been in the wilderness for 2000 years but there is a change coming on the Third day! Psalm 110 speaks of the Lord sending forth His scepter from Zion and ruling in the midst of His foes in this Day. Do not be afraid that you are going to be left behind in this move. The ark of God only came up out of the Jordan once all the people had crossed over. Remember that the Presence of God is going before you and He is also your rear guard.

Unfortunately for the enemy, this Horror movie that they are watching is not over yet! After the Israelites crossed the Jordan they camped at a place which the Lord God said to call 'Gilgal'. This word 'Gilgal' means 'to roll away or remove'. It reminds me of the stone that was rolled away from the tomb of Jesus on the Third Day. Therefore it speaks of the resurrection.

Shittim - Death

Jordan - Burial

Gilgal - Resurrection

What a glorious prophetic proclamation God was making to every principality and power that was watching this journey. There was coming a Savior who would purchase a people from every tribe and tongue and through His death, the reproach of sin would be rolled away (Gilgal) from mankind.

What a glorious proclamation God is making through your life as you transition to this new place!

Joshua set up a memorial with the 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan's riverbed. It would remind coming generations that the God of the Red Sea was also the God of the Jordan crossing. The stones were taken from the very place where the priests' feet stood firm and every tribe was represented. From the hidden places in your life where God's power has been at work, there will come a great testimony of His delivering power that generations to come will hear. The number 12 is the number of government and apostolic authority and this memorial also declares that the government of God will again operate through the Church. We are coming into a time where Christ will rule in the midst of His foes through His Church(psalm 110).

Let us look at what happened on the first Third Day. God drew back the waters and commanded the seed in

the earth to grow and bear fruit. Previously it had been covered and unseen. In the same way, on this Third Day in church history, God is going to uncover the seeds planted in the earth of your vessel and cause you to reach your full potential as you bear fruit after the Christ kind!

Chapter Four

Belated Circumcision

The first thing that happened to the Israelites when their feet were in the Promised Land is that they were circumcised!! During this trial there is a circumcision of the heart that is taking place. God is dealing with deep things, things that you did not know were in your heart before. There is a danger of great discouragement at this time as you realize the sinfulness of your own heart, in spite of having known the Lord for many years. As the fire causes the dross to rise to the surface, do not listen to the voices that tell you to give up, that you are a failure. Use this opportunity to acknowledge your complete dependency on the blood of Christ because the heart of man is desperately wicked and if the Lord has put His finger on an area, it is because He wants to cleanse you and set you free of that very thing. Dross comes to the surface in order to be skimmed off! There is a wrestling with self and the flesh at this time and the only solution is surrender to the Lord. As you confess your sin to Him, He is faithful to forgive and cleanse you. Circumcision is a painful process but it is something we all must go through because all God's covenant people have circumcised hearts.

The Israelites were circumcised on the 11th day of the first month. 11 is the number of transition, before 12 –

which signifies government and rule. The Church is in a place of transition and heart issues will be dealt with during transition. Isaiah 11 gives us a prophetic description of the Bride with the seven spirits of God resting upon her, fashioned in the image of Christ, her Groom, judging with righteousness and justice for the poor. This is where the time of transition will take us and what it will make us, if we will submit to His dealings.

There were a whole generation of people that were uncircumcised, even though God had commanded circumcision as a sign of covenant between Him and the Israelites, from the time of Abraham. God is looking for warriors that are circumcised in their hearts. The act of circumcision is a picture of removal of the flesh covering and nakedness before the Lord. It is also a sign of covenant. This ritual was done symbolically in the area of their strength and fruitfulness.

What is your area of fruitfulness? This is where the Lord will be dealing with you. There are things that remain undealt with in our lives on the way through the wilderness. The Israelites knew they should be circumcising their children. There are things born into our lives in the wilderness that are not in line with the Word of God and we have turned a blind eye to them. By the time this generation was circumcised, they were fully grown so it was a painful experience to go

through - but a necessary step of obedience. There are some things in our lives - habits, character traits etc - which we know are not acceptable to God but we have put off dealing with them; making excuses, allowing them to grow to adulthood. However God means business and He cannot have you entering into the battles that are ahead in a fleshly manner. For your own sake, He commands a re-establishing of the covenant seal upon His warriors. Because of this covenant, your enemies are His enemies and all the resources of His strength are at your disposal. You do not want to bypass this step, no matter how painful it is.

Allow God to deal with your flesh.

You may feel discouraged as the Lord puts His finger on one thing after another that you need to repent of, but keep going until the operation is complete; remember Joshua had to circumcise 40 000 people. There was such a huge pile of foreskins that the place was called Gibeath-haaraloth - Hill of Foreskins!!

Notice also that the people did not perform the operation themselves. Joshua - who is a type of Christ - had to do it and in the same way, we can only surrender to the sword of the Lord's Word cutting into our hearts. We are unable to do the deed ourselves. The Lord will do the stripping away and we need to remain in this place until we are healed - just as the Israelites

did (Josh 5:8). They must have felt very vulnerable at this time because they were incapacitated, exposed, in full view of their enemies. To the natural mind, such a powerful crossing should have been followed by a victory procession and a show of great strength. However, God's strength is perfected through our weakness. The Israelites knew that it was not by their own strength that they had entered the Promised Land and any false sense of pride was dealt with effectively by the rite of circumcision. Humility and a sense of one's own weakness results. Then God can use you, because you know that the power is in the Blood of the Slain Lamb and not of yourselves.

After the circumcision, God said, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you!" This was not accomplished by the crossing of the Jordan but by the circumcision of the new generation. The word 'reproach' in the Hebrew means 'disgrace, shame, pudenda' and the root word means 'to pull off, to expose by stripping, to betroth (as if in surrender), to reproach'. Doesn't this sound like the physical act of circumcision?! When God said He was removing the reproach of Egypt, He meant that although they had come out of Egypt, Egypt had not come out of them. There was a remnant of their years under the tyranny of slavery that had not been removed by the wilderness experience. Although they had come out of Egypt, they had not fully surrendered to the Lord.

In Isaiah 25 the Word speaks about Mount Zion and the things that God will accomplish there. Verse 8 tells us that He will take away the reproach of His people from off all the earth. The Church, certainly in the western world today, carries a reproach to a large extent. We are called by the Name of Christ and yet we do not display His character or His power to any great extent. Isaiah 26:18 describes this reproach graphically;

"We have been with child, writhing and in pain but we have brought forth only wind. We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth and the inhabitants of the world are not yet born."

There is a vast harvest of souls waiting to come into the Kingdom and God is working, operating upon His Body to bring them to a place of fruitfulness. He is working on our characters so that he can transform us from Jacobs (swindler, supplanter) to Israel's (straightened of God). It is at Gilgal, the place of 'rolling away', that resurrection power is to be released upon the Church. Remember how Paul describes his desire to be conformed to the death of Jesus Christ so that he might somehow attain to the resurrection that lifts him out from among the dead , even while in the body (Amp. version). Phil 4:12 tells us that this is what Christ took hold of us for. So press on and lay hold of it!

**We are coming into a time when the reproach
of God's people is going to be taken away.**

Resurrection power is our portion on this 3rd Day. Hallelujah! In Isaiah 25:6 it tells us that on this Mount Zion, God will prepare a feast of rich things for us and will remove the veil over the nations that prevents us seeing His face clearly!

After the circumcision of our hearts there is a space of healing. For 4 days all of Israel remained in camp and restoration took place. The Lord is coming to restore His Bride. He is coming to restore the years the locust has eaten in your life. Do not fear His surgeon's knife because He wounds so that He may heal (Hosea 6:1). It is His proven promise that on the 3rd day He will raise us up to live before His face. As it happened with the Firstborn from among the dead, so shall it be in your life as you surrender to His dealings. The places you thought were dead in your heart and life will be touched by resurrection power!

On the 14th day of the first month the Israelites celebrated the Passover in the Promised Land. Josh 5:11, 12 tell us that they ate of the produce of the Promised Land that day and the next day the manna ceased. In other words, there was one day when they ate a double portion - both manna and unleavened cakes and parched grain. Beloved, the day of the

double portion is coming! The Church will taste the first fruits of their full inheritance. They are passing over into a new dispensation and it is fitting that Passover, the feast to remember the deliverance brought by the blood on the door-posts and the escape from Egypt, is celebrated at the entrance to the Promised Land. They had entered the land right on time according to God's calendar. Similarly, the proclamation of the finished work of Christ will resound again over the Church. There shall be a fresh understanding of, and reverence for, the Blood of the Slain Lamb in the days to come.

How the people of Jericho must have wondered when they watched this strange army, first being circumcised and then slaughtering thousands of lambs. What a peculiar people! Hundreds of years later the Lamb of God was slaughtered at evening on the very same day.

God's theme and intention is always the same, no matter the circumstance.

He is working in your life so that out of your experience there comes a declaration of the power of the Blood and the finished work of Christ, the Slain Lamb.

After Passover, the people celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which speaks of consecration and separation from Egypt's religion, bondage and slavery.

In the Church there is coming a fresh release of joy in worship as we realize and proclaim afresh our deliverance from bondage and our consecration to our glorious Savior. God is calling His Bride to separation from the things of the world; to live holy set-apart lives before Him.

Straight after this, the city of Jericho fell using divine strategy. The battle was the Lord's and He brought the mighty down through the obedience of a people sealed with a covenant mark. The enemy strongholds are coming down - Isaiah 25 says that on Mount Zion, God will bring down the high walls of Moab (v12). There is going to be a huge multitude released from the clutches of the enemy and brought into the Kingdom of God and Christ will see the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied!

Chapter Five

God Changes Names!

The Lord is dealing with His Church, bringing forth in her the character of Christ. In the Old Testament, the name given to a child was very important. It was chosen according to the meaning and was a description of some quality in the child or of the circumstances in which he or she was born. However there were certain occasions in which God Himself named the child because He wanted to proclaim something through that person's life. An example of this is of course Jesus, whose name means 'savior'. There were also instances when God changed people's names and this was an outward sign of a work He was doing inwardly in them.

Jacob was one such man. As soon as he had crossed the Jabbok river, he found himself alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak (Gen32:24). Are you in a place where you feel alone and God is wrestling with you? All is dark and you don't understand what is happening in your life but there is a sense of intense dealing with the Lord and the pressure is not letting up. Jacob wanted a blessing from God but before the Lord could do that, there were some issues that had to be confronted.

Jacob had to face what kind of a person he really was. When God asked him, "what is your name?" it was not because God has a bad memory. What He was really asking was, "what does your name mean? What does it tell you about yourself? What kind of a person are you?" These are hard questions to face. Jacob had lived his whole life without taking a good hard look at himself through someone else's eyes. He was so intent on getting the birthright, the blessing and anything else he could lay his hands on in terms of his inheritance that he had turned a blind eye to the ugliness of character that was developing in him along the way.

The Church, corporately and individually, has been in this place, wrestling with God, wanting a blessing. In return, the Lord, in His wisdom, has brought circumstances about in our lives where our eyes are being opened to who we really are. Pressures and trials are causing all sorts of ugly things to float to the surface in our hearts and the hardest part has been to admit that they were obviously there all along. The Lord is dealing with the pride and self-righteousness of the Church in these days. He is lifting the covers off all that is not right in His Body and allowing the light to judge it.

Jacob means 'swindler, supplanter' and this tells us what the Lord will not be tolerating in His Body any longer. Supplanting or a competitive spirit, the desire for prominence and position is not a fitting quality in

Christ's followers. Swindling, all unrighteousness concerning finance and its use in the Church will be exposed to the glaring light of His judgment. Corruption in any form will be dealt and those who has benefited from it will be removed. It is never easy to have one's faults pointed out and when it is God's searchlight on you, there really is nowhere to hide. The only place to run is to the foot of the cross, acknowledging the sin and crying out for the cleansing of the Blood. It is time for judgment to begin with the House of God because the Lord can not accomplish what He wants to through His Church until we are cleansed. Yes, the Lord does use imperfect people. Yes, His strength is perfected in our weakness; but he cannot use a people that are full of scheming, trickery, religious pride and self-righteousness.

**The wrestling with God deals with the
Pharisee inside all of us.**

Let's face it, none of us want to be whitewashed tombs, full of dead men's bones. Submit to His searchlight for your own sake.

Jacob was shocked as he pondered what kind of person he really was, but he did not let go of God. Sometimes the pain of facing the state of our hearts is so great, we wince and want to turn and run away. However, denial will never get us to the place God wants to take

us. Rather keep holding on tight because as you continue beholding Him, you will be changed from glory to glory. Revelation 2:17 says "to him who overcomes I will give to eat of the manna that is hidden, and I will give him a white stone with a new name which no-one understands except he who receives it."

The reason only you will understand this name is because you were alone wrestling with God and you are the only one who really knows what this trial brought to the surface in your heart. You understand that this new name is not because of anything wonderful in you but because God has forged it on your heart as a mark of circumcision and a sign of His dealing with your flesh. God allows the trial you are going through to do its work so that you can become perfect, lacking nothing. When you have faced yourself and seen your flaws and weaknesses, you know you deserve nothing from God. Then He is able to bring to pass His promises in your life because you will not touch the glory. You are changed, more humble, more grateful.

Before Jacob had this intense dealing and wrestling with the Lord, he was full of arrogance and confidence and didn't give a second thought to integrity. Afterwards he was more hesitant, quicker to acknowledge his own weakness and need of God. Gen

33:10 tells us that he saw God in the face of his brother instead of seeing him as someone to swindle:

' for truly to see your face is to me as if I had seen the face of God...'

Before God's dealings Jacob hated, despised, manipulated and used his brother to get what he wanted. A look in God's mirror shocked him to his senses! He became a person who was desperate to give and to bless his brother instead of take from him. The character of God had become grafted into his heart. God wants a Church who displays His character to the needy world and to one another.

God gave Jacob a prophetic new name after causing him to confront the flaws in his character. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, which comes from two Hebrew words, 'yashar' meaning 'straight' and 'El' meaning 'God' - so Israel means 'straightened of God'. God the Father wants to make the crooked places in our lives straight. We must be a Church that is willing to press in and hold on and persevere until the blessing is bestowed. This is the character of the Bride, willing only to settle for her full inheritance, the ends of the earth for His kingdom.

Gen 32:31 says that as Jacob passed Peniel, the sun rose on him. As the Church comes out of this face-to-face encounter with the Living God, the morning of the 3rd

Day will dawn and the glory of God will rise upon her. Isaiah 60:1 says, 'Arise, shine; for your light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.' There will however, be a permanent reminder of this place and it will be seen in the way we walk! Jacob had a limp from that day onward. He could no longer rush heedlessly ahead. Every step he took reminded him of his dealings with God. And so it will be for us too; our daily walk with the Lord will never be the same. The heart surgery performed will always remind us of our weakness and our need of God. We will come out of the wilderness leaning on our Beloved.

Jacob journeyed from Peniel to Succoth, which means 'dwelling or tabernacle' and alludes to the feast of tabernacles which speaks of fullness of harvest and fruitfulness. The journey is the same for us. After a face-to-face encounter with the Lord we move to a place of dwelling in His presence constantly and bringing forth much fruit. Hosea 6:2 says that on the 3rd Day He will raise us up (resurrection power) so that we may live before Him; in other words we will dwell in His presence.

God is looking for a people that He can dwell with.

He doesn't want visitation. He wants habitation. This is why we have to have this Peniel encounter with the

Lord. He wants to make His Church a fitting habitation for His glory! The Jews call Yom Kippur, 'Face to Face' because it is the time when the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies and sees God and makes atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel. The next feast that they celebrate after Yom Kippur is Tabernacles or Succoth, when God dwells in the midst of His people. So Jacob's journey is reflected in these feasts.

Isaiah 11:10 describes this Bride, the mature Son;

'it shall be in that day that the Root of Jesse will stand for a signal to the peoples; of him shall the nations enquire and His dwelling shall be glory!'

The glorious Church is the standard that the Lord is wanting to raise up in the earth, judging and ruling with righteousness and justice in the earth; He wants her to be a place that the nations can enquire from and receive truth that will set them free. God also wants them to experience His character of love and mercy through His people. The atmosphere that this Bride, the mature Son, lives in, is the tangible, manifest presence of the glory of God, an atmosphere where miracles and healing are a common occurrence.

Chapter Six

The Molds From Which We Are Made

The first two people who experienced a name-change were Abram and Sarai. They are the forefathers of our faith and there are principles to be learned from all they went through. God is a God of principle and pattern. Just as Jesus provided a pattern by being the First-born amongst many brethren, so too this couples' story holds valuable keys to understanding God's dealings in our lives. God wants to give us new names too, which will embody our refined characters and His authority.

Isaiah 51:1,2 tell us:

'look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole in the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you...'

Abram had a promise from God but for thirteen years God did not speak to him and he went through the darkest period of his life. Ishmael had been born and this had brought strife and heartache into the home. This season was the trial of Abram's faith. It was a time when he had to wrestle with doubt and face the weaknesses in his own character and choose to still believe God. James 1:2-4 tells us that the trial of faith produces endurance and patience that we may be fully

developed, lacking nothing. When the trial had worked in Abram what was necessary, God spoke to him again, confirming and expanding the explanation of the promise He had given and the conditions of the covenant between them. He also announced a change of name!

Abram's new name had a portion of God's name in it and its meaning confirmed the promise God had given him. In the same way, the new name God wants to give us will carry an expression of Christ within it. Every time someone called his name, 'Father-of-a-multitude', he would be reminded of the fulfillment of the promise. The fiery trial God had put him through had forged in his earthen vessel the character that was necessary to hold and bring to completion the promise, without stealing the glory.

Let us have a look at the change that God wrought in him. 'Abram' means 'high father' and the root of this Hebrew word means 'to exalt oneself, pride, haughty'. 'Abraham' means 'father of a multitude'. The Lord wants to bring about the same changes in us. He wants to take us from pride and idolatry through death to great fruitfulness. Why death? Because, during those thirteen years, Abram saw his natural ability to father children die a natural death. Ishmael was born as a result of Abram's fertility. It was Sarai who was barren. After Ishmael's birth, during that 13 year period, Abram just got too old. Nothing would function in that

department any more. God could only bring His promise to pass when Abram had come to the end of his natural abilities. The seed of the promise had to fall to the ground and die to produce a harvest. For resurrection power to be displayed there has to be time spent in the grave.

Some of you have recognized that that the Lord has you in a time of death. You started out strong and confident in hope but time has gone on, months and years have dragged by and it has been so dark in the coffin of buried promise that you have seen no light at the end. Hope deferred has made your heart sick and you are almost at the place of laying your dying hope in the coffin along with your promise.

Week after week you have gone to Fellowship and listened for the prophetic word, hoping to hear God say, "Lazarus, come out!" but it has not come. Just like Lazarus, you have been in the grave... Let me encourage you, if you are in the grave, you can be SURE that resurrection morning is coming. God is Light and with Him the final stage of the plan can never be darkness and death. In the beginning there was light and in the end there is light that never goes out in the New Jerusalem! God's day in Genesis begins with evening and ends with morning! What God has promised He is able also to perform. We are coming to the morning of the Third Day and even though your heart is a valley of very dry bones, the God Who does

not change is here and He will breathe the breath of life into the bones of the promise He gave you and it will rise up on its feet in resurrection power!

The Hebrew word 'dry' in the valley of bones means 'confused, withered' and this is where some of you, like Abram, have been; asking the question, "did God really say...?" This is the time when we need to do what Abram did. Hebrews 12 tells us that he did not weaken in faith when he considered the deadness of his own body, but he grew strong as he gave praise and glory to God, being FULLY persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform ! This is the key.

We have to take our eyes off the grave, the coffin, and the dry dry bones and fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author AND the Finisher of our faith.

As we contemplate His power, His faithfulness, His impeccable track-record, there will arise in our hearts a spirit of praise that will release to us strength and endurance to uphold us until the manifestation of the fulfillment of His promise comes.

"You have need of steadfast patience and endurance so that you may fully accomplish the will of God and thus receive and enjoy to the full what is promised. For still a little while

*and the Coming One is coming and will not delay.”
(Hebrews 10:36 AMP)*

God is busy changing your character, removing pride and self-sufficiency just as He did with Abram. When you come to the place where you have no more theories about how God is going to do it, then He can work a work that is super abundantly more than you could have hoped or dreamed of.

Sarai also experienced a change of character, which was signified, by her name change. Her name means 'head, ruler'. She was a domineering, headstrong person but the suffering she experienced through her barrenness, and the trauma of having Ishmael growing up in her home, changed her. Here we see another thing the God-appointed trial accomplishes in us. He takes us from being a headstrong people, ruling our own lives and getting our own way, through the death process until we become a 'Sarah' which means 'queen' so that we, as His Bride are fit to marry the King of Kings.

Sarai learnt by bitter experience that trying to engineer and prod into existence the fulfillment of God's promise did not work. It only brought her pain and heartache. We need to learn to wait for God's timing and to not try and prescribe how the Almighty must carry out His plans.

I believe there is also a prophetic message for married couples in this story. In the season that is coming on the Church God is going to use couples to bring forth His purposes in the earth. In many instances, like Abraham and Sarah, there has been no joint fruitfulness in the Kingdom. Abram was fruitful in producing Ishmael but Sarai was uninvolved. Her heart was for the Lord's work and to see His purposes accomplished but when she looked at her own life, she saw only barrenness. She could not imagine being used in the area of God's promise and believed that God really only intended to use Abraham. He was the one that God had spoken to so he must be the one God intended to use.

So she surrendered her God-given place at her husband's side to someone she thought would be effective. Her eyes were on her own lack of natural ability and not on the supernatural ability of God to equip her to bring forth His purposes. This surrendering of her God-given place and authority caused much suffering in her life; she was mocked and despised and treated without respect by the very person she had allowed to usurp her. Hagar was an Egyptian and must have brought her idols and beliefs into the home. Sarai's retreat allowed an opening for darkness to enter her home. When she complained to Abram about the treatment she was receiving, he reminded her of her place of authority and she was

required to deal with the situation herself. What she opened the door to, she had to close the door to!

Many of us as women have surrendered our place in God and our authority because of our own conclusions about our worth and ability. This has created an opening for the enemy to bring strife and suffering into our homes. This is not what God wants for us as couples. God's original mandate was for a man and a woman joined by Him to exercise dominion and steward that which He placed in their care and to bring forth fruit together. His promises concerning the areas He wants to use us in do not depend on either person's natural abilities or giftings. They are dependent on His ability and His faithfulness to bring to pass His Word in our lives.

Sarai's failing was that of not taking up her assigned place in the purposes of God because of lack of ability and feelings of failure; she failed to see that she and her husband were one. Abraham's failing was a lack of understanding that a promise of fruitfulness to him would include his wife. He seemingly also assumed that he was the man of power for the hour! It must have been confusing for him that the arrival of Ishmael brought with it strife and silence from God - a thirteen-year silence! In fact he was so certain that he was the gifted one and that his wife could only be trusted with pouring tea that when God told him He was going to use Sarai as well, Abraham laughed out loud. In fact

Gen 17:17 tells us he laughed so hard he fell on his face! He didn't dare voice it to God but he thought to himself, "this is never going to work. I'm getting on in years and Sarai has never even functioned once in this area. At least I've produced something successful...!" and he has the audacity to say to God, "why don't you rather just bless my ministry. It's already up and running. In fact, it's thirteen years old. Let Ishmael be the chosen one. You're not going to have much success using Sarai..."

Abraham seemingly suffered from a residue of spiritual pride. God had dealt with most of it during the long years of trial. Yet here he still considers himself better than his wife and doubts God's ability to use a barren woman. God was not amused. He reaffirmed His intention to use Sarah and declared that between them they would bring forth fruit that would bring joy to both of them. This would be the fulfillment of God's original promise to Abraham. The plan and purpose God had was for them as a couple. Abraham experienced God's resurrection power and Sarah, God's creative miracle-working power and as they joined together to fulfill God's purposes, the son of promise was conceived and brought forth in due season.

We all have promises from the Lord as to where He is going to use us but in this season we are going to receive fresh revelation as to exactly what He was

meaning when He gave the promise. Some of us husbands are going to have to do a rethink concerning the parameters of God's plans for us. We may have successful ministries or areas we are being used in that do not involve our wives. They may not be involved in any visible way for the Kingdom. They are perhaps taken up with running households just as Sarai was. There may have been no outward sign of gifting seen in them. Yet, God has had them in a season of intense preparation. He has been working on the hearts and characters of His Sarai's. They have been through much private suffering and heartache in which they have allowed the Lord to work and change them. At times it has seemed as if the suffering season would never come to an end and that they have been declared unusable by the Lord but these are just the whispers of the enemy, the father of lies. God's word to His Sarai's today is that they will indeed be fruitful and that He has come to lift them up. It is time to become His princesses (Sarah). He will bless them and make them mothers of nations. Many people will come into the kingdom through their lives and ministries. God is coming to join couples together in a fresh spiritual intimacy and out of this joining together a joint ministry will be birthed that will affect the nations of the world.

God's word to husbands right now is this:" it's time to re-evaluate. The God of Covenant is calling you back to the covenant of your marriage. I have not only a

physical purpose for it in producing children but a spiritual purpose for it. Change your mindsets about your wife. She is no longer your Sarai but I am making her to be My Sarah, one who will conceive and bring forth the fruit of the promise I gave you. You will not fulfill my purposes alone but together even as in the beginning when I declared, ' be fruitful, multiply and have dominion' so together you will go forth and display My power in the earth.'

Of course Abraham and Sarah had different facets to contribute to the success of their joint ministry. He provided the sperm and she, the egg and the warm safe womb in which it could grow. Both were vitally important, neither being viable alone. I sense the Lord wanting to emphasize that there needs to be a return to an understanding of the value of what each partner has to contribute to the success of the Kingdom ventures; an honoring and appreciation of the expression of Christ in one another and how each part has need of the other.

This does not mean that any previously existing ministry will cease. God said that he would bless Ishmael and multiply him. However, there came a time when Abraham had to separate from Ishmael for the sake of the son of promise. When Isaac had grown out of infancy, then it was time to make a choice as to which son would be nurtured. In the same way, there will come a time when one ministry will have to make

way for the growth to maturity of the ministry God has chosen for you as a couple to steward. He will confirm it by His word; your future is in stewarding the fruit of your being as one before Him. This is because your marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church and God's pattern is that true fruitfulness comes only out of intimacy between a bride and a groom.

As we come closer and closer to the return of Jesus for His spotless Bride, so God wants to shout the message louder and louder, or paint the picture bolder and brighter. He wants the world to get an understanding of the love-relationship between the Church and Christ, and how, out of oneness, fruitfulness comes. So He is pouring His restoring, healing power into Christian marriages to lift them up to the place of their original purpose.

Our marriages are an advertisement for the coming main attraction.

Just as in the secular entertainment industry, when a blockbuster feature film is due to be released, it is preceded by a steadily increasing barrage of advertising, actor interviews and daily exposure in media; so the message of the soon coming Bridegroom and the marriage supper of the Lamb is sounding forth in increasing intensity in the earth. The Father does not

want anyone on earth to be able to say, "I never had an opportunity to receive an invitation". What a high and holy calling we have as married couples, being walking advertisements of the soon-coming marriage of the Lamb.

Adam and Eve walked together with God in the cool of the day and it is vital for couples in these days to seek the Lord's face together. The time has come to be naked and unashamed spiritually with one another again. It is time to deal with the fig-leaves, whatever they represent to you, perhaps bitterness, insecurity, spiritual pride or shame; so that we can together reach the fullness of God's highest purposes for our lives. It is a tragic waste of the resources God has hidden in both of us to settle for anything less.

Now is not the time for individualism and a competitive spirit in the Body of Christ. The Bible says two are better than one. In Christ there is neither male nor female but we are one, joint heirs in Him. So let us surrender our own plans and the narrow understanding of His purposes that we have held dear and allow Him to blend our single songs into a powerful duet of praise to the glory of His grace. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us, in ever-increasing measure, His intention in bringing us together as one flesh before Him.

Chapter Seven

The First and Last Couple in History

Let's spend a bit more time studying the first couple God made and the lessons we can learn from their lives. Adam was the first man created in the image of God. Christ was known as the last Adam. He came to fix what the first Adam ruined and to restore us to fellowship with our Father God.

Eve was the first woman, taken out of Adam's side. She was deceived, Adam ate too and the fall of man followed. The Bride of Christ, the Church, is intended to be the last Eve.

Where the first Eve failed, the Church should succeed.

Let's look a little deeper into this...

The first Adam disobeyed God's personal instruction, did not protect his wife from the enemy and did not take responsibility for his sin but tried to blame his wife. Jesus, our Bridegroom, in contrast, took the sin of His Bride on His own shoulders, suffered her punishment and dealt effectively with the enemy so that as she sheltered in Him, she would be safe from His lies. It is almost like playing a videotape and then watching it rewind so that everything happens

backwards. All of history is the account of mans' journey back to the Garden of Eden and to face-to-face relationship with God once more.

The first Eve listens to the serpent's insinuations and allowed them to cast doubt in her mind as to the truth of God's spoken Word. Satan tells her that disobeying the word of God will not bring her harm but will in fact be beneficial as she will become like God. She meditates on the words of the enemy instead of on the Word of God and looks at the tree with her natural eyes. It looks attractive and, coupling this with the thought sown by the enemy that eating its fruit will bring great benefits, she acts, eats and shares her experience with her husband. Notice that the carrot satan dangles before her is that she will become like God; which is his own personal desire and the very reason he was thrown out of heaven. The root emotion driving this desire is jealousy; not being satisfied with your God-given gifts, position and calling but craving the position, authority and power of one superior to you.

Adam gave Eve her name after God had disciplined them for their sin. 'Eve' means 'life-spring' which is ironic considering her actions led to the beginning of death for humankind. However Adam was prophesying over his wife and ultimately over the Church who, as the last Eve, is intended by God to be a company from which life springs forth to touch a dying

world. Many lessons can be learnt from Eve's behavior about how the Bride of Christ, the last Eve is meant to conduct herself in the earth. Remembering that the last Adam undid or reversed all that the first Adam had done, the last Eve will do the same. This Bride of the Son of God will not listen to the words of the enemy or meditate upon them. She will stand upon the truth of the Word of God and pull down vain imaginations and every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Psalm 1 tells us that her delight will be in the law of the Lord and on this law she will meditate day and night. The law of God will not be seen as a burdensome thing, intended to prevent her from experiencing pleasure, as the first Eve saw it. The Bride of Christ will understand that God's laws are in place for her protection and will not willfully transgress them.

The other thing this prophetic Bridal Company will do is they will not walk by sight but by faith. The first Eve's eyes caused her to stumble but the last Eve will not judge by the sight of her eyes or feed her flesh. She will sow to the Spirit and from the Spirit reap life eternal. Like her Bridegroom in His time on earth, she will only do that which she sees her Father doing and her food will be to do the will of Him who sent her and to complete it! She will have her eyes fixed on things above and not on earthly things and because she is looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of her faith, she will not be tempted to partake of forbidden

fruit or the pleasures of sin for a season. Her aim will be to please the One Who enlisted her and as a vessel set apart for holy use she will shrink from anything that wants to draw her away from wholehearted devotion to Christ.

A hallmark of this Bride will be her humility and servant-heart.

She will not covet position or the applause of men and will not think of herself more highly than she ought. Each member of this bridal company will embrace their own calling and gifting and allow themselves to be built into a spiritual house with each joint supplying, considering others better than themselves. The wisdom of God spoken of in James 3 will be seen in operation. It will be pure, peace loving, courteous, considerate, gentle, full of compassion, impartial and unfeigned. What a contrast this is to the earthly wisdom described in verse 14 of this chapter. This is marked by bitter jealousy and contention and selfish ambition; the kind of wisdom displayed in the Garden of Eden.

It is very interesting to note that Adam's bride was formed from his body, the rib, which is close to his heart. Because this is God's original established pattern, it follows that Christ's Bride will also come out of His Body. It will not be the whole body that will constitute the Bride but the part closest to His heart, those who

have pressed in to hear His heartbeat, who have no desire to be seen but long only for intimacy and closeness with the heart of God and have chosen this as their dwelling place, not as the place of casual visitation! While the rest of the Body slumbers, God fashions and builds the Eve Company and then reunites her with the Body, who embraces her as being of the same origin as itself! How this encourages us to heed the call of the Spirit to come away with Him to the secret place where we can commune heart to heart with our Beloved and be built and prepared as the Bride.

Chapter Eight

Sons of God

In Luke 3 we read of John the Baptist preaching and baptizing at the river Jordan and in verse 15 being asked if he was the Messiah. John's answer was that after him, One would come baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He called for people to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. John was the one who came in the spirit of Elijah before the Lord came.

Once again this spirit of Elijah will visit the established church to prepare it for the coming of the Lord. Just as John's preaching of repentance came before Jesus, I see that in the church there has to come a baptism of repentance before there will be a revealing of the Sons of God. Just as John was not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals, so there is coming the revealing of a group of people of which those we presently call prophets, are a mere shadow and forerunner. The level of anointing and authority will be like comparing John and Jesus. John did no great works but we are intended to do the works Jesus did and greater!

This body of people have been prepared in secret, away from the public eye, just like Jesus, whom we hear nothing of from the time he was twelve until the time of His revealing at the Jordan. All it says is that He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God

and man. It was a time of private training and measuring and then came the time of revealing and the seal of God's approval -"this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". The present prophetic company is only the 'best man' who has to make way for the Bridegroom company. There will be those on whom the Spirit descends and remains and by this we will know that they are the sons of God.

Concerning the baptism of repentance, this shall be a true heart repentance which shall bring forth fruit in keeping with the heart change, unlike much of the so-called repentance that has characterized the church in the past, mere lip-service ritually performed to get to the desired times of refreshing .As we read in Luke 3, true repentance will bring a change in behavior which will bear fruit and display the character of Christ to the world. Following this true repentance will come a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church and a work of the fire of God, all of which will prepare the Bride for her coming Bridegroom. We see this also in Revelation 3 where the Spirit calls the Laodicean church to true repentance and recognition of their state. It is because of His great love for His Bride that the Lord tells her her faults, in order to bring her to repentance that she may not be found naked when He comes.

Luke 3:17 says that this visitation of the Lord to His church will be with a winnowing fork to cleanse His

threshing floor and to separate the wheat from the chaff. It is the chaff that will be burned with fire. The chaff is the grain husk, the outer covering of the wheat grain.

**Jesus is bringing His fire to deal with the
outer covering in our lives.**

Just as the body is the 'outer husk' containing the spirit, so the Lord desires to burn off that which is of flesh in our lives so that the true grain can be stored in His granary. What for? - To provide food in time of famine, just as in the days of Joseph. Judgment is beginning with the house of God and just as in Luke 3:8 when the Pharisees could not use their family connections to declare their acceptance by God, so we, as believers, will not be able to say, "I'm saved, I'm a child of God" but continue to tolerate areas of sin in our lives. God is calling the Bride of His Son to walk and live a life worthy of the calling she has received. There will be those, like Herod, who refuse the calls to repentance and attempt to silence the prophetic voice by using their authority to imprison it but the judgment of God shall come upon them.

We must allow the fire of the Lord to have its way in our lives because this is the day of the Lord spoken of in Malachi 3:3 when He comes as a refiner to purify the sons of Levi that they may offer to Him offerings in

righteousness. There is an awesome parallel between the same verse numbers in these chapters of Malachi, Luke and Revelation. Compare Malachi 3:3, Luke 3:3 and Rev 3:3 all of which speak of repentance; then verse 5 in each chapter which speak of judgment and its results. This shows us that Christ is consistent as the One who was (old testament), is (new testament) and is to come (Revelation).

Mal 3:3 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.

Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Mal 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, says the LORD of hosts.

Luk 3:5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

Rev 3:5 He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Let us look into the location at which this baptism of repentance was taking place. John 1:28 tells us that John was baptizing in the Jordan at Bethany. The word 'Jordan' means 'to bring down, to cast down, to subdue'. So we are given an understanding that as we go through this time of repentance and cleansing, there will be a delivering that takes place in our lives. Areas where there have been strongholds of the enemy will be liberated and principalities that have ruled in our families will be cast down and subdued as we cooperate with the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. This will bring about a liberty and joy that will be the strength of the Church in the days ahead. There will be a taking back from the hands of the enemy all that is our rightful inheritance and land in our lives that has gone into captivity due to sin shall be restored to us.

**The land of our lives shall truly become holy
ground**

That which is unclean shall no longer be found there. The word 'Bethany' according to Strong's, means 'house of dates' which in itself does not seem to speak of anything in particular, until we remember that when David brought the ark of the covenant back into Jerusalem (1 Chron 16:3), he gave everyone a date-cake, a loaf of bread and a raisin-cake or flagon of wine, depending on the translation.

This Hebrew word translated date-cake is only used twice in the Word and actually means 'a measured portion, a good piece'. So what is this date-cake a type or shadow of? Is this not what Mary chose, the good portion, when she sat at Jesus' feet and received a continual revelation of who He was? The good portion is abiding in His presence, before His face which is where Hosea 6:2 tells us we will be found living after we have returned to the Lord in repentance. To confirm this, Bethany, 'the house of dates', was where Mary lived, and she received the Lord's seal of approval when he said, "she has chosen the good portion and it will not be taken from her". Sadly, there will those, like Martha, who will continue to do works for the Lord in preference to developing an intimate relationship with their Bridegroom.

What was David doing when he brought the ark back to Jerusalem? He was restoring the manifest presence of God to the church. Its restoration was preceded by extravagant worship and dancing. As we enter into

deeper and deeper levels of worship, joining the company around the Throne and gazing upon the Lamb, there will be an accompanying release of three things to EVERY man and woman just as in the case of David, who gave three gifts to every man, woman and child.

The loaf of bread speaks of a portion of revelation of the Living Bread, Jesus.

As mentioned previously, the word 'date-cake' means 'a measured portion, a good piece'; referring to a measure of anointing given according to the measure of choosing the good portion of the knowledge of Him (remember Mary).

The word 'raisin-cake' in Hebrew speaks of a strong foundation formed after fire. The process of passing through the Refiners fire will cause a strong foundation to be formed in each of us who submits to the Spirit's dealings. There shall not be those who remain untouched and hungry on the sides of this move of God. It shall be for all who will come, all who are hungry. Alternatively, this word is translated 'a flagon of wine' which speaks of a measure of revelation received and carried in a vessel because Jesus has turned the water of the Word into wine so that it may be served to the thirsty on the 3rd day. The measure of study we give to the Word and the amount of the

Word that we hide in our hearts will determine the amount of wine we are able to hold!

There is another Hebrew word which also means 'an assigned portion' and this is 'Timnath'. We find a widowed Tamar ('palm-tree' - a type of the church) sitting at Enaim ('double fountain') on the way to Timnath ('measured portion') in Genesis 38. This is a picture of much of the church at this time, widowed so to speak, living with memories of times with her husband but no manifest presence. But praise God, His anointing is for those who mourn in Zion (Isaiah 61:3), to give them joy for mourning, because their beloved Lord's presence is with them once more - remember David and the ark of God?! Yes, the manifest presence of God is coming back into the church and we will receive double what we have forfeited (Enaim) and everlasting joy shall be ours (Isaiah 61:7). Read Isaiah 62, for it speaks of the Lord's passion for His church and Bride that she shall be called a holy people, in whom He delights.

There is another mention of this Timnath in Joshua 19:50. It says that Joshua asked to live at Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. Timnath-serah means 'a measured portion of shining'. This was Joshua's desire - to live in the glory, and this is where his bones were buried. Should this not be our desire - to dwell before His face, in the presence of His glory like Mary of Bethany? This *is* the good portion and Joshua was

given an anointing in proportion to his desire, an anointing to take the Promised Land. This was his 'date-cake'.

The good news is this - the anointing that Joshua had is still available to the church.

Your assigned portion of the Joshua anointing is waiting for you.

His mantle is still available to be picked up. Joshua was a type of Jesus and if it is your desire to dwell in the glory of God, this power to possess your inheritance and subdue the enemy is available to you. Where will you find it? Joshua 24:30 tells us where Joshua was buried. It gives us a detailed map to find the treasure:

"They buried him at the edge of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash."

Gaash means 'quaking, to shake violently'. So as we continue on our spiritual journey towards the city of the great King (which is in a northerly direction, on the sides of the north), according to the treasure map, once past the hill of Gaash, once we are past the great shaking (until that which cannot be shaken in our lives remains) there is an allotted double portion (Ephraim means double portion) of the Joshua anointing waiting for us, that we may go up and possess fully our

inheritance. It will be the Joshua generation that will dwell in His presence, before His face at Timnath-serah but this is not only for the young people. Every man and woman received a portion.

So, Beloved, let us set our hearts towards the joy set before us, knowing that the baptism of repentance must first come before the sons of God can be revealed and let us allow the Holy Spirit to separate us from the chaff in our lives, for the winnowing and shaking must come before the Lord can deposit His Joshua anointing into clean and holy vessels. I do not see this cleansing work of the Spirit as a mass public move but rather a hidden work of conviction - and as we experience situations which place us under extreme pressure, our eyes will be opened to see our fleshly sinful reactions. Then let us bring them before the Lord in repentance. Death must be at work in us so that the resurrection life of God may come forth in these earthen vessels.

Earthen vessels must pass through fire before they can hold any liquid and dispense it.

Let the Master Potter do his work so that we are able to hold His glory.

The Lord impressed strongly on me that psalm 84 in its entirety would sustain us in the time ahead. Yes, we will pass through the valley of weeping and make it a place of springs; we will go from strength to strength

until each of us appears before God in Zion. O Lord,
blessed is the man who trusts in You.

Chapter Nine

Restoring His Presence

As we have said, for a long time, the Church has been like a widow woman; someone who has memories of the company of her husband but who no longer experiences his presence. The time has come for the manifestation of God's presence amongst us again. The Bride must know once again the presence and touch of her Bridegroom.

As discussed previously, David was the man God chose to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. It had been taken captive by the Philistines and David wanted to restore it to its rightful place, in the midst of the people of God. Because the ark carried the presence of God, without it the people of Israel had no victory against their enemies. So the restoration of the ark to Jerusalem in David's time, is a picture of the presence of God being restored to the Church and there are lessons we must learn from the way David went about it.

There is a word going out over the Church in these days. It comes from Isaiah 40:3 and is the cry of John the Baptist as he preceded the coming of Jesus.

'prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'

Again in Isaiah 62:10 there is a call to preparation for the visit of the Lord of Glory:

'go through the gates; prepare the way of the people, cast up the highway, gather out the stones; lift up a standard over the peoples...say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, He comes'

There is a right way to prepare for the coming of God's presence.

We pray so earnestly and yet so glibly for the Lord to manifest himself in our midst once more, but sometimes we do not realize the awesome power of God's presence and the effect it will have. In Malachi 3 this whole scenario is described very graphically:

'Behold I send My messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, Whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the Covenant whom you desire, behold, He shall come, says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like the refiners fire and the fullers' soap...'

David learned the hard way that inadequate preparation and leaning on one's own understanding can bring disastrous results. He was so zealous to return the ark to Jerusalem that when he planned the return trip he did not consult God as to how it should be done. To his way of thinking, he was going to pull

out all the stops and use something completely new, a cart straight out of the box so to speak, to carry the ark. There is a danger in using new methods for new method's sake in the Church. God has prescribed patterns which we need to conform to if we desire to see Him come back to His Church. It is no good trying men's good ideas; what works are God's ideas and blueprints.

So merrily along the road they went, rejoicing, and Uzzah and his brother drove the cart. Uzzah means 'strength'. It was the strength of man driving the cart - but God says in His word that it is not by might nor by power but by His spirit that success comes. Men's ideas driven by men's strength to try to bring back the presence of God to the Church are doomed to fail. 1 Chronicles 13:9 says that things were not going as smoothly as expected and the oxen were very restive and stumbled. The place where this happened was called the threshing floor of Chidon. 'Chidon' means 'calamity or destruction'. The Hebrew word used to describe Uzzah's attempt to hold the ark steady carries in it the idea of seizing for one's own possession. This seems to suggest that Uzzah's motives were not purely to prevent the ark being damaged but in some way his action was to ensure that he received some of the glory. Verse 10 tells us that God was very angry with him because he touched the ark and struck him dead. This is not the scenario of a parent smacking a child's hand because he touched an ornament but rather God's

judgment of a man who dared to touch God's glory and attempt to possess it for selfish purposes.

This threshing floor is a place where God sifts the intents and purposes of the heart, separating the pure of heart from the impure. The oxen are a picture of the burden-bearers in the Church; those who bear the weight of carrying out the leader's vision and strategy. When the plan is not of God, they will stumble under the weight and be restless and uncomfortable under the yoke.

David was angry and named the place Perez-Uzzah because it was where God broke forth in judgment upon Uzzah. All fleshly attempts to summon up the presence of God will end at this place, the threshing-floor of destruction. God will divinely deal with the attempts of man to guide the movement of God in the strength of his own understanding. This will restore the fear or reverence of God to Church leadership. They will come to understand that it is the God of all heaven they are dealing with and not a mere man and begin to question how a man that is flesh can usher in the presence of Almighty God. There will be a seeking of the Lord's face for guidance and direction and the clever plans of man will be put aside.

David, feeling totally rebuked, put the ark in the house of Obed-edom for three months. He understood why the disaster had happened, as he told the Levites;

"because you bore the ark not as God directed at the first, the Lord our God broke forth upon us, because we did not seek Him in the way He ordained." (1 Chron 15:13) Then he went back to God's Word and studied the instructions given to Moses on how the ark was to be carried.

Obed-edom means 'bond slave' and he was a gatekeeper for the ark; someone responsible for opening the door for the presence of the Lord to enter a place. It will be those who are bond-slaves to Jesus Christ who will open the door for the manifest presence of God to return to the Church. Only holy, set-apart vessels, who have prepared their hearts for this purpose, will do.

The presence of God will be in their house or vessel!

God had ordained that the ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the priests and before doing this they were required to sanctify themselves. Once they had done so and put on their linen garments, the ark returned to Jerusalem, preceded by a company of singers, dancers and musicians. Extravagant worship in spirit and in truth will be seen as the ark returns to the Body of Christ. The manifest presence of God will be brought back into the Church through the sanctified lives of those believer-priests who have set themselves

apart for holy purposes. The linen garments they wore speak of their righteous deeds and lifestyles. Therefore, as we hear the sound of the trumpet in the Spirit announcing the coming of the Lord to His Church there is a holy urgency to prepare our hearts, sanctify ourselves and allow the Lord to cleanse us of all that would disqualify us as vessels worthy of bearing His glory.

We must recognize and accept the personal responsibility we bear as believer-priests in bringing the glorious presence of God back to the Church. It is not good enough to think it is someone else's responsibility, perhaps the intercessors or the elders. It is YOUR commissioning from the Lord and mine to sanctify ourselves for this task. It is upon our shoulders (the area that speaks of authority and upon which the mantle of our giftings rests) that God has chosen to carry the ark of His presence back into the Church. What a sobering and awesome responsibility.

As Peter says in 2 Cor 7:1

'Therefore, since these great promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring our consecration to completeness in the fear of God.'

As we prepare for His presence, let us go back to Isaiah 62:10 in order to help us find out what this preparation

entails. We are told to cast up the highway. In Hebrew, this phrase carries with it the idea of a turnpike. In other words, this is a doorway where people go through single-file! There will be no mass preparation for a visitation of God's presence or just preparation by the pastor for the congregation, but rather each individual going before the Lord and allowing Him to search the depths of our hearts. As David put it in psalm 139:23

'search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

We need to have clean hands and a pure heart to dwell in the Lord's presence. No-one else can do this preparation for us. We stand before God as individuals. Each priest who carried the ark was required to sanctify himself.

Isaiah 62:10 also speaks of removing the stones. The Hebrew word for 'stumbling block' means 'an enticement, an idol'. We have to let go of everything in our lives that would entice us away from pure devotion to Christ. Many times in the Old Testament the Lord contended with Israel about their idolatry. An idol is anything in your life that occupies the place in your heart devoted to Christ. A good measuring rod of the priority things occupy in our hearts is the amount of time and attention we spend on them. It could be

your career, your garden, your children, the television, computer, money or any number of other enticements that draw you away from giving to God what is rightfully His; your whole heart. One thing I have noticed; if one 'touches' a person's idol in any way, there will be a violent reaction.

**Harlotry and idolatry are very closely linked
in God's eyes.**

Hosea 4:12 says:

'My people ask counsel of their idols. For the spirit of harlotry has led them astray.'

When we make anything else in our lives a 'god' then we begin to commit spiritual adultery. Verse 11 of Hosea 4 explains that this will rob us of spiritual understanding and affect our hearts and minds. James speaks very forthrightly when He says that we are like unfaithful wives having love-affairs with the world. Church of God, we need to ask God to give us salve for our eyes so that we can begin to see our spiritual state the way God sees it and ask Him to cleanse and set us free from all idolatry. Paul puts it so beautifully in Hebrews 12:1

'let us strip off and throw aside every weight and the sin that so readily entangles us and run with patient endurance the

race set before us; looking away from all that would distract to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.'

Once these stones are moved out of our way, the highway is prepared in our heart for the Lord to come. Psalm 84:5 tells us that the highway to Zion is in our hearts. So let us ask the Lord to reveal to us any hindrances in our hearts and then ask Him to grant the necessary grace to deal with them effectively. In the Old Testament, idol-altars were completely torn down. Not one stone was left upon another and they were burned with fire. So there was no further opportunity to offer sacrifices upon that altar. In the same way, we need to pull down vain imaginations and every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God until we have undivided hearts, wholly set-apart for the worship of the Lord our God.

Chapter Ten

Gatekeepers of the Presence of God

David appointed four men to be gatekeepers for the ark of God. It was their responsibility to open the door so that the ark carrying the presence of God could enter. Their names were Obed-edom, Jehiah, Berechiah and Elkanah. The Bible teaches that our bodies are the temple of the Lord and we also have gates to our temples. A gate allows people or things to enter and leave a building and God has designed our eyes and ears to be the primary way that access is gained to our temples. The other senses; taste, touch and smell also provide an entrance for information or input that will affect our temple and what it contains. If we desire for our temples to contain the glory of God then it is important that we have trustworthy gatekeepers, the same kind that David entrusted with the task of ushering in the presence of the Lord. Let us look a little more in depth at these gatekeepers and the meanings of their names.

Obed-edom means 'bond-slave'

Jehiah means 'to restore to life, to be whole'

Berechiah means 'to kneel as an act of adoration'

Elkanah means 'God owns or possesses'.

These four things must be in place to open the way for the manifest presence of God in our lives and for us to be able to bring it into the lives of others.

A bond-slave was one who had been set free but had chosen to serve his master for life of his own free will. They would then pierce his ear as an outward sign that he was a bond-slave.

**The Lord is wanting our ear-gates to be set
apart to serve Him alone.**

He is wanting to place a mark of ownership upon our ears so that we would truly be sheep that hear His voice and do not follow the voice of a stranger. Unfortunately, what has happened in some cases is that we have lent our ears to the whisper of the enemy. We have listened to gossip, filthy jokes, doctrines of demons, seductive spirits and other unclean things and all these are broadcasts of Hell's radio station. By not refusing this input and quenching the convicting voice of the Holy Spirit, we have given the enemy permission over the years to set up a folding chair at this gate in our lives and we wonder why we struggle to hear God speak above the interference of the accuser of the brethren.

The gate of a city was a place of authority and rule, where legal matters were decided and the elders of the city sat. Only those who had been given authority to do

so were allowed to take up their seats at the gates. In the same way, only those who you have given authority to are legally allowed to take up their seats and rule at the spiritual gates in your life. We give authority to the enemy when we live in disobedience to the Truth revealed in the Word of God, when we knowingly indulge in activities which He has forbidden, when there is unconfessed sin or our lifestyles do not fit that of a believer-priest, set-apart for His pleasure alone. This gives demonic powers legal access to territory at our gates and the only way to get rid of a legal document like this is to avail yourself of the more powerful legal document written at Calvary which states that the Blood of Jesus paid once and for all in full for the remission of this sin. The Lord requires us to confess our sin so that the voice of our Divine Advocate can ring out in the legal courts of Heaven and declare us forgiven and cleansed. Once sin is dealt with, the legal document that satan holds is nullified and his seat at the gate is overturned and restored to its rightful owner, the Lord Jesus. It is at this point that authority given by God over principalities and powers and all the works of the evil one, can be exercised and they have to leave.

There is debate going on in the gates of our lives at the moment as to whether the King of Glory has a right to come in. Psalm 24 speaks of this:

'Who shall go to the mountain of the Lord? Who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart....'

We are all prophetically standing in the place that Joshua the high priest finds himself in Zechariah 3; before the throne of God and Satan is at our right hand to accuse us. He knows all the details of our sin and failings and if justice has its way, then we are declared guilty as charged. But hear the voice of the Blood as it speaks in Zech 3:2

"The Lord rebuke you, satan, even the Lord who now chooses Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

He commands that Joshua's filthy garments be taken away and that He be clothed in rich apparel. It is said that if he is faithful, he will have a permanent place before the throne. In just the same way, even though our lives are not as they should be, our Bridegroom speaks for us in the gates. He is our Kinsman-redeemer and as we serve notice on the princes and gatekeepers of our lives and sever our alliances with them and flee to the protection of our Bridegroom, He will execute judgment on the powers of darkness that have bound and harassed us.

Psalm 24:7 says, "lift up your heads, o ye gates... that the King of Glory may come in....who is the King of

Glory, the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle". The words 'lift up your heads, o ye gates' can also be translated, 'yield, you princes at the gates'. So we see that an overthrowing and an execution of judgment on principalities and powers that have influence in our lives takes place. As we come in repentance, claiming only the Blood as our defense and serve notice on the squatters we've allowed in our territory, the battle cry of the Bridegroom is sounded and the day of His vengeance will be seen.

In Psalm 24, the other thing that is commanded to be lifted up is the 'everlasting doors'. What can this possibly refer to? Well, the Hebrew word for 'everlasting' also means 'concealed' and comes from the root word meaning 'to veil from sight, secret thing'. So there are things in our lives which are veiled and hidden purposely by the enemy so that we do not know to deal with them. The word for 'door' comes from a root meaning 'to loosen, to let go free, to break forth'. So when we pray, "be lifted up, ye everlasting doors!", we are really crying out for the hidden areas of bondage in our lives to yield and be loosed; those things that up to now have prevented the Lord's working in our lives must be loosed so that the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts may have His way in us.

As we cleanse our temples, just as Jesus did when He came into Jerusalem and threw out the money-changers and their cronies, we are dedicating the

whole temple back to holy purposes. We can see a practical example of this principle when the Israelites took over a city in Amalekite territory. Its name was En-mishpat; which means ' fountain of judgment '. Once the enemy had been subdued and routed, the name of the city was changed to Kadesh, which means ' holy place, consecrated, set-apart '. The whole character of the place was changed from a place under the judgment of God to one which was dedicated to His glory.

The other set of gates the Lord wants to deal with are our eyes. The Word teaches that if the eye is sound, the whole body is full of light. This word 'sound' means 'clear, unclouded' and so obviously there are things which can cloud our vision. This whole discussion in Matthew 6 is followed immediately by teaching on covetousness and the love of money. The eye is the part which guides and gives direction to the body. We will move towards that which our eye is fixed on. If it is fixed on earthly things and we allow the lust of the eyes to rule us , we will never come into all that God has prepared for us. All forms of idolatry involve our eyes, as do all forms of sexual sin whether they only involve our thought lives, or our bodies as well. All pornography is designed to control people by gaining entrance through the eye-gates. The standard diet in much of what is offered as entertainment by the media consists of depictions of immorality and sexual sin and uncleanness. Yet many of God's people have allowed

their eyes to rest upon these things habitually. God designed our eyes to be gates that allowed entrance to good and clean and inspiring things, that which would cause us to bow down and worship and glorify God for His greatness. Sadly, to a large extent we have come to a place where we no longer flinch at the sight of nudity or depictions of sex. Our consciences are so numbed because of the continual bombardment against godly values that we no longer call evil what the Lord calls evil. God never intended for physical intimacy to be entered into before the eyes of others but in the inner chamber before the eyes of God only. Why are we no longer convicted about looking upon that which is sacred and holy unto the Lord?

God wants our eye to be single, focused on His kingdom and righteousness and because the focus of our eyes is largely linked with our thought life, dedicating our eye-gates back to godly purposes will help us considerably in gaining victory in our minds. Let your eyes see the Word of God and the beauty of His creation and meditate on these things. Isaiah 33:15 describes a man who stops his ears from the hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes to avoid looking upon evil and the results of this lifestyle are that:

such a man will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him, water for him will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty...'

A life of holiness really means being set-apart as a vessel for God's purposes and not being involved in that which is unclean in any way. This does not mean that we have no contact with sinners, but it does mean that we are not trying to witness to them when we are under the same bondages they are. Some Christian men are tormented by lust even when trying to serve the Lord and this is largely because of undealt-with areas concerning the things they have allowed their eyes to look upon in the past which have given spirits of lust authority to set up their thrones at the eye-gates of these men. True repentance will open the way for these unclean spirits to be sent packing.

**Yield, you princes at the gates, so that the
King of Glory may come in!**

We want to, like Isaiah, see the Lord, high and lifted up and His train filling the temple. Our eyes are also the gates through which information comes; because of this, they cause us to pass judgments upon others. Often these judgments are not verbalized but our hearts become full of critical assessments of others. We need to heed the Word of God which tells us not to judge or we will be judged in the same measure as we hand out to others. Romans 2:5 says that we are storing up judgment for ourselves when we judge others for the very things which are in our own hearts. Let us repent of operating in a critical spirit, which is the

counterfeit of the spirit of discernment and serve that spirit notice that it is no longer welcome to sit at our eye gates. In the Kingdom of God measurement and judgment is not done in the same way as in the world. We see an example of this when Samuel went to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king of Israel. He chose according to outward appearance, the tallest or the oldest but the Lord corrected him and laid down His standard for judgment which was according to the heart of the person.

When people in the Kingdom use their eyes to assess and pass judgment on situations, great errors are often made. Saul was a king chosen by the people (1 Sam 12:13) and by outward appearance he seemed to be ideal. He was extremely handsome and a head taller than any of the people; yet the record shows that his character was flawed, he was a people-pleaser who dabbled in the occult and in the end the Lord rejected him. God chooses those who are circumcised in their hearts, not according to what is seen with the natural eye.

The third sense through which we allow entrance to our temples is the sense of touch. The Hebrew word for 'touch' brings clarity as to what the Lord wants to deal with here because it means, ' to lay the hand upon, to lie with a woman, to beat'. The Greek word for touch means ' to attach oneself to '. It seems the Lord wants to address soul-ties and the area of intimacy here.

Whenever a man lies with a woman, he becomes one with her and a bond is formed in the soul area which endures after the relationship is over, unless it is deliberately and specifically broken by prayer. God originally intended for this bond to be formed as part of a godly union within marriage to one partner for a lifetime. Unfortunately, promiscuity before or after salvation means that a person becomes bound in the spiritual realm to every person he or she has been intimate with. A bond can even be formed through a strong emotional involvement without sexual intercourse taking place. There is a yoking that takes place which prevents the person from fully receiving the yoke which Jesus wants us to carry (which is easy and light). It will also prevent true intimacy taking place in a Christian marriage if there are unbroken soul-ties and allegiances to past relationships.

If we desire to have the Lord touch others through our lives, then we need to repent of unclean associations and every yoking of darkness with light so that we may honor God through our bodies. All through the gospels there are records of people pressing in to touch Jesus. May our touch bring the touch of Jesus to a broken and searching world.

In the human body the sense of smell is linked to the sense of taste. If a person has no sense of smell then they have a much reduced ability to differentiate between different flavors. In the spiritual realm, these

two senses are also linked and God has designed us in such a way that our primary ability to discern is rooted in these two senses, taste and smell. This is why it says in psalm 34:8; 'taste and SEE that the Lord is good'. Our ability to 'see' in the spirit or use our spiritual eyes is connected to our spiritual taste buds! The Hebrew word for 'taste' means ' to taste, perceive; by implication intelligence, discretion, judgment, understanding'.

Taste speaks of an experiential encounter with God. The first time it is mentioned in the Bible is when the Israelites were in the wilderness and God provided manna for them to eat. Numbers 11:8 tells us that the manna tasted like fresh oil. However, these people scorned God's provision and longed for the food of Egypt. They wept and reminisced over the taste of all that Egypt had to offer. Fellowship with Jesus, the Word of God, is laid out for us each morning like manna for us to gather and every time we scorn this provision and long for that which the world fed us with; vain entertainments that feed the flesh but are of no benefit to the spirit, then it angers the Lord. He allowed Israel to eat the meat they craved but it brought death. Numbers 11:34 says:

'the place was called Kibroth-hattaavah (the graves of sensuous desire) because there they buried the people who lusted, whose physical appetite caused them to sin.'

Hosea 4:11 puts it like this:

'harlotry, wine and new wine take away the heart and the mind and spiritual understanding.'

In the New Testament, the Lord cautions us that those who sow to the flesh will reap corruption, but if we sow to the spirit we will reap eternal life. The manna tasted like fresh oil, straight from the vats of Heaven. It is a type of the continuing revelation of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, Heaven's daily provision for strength and victorious living. If there has been any measure of grumbling in our hearts, any despising of the Word and a longing for the food of the world to satisfy our flesh, then let us repent and ask the Lord to cleanse our spiritual taste buds that we may be able to discern between that which is truly beneficial and that which is harmful to our spiritual health. Even as physical fasting cleans out the body and sharpens the taste buds, so fasting from the food of the world will sharpen our spiritual senses and put us in touch with the Holy Spirit once again. Let us switch off the television and the entertainment systems which lull us into spiritual apathy and feed upon the Word of God and notice the difference in our lives!

The Hebrew word for 'smell' means 'to perceive' and comes from a root word meaning 'to make of quick understanding, spirit, wind'. Your spiritual sense of smell is one that picks up information that is not visible

to the natural eye. It is here that the gift of discerning of spirits operates. The first mention of the word 'smell' is in Genesis 27:27. Isaac smelt Jacob's garments and thought it was Esau because they smelt of the open field and mown grass. He was led astray by his sense of smell and because he had no natural sight he was easily deceived. If our spiritual sense of smell is sharp we will be able to close our eyes and discern what garments a person is wearing in the spirit. However we must also heed what our spiritual ears are telling us. Isaac ignored the fact that the voice was Jacob's voice. he allowed his sense of smell and touch to override the information that was coming to him via his ears. Herein is a warning for all of us in these days when many deceiving spirits have gone out into the world and the church. We need to weigh the information coming from all our spiritual senses to be able to correctly discern the work of the deceiver. This story shows us that a sharpness and alertness of spiritual hearing is vital and will protect us from deception. Isaac wanted to eat his favorite food before blessing his son.

The desire to feed his flesh clouded his judgment.

He allowed himself to be ruled by the smell of the food and Esau's garments and thus gave his blessing to the wrong person.

This is why it is so important to train our ears to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd so that we will not follow the voice of a stranger. The enemy may dish up your favorite food and be clothed in a way that impersonates the Shepherd and even use His aftershave but his voice will give him away. Don't eat of his dainties or follow him because it will lead to bondage and destruction.

In Isaiah 12 there is a prophetic description of Jesus:

'the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. and shall make Him of quick understanding, and His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, neither decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness and justice shall He judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the meek, the poor and downtrodden of the earth and He shall smite the earth and the oppressor with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked....'

I believe this is what the Lord is calling us to, a state of heart where we function in the same anointing that Jesus had by the Spirit of God, not judging by our natural senses but relying on a pure spiritual discernment to rightly assess situations.

The sense of smell in the Bible is largely connected with the smell of garments. Song of Solomon describes the garment of the bridegroom as being fragrant with myrrh and spices. As we cling to our Bridegroom, the fragrance of His garment will be transferred to our garments and we will carry everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ. There is a discernible fragrance that comes from the life of a person who is fully yielded to the Lord, which is picked up even by unbelievers. May our lives carry His fragrance.

Chapter Eleven

Emmanuel - God with us

In reading the book of Zechariah, my eyes were opened to see the passionate love and jealousy of the Lord towards His Bride. In Zech 1:14-21 He speaks of His longing for her and His desire for her to be His alone once again, that He might dwell in her and there was coming a deliverance from those that had brought her into captivity as a result of her sin. I heard the brokenhearted cry of the Bridegroom for His Bride to return to Him once more, how He was releasing angelic powers to deal with the demonic oppression that His Beloved had been under and that although her captivity had come about by her own state, that His love for her is so great that He is calling out to her to return to Him once more. I believe that in this hour our Bridegroom is stirred to action

Zech 2:13 'He is aroused and risen from His holy habitation'

He has heard the cries of His precious ones who for so long have wrestled in their own particular prisons, waging war day after day against powers of darkness that seem too strong for them. He has heard their calls for deliverance and seen their suffering and now the

fullness of time has come, the day of His vengeance and His passion is aroused for his Bride.

So He sends an angelic messenger to his Beloved where she sits wondering if God even cares that she is suffering or if He really loves her and He says, "Tell her I am coming. Tell her to sing and rejoice because once again I will dwell in the midst of her. I will be a wall of fire round about her and the glory in the midst of her. All that her heart has cried out for will be hers and yes, I do desire to deal with those who have so oppressed her, because in touching her they have touched the apple of My eye. I desire to bring my judgment upon them but first she must flee to My protection, separate herself from her unclean alliances, where she has set up house with the daughter of Babylon, and formed bonds with her captors. Come out from among them and be separate. Flee to the stronghold of Zion that I may deal with those who have plundered the lives of My people. It is time to deal with the kings and princes that have scattered My Beloved and kept her bound. Hear and flee. Be cleansed, touch no unclean thing. Call her to prepare herself as a Bride for her Husband for I will surely come to her and I will dwell in her midst .She is my portion, are my love, my fair one, come away with Me."

There is an earnest desire on God's part to answer our prayers for freedom and deliverance but he explains in Zechariah 2 that He cannot do it fully unless we will

separate ourselves from that which is unclean and come back to the place of safety, Zion. His heart is not to destroy us but to destroy our enemies. However we must remove ourselves from our dalliances with darkness and become a set-apart people, holy unto the Lord. The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt but they had to respond to God's call to come out of there before God could deal with their oppressors. God has heard our heartfelt cries for His presence and for the return of his glory - but what we have failed to understand is that if He came to dwell in the midst of us in our present state, His manifest presence would kill us. The desire of the Bridegroom is the same as that of the Bride, to be together in intimacy but we have to make complete surrender to His protection, and only then can He come and deal with our enemies. Zechariah 2:7 says that some of us are dwelling with the daughter of Babylon. Some of us are out of choice living in the same house with that which is an abomination to our Beloved. Instead of keeping our temples clean and full of light so that we are ready for the Bridegroom, we have allowed rooms to be occupied by the things of darkness.

Nehemiah found a similar thing in the temple of the Lord. Eliashib the priest had prepared a chamber in the house of God for Tobiah, the enemy (Nehemiah 13:7). This room was supposed to be used for the Levite's God-given provision but the enemy had set up house in there. Verse 4 tells us that Eliashib and Tobiah were

related by marriage. In other words, there was an unequal yoke, an alliance formed between darkness and light which gave the darkness right to move in and set up his furnishings. The root word for "furnishings" means 'armory'. These rooms are supposed to be filled with God's provision for us as priests but in some of our lives, we have given permission, because of our unclean alliances, for the enemy to use rooms in our temples for a launching pad of attack against the Body of Christ. It reminds me of the tactics used by terrorists who occupy Palestinian Christians' houses and use them to shell Israel. When we give permission in our hearts for anger, spiritual pride or bitterness or any other dark thing to dwell there, then the enemy has a foothold to do his work from. He uses our tongues to speak words that bring death and not life. James dealt with this when He said:

'out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. These things ought not to be so, brethren!'

We are also warned not to be unequally yoked because light can have nothing in common with darkness. Have you got yourself into a situation where you are unequally yoked and thus being forced to compromise your beliefs to keep the peace.

Come out from under it and wear the Lord's yoke which is easy and light.

Nehemiah threw out all the furnishings and cleansed the chambers and the provision of the Levites and the singers was restored. In the same way, God is calling us to break these alliances so that he may fully possess His Bride; and that we may be filled with all the fullness of His planned provision for our lives.

There is coming again a season in the earth when Jesus will again be called "Emmanuel, God with us." The church will again be known as the One who has God in the midst of her and His glory will be seen as a result and there shall be a great harvest of souls into the kingdom. Zech 2:11 says 'and many nations will join themselves to the Lord and be My people.'

I feel that Isaiah 52 is a confirmation to what the Lord is saying. To condense it into a few lines, "awake, put on your beautiful garments, loose yourself from the bonds around your neck, captive daughter of Zion, you will be redeemed without money. The watchmen will see the return of the Lord to Zion, the waste places shall sing, the Lord's holy arm shall be seen bringing deliverance. Come out from the midst of her, cleanse yourselves. The Blood of Jesus shall sprinkle many nations and kings shall shut their mouths because of Him."

Hear also Isaiah 27:1-6

'In that day (3rd day) the Lord will deliver Israel from her enemies and the rebel powers of darkness; His sharp and unrelenting sword will visit and punish the swift fleeing serpent.... in that day it will be said of Israel, a vineyard beloved and lovely; sing a song to it and about it! I the Lord am its keeper; I water it every moment; lest anyone harm it, I guard and keep it night and day. Wrath is not in Me. If only the wicked internal foe were lined up against Me in battle! I would burn them up together. Or else if all Israel would escape being burned up together there is but one alternative, let them take hold of My strength and make complete surrender to My protection, that they may make peace with Me!'

Let us ask the Lord to open our eyes that we may see where our lives are under enemy control and flee to the protection of Him Whose passionate love for us will move Him to deal with all that attempts to separate Him from His Bride.

Chapter Twelve

Dealing With Vermin!

In Song of Solomon 2:15, the Bride asks the Shepherd to help her remove the little foxes that spoil the vineyard and prevent it being fruitful. Her desire is to bear fruit and so the Lord must begin a process of catching and destroying the pests in order for the vine to bring forth fruit on the branches. It says that the vineyards are in blossom, which means that there is potential fruitfulness. The Hebrew word translated 'foxes' explains to us that these were actually jackals that burrowed and destroyed the root of the vine. They lived under the surface of the vineyard, unseen, but having a devastating effect on the crop. They had to be brought to the surface in order for them to be caught and exterminated.

In the same way, the Lord uses His Refiners fire to cause the dross in our lives to surface so that it can be skimmed off. It is an uncomfortable process and quite a shock for us to see the things that pop up their heads in our hearts; ugly little hairy scavengers with sharp teeth! Everything looked so nice and green on the surface and yet we couldn't understand why our lives just bore so little fruit....

Verse 15 says that these foxes 'spoil' the vineyards. This is the Hebrew word 'chabal' which means 'to bind, to

pervert, to writhe in pain, to destroy, to damage'. What a graphic picture of the effect that hidden sin has on the potential fruitfulness of our lives. The Bride described them as being 'little' foxes. This word means 'abbreviated in importance'. In other words, these are things in our hearts and lives that we do not attribute great importance to; ugly things lurking below the surface that often other people do not see; unclean thoughts or bad attitudes which stay safely hidden from the rest of the world and the Church. Yet this passage shows us that they are having a devastating effect on our ability to be fruitful in the Kingdom of God. Remember, Pharisaical attitudes and religious pride are classified as 'foxes' too even though they swing bowls of incense and chant scripture verses on street corners!

Let us dig a little deeper down where the foxes burrow. The root word from which the Hebrew 'little' comes means 'to cut off, to detest oneself'. This helps us so much in seeing how the enemy keeps us bound. Because often we are the only ones who see the furry heads of these little monsters popping up, only we are aware of the ugliness in our hearts. This gives the enemy opportunity to accuse and bring condemnation upon our heads -"you call yourself a Christian and look what kind of a person you really are" and he feeds the fires of self-hatred so that our hearts condemn us and we have no confidence before God. We attempt to keep up a religious front so that others will not think badly

of us, lathering ourselves with 'Holy Incense' aftershave - and the foxes remain un-dealt with, cavorting below the surface and worse still, breeding prolifically.

The Lord is kind and He sees His Bride struggling and knows the cause and the solution to her pain. The only way to drive these foxes out of their holes is to use fire. The heat forces them to flee their dens and they can then be caught and killed. This is why the Lord allows us to be brought into places and situations which cause us to react badly. It is His kindness that arranges a situation where we can no longer maintain our religious fronts and all our ugliness and anger is seen, sometimes not only by ourselves but others too. It is painful for our religious pride to be seen as we really are, our worst side showing so to speak, but there is a key to handling these foxes. They must be caught and killed before they have a chance to go into hiding again. Expressions of hatred, anger, jealousy etc must be acknowledged and taken to the cross where we fall upon the mercy of our God and receive forgiveness. Colossians 3:5 puts it well:

'kill the evil desire lurking in your members; sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry.....put away and rid yourselves completely of all these things: anger, rage, bad feeling toward others, curses and slander and shameful utterances from your lips...'

In God's court of Law, only a plea of guilty on our behalf will release the Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, to speak for us and declare the sin to be paid for and the debt canceled.

If we will not confess our sin then there will be no reprieve for us.

The Lord is at present releasing to His people a fresh understanding of the power of the Blood to deal with sin and to deliver us daily from it's power. It is a truth that we treat trivially in the modern church. Through this refining fire we will come to realize that in us there is no good thing and that only what Christ has forged in us is of value.

These kind of pressurized situations deal very effectively with any pride or self-righteousness which we may have. After all, the Father does not want His Son to marry a Bride dressed in filthy rags of her own righteousness but in white linen. This dealing with the foxes is all part of the Bride making herself ready and because time is now short, the process has become intensified.

Chapter Thirteen

Cleansing the Bride

God desires to purify and heal His Beloved, bringing about a time of breaking down so that He may build on a pure foundation; a time of cutting open and removing of scabs that all infection may be washed out and true healing may take place; a time when the ax is laid to the root of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that has borne bad fruit in our hearts. He has called us to the inner chamber, a time of being set apart with the Holy Spirit, like Esther with her Keeper, for treatment with myrrh, that we might be purified and healed. Unclean vessels are not going to be able to carry the weight of glory that the Lord desires His Bride to contain and so for our own good, because we are His Beloved, He calls us to yield to the work of myrrh within our hearts. Myrrh speaks of death and burial, which must come in God's blueprint, before resurrection life can come forth. It was also used to heal wounds received on the battlefield, was a powerful disinfectant and cleanser and was the first ingredient of the sacred anointing oil used to set apart vessels for holy purposes. In this time, the Lord has set apart those who have accepted His invitation (Zeph. 1:7) and the Holy Spirit has begun a purifying work with myrrh. He wishes His Bride to be endued with the seven Spirits of God spoken of in Isaiah 11, but first the

ingredients of the anointing oil must do their work so that the fragrance of Christ comes forth from her through this anointing.

In a vision, I saw this Bride as a menorah (seven-branched candlestick) raised up in the earth, a standard to which the nations run for salvation, (Isaiah 11:10 & 49:22). It was made up of the ingredients of the anointing oil in Exodus: myrrh at its base, then cinnamon, calamus, cassia forming the stand and branches and lastly, olive oil burning for the light. God is preparing to raise up His standard in the earth. He is working on the base of His menorah applying myrrh.

Song of Solomon 5:5 and 13 tells us that His hands and His lips drip liquid myrrh and in 4:6, the promised bride declares that she will go to the mountain of myrrh until the day breaks. This is the place the bride must tarry, waiting for the dawn and the rising of the light of His resurrection glory upon her.

When the Bride responds to the call of the Bridegroom to come away with Him (Song of Sol. 2:10) the place He takes her to is the cleft of the rock, a place of intimacy, hidden in the wounds of Jesus, the Rock of Ages. It is a safe and hidden place - but it is also a place of pain, of deep cleansing and purifying, a place in the grave of our own fleshly desires and life - undergoing a process like the body of Jesus, bound with myrrh, aloes

and linen cloths in the tomb awaiting the morning of the 3rd day.

I sense that it will be a hidden and individual work done in each of our hearts as the Holy Spirit puts His finger on issues for it is not the heart of the Bridegroom to expose and humiliate His precious Bride. Starting at the level of the 'base' of the menorah speaks of the Lord bringing us back to ground level, a breaking down of faulty structure and dealing with all built by the flesh so that God Himself may build a church that cannot be shaken. It is the place of Hosea 6 where He wounds to heal and breaks down to bind up that He may raise us up to live with His abiding resurrection presence within and upon us, for His coming is as certain as the dawn. Zechariah 6:12 & 13 (Amplified) speak of the Man who is the Branch who will build the TRUE temple of the Lord. The menorah is a type of the Branch and the Lord is shaking until what cannot be shaken remains – then the Church will truly be the light of the world.

Song of Solomon 1:13 declares that our Beloved is a bag of myrrh in our bosom and we need to allow this abiding presence of myrrh to work its purpose in our hearts because God is wanting to deal with root issues, areas that we have struggled with for years without seeming victory, those little foxes!!! Yes, there is a sense of a dawning of a new day, of a spring season (Sol 2:10-13) but to ensure that the blossoms and buds develop

into fruit, the enemies of the vineyard have to be dealt with.

**It is in this season of myrrh that there will be
an exposing of root issues.**

We must recognize it as God's great kindness. He desires us to be set free and purified and we must not run from His dealings.

Sometimes, when there is deep infection, the wound has to be cut open, cleansed and treated with healing, disinfecting ointment to restore wholeness to the body. Because we are in the hand of the Master Physician, let us not shrink from the scalpel, the words anointed with myrrh that come from His lips, remembering that this process lasts only for a season and it is the kind hand of the Lover of our souls at work. The anointing of sweet spices follows, which prepares us for true intimacy with our Bridegroom. We want to be pure vessels pouring forth a pure river of the life of God in the earth. Lord, have Your way.

Even so, on a wider scale, I sense the Lord saying: "There is infection and impurity in my Bride and I will lay open and cleanse her and restore purity to her. For too long she has walked with a limp, ineffective and unfruitful in the earth but I will come as a refiner and purifier to my Beloved (Malachi 3:3), and tenderly and effectively I will deal with the causes of

infection. I will not hold back my scalpel or allow diseased tissue to remain, but I will cut and continue to cut until it is dealt with and then shall the healing come forth and the soundness of flesh and my Bride shall no longer be a stench of rottenness in the earth but she shall bear my fragrance and my glory and My kingly authority in the earth."

Chapter Fourteen

Sir – Don't Spill Your Seed !

Because we are a prophetic people, it is imperative to realize the sobering responsibility that rests upon our shoulders to bring forth a pure word from the throne-room and accurately represent God's heart to people. Much of the abuse lobbied at the area of the prophetic in the past season has been a result of people prophesying when the Lord has not instructed them to do so or living lifestyles incompatible with being a mouthpiece of Almighty God.

As prophetic people, we are familiar with our spirits having a womb where conception and pregnancy take place and in the fullness of God's time, His purposes are birthed. We also know that in the spiritual realm, the mouth is the reproductive organ. God spoke and brought forth life, creating the earth.

As prophetic people, we also have the awesome responsibility of being co-laborers with Him in planting seed in the earth, or to put it another way, we receive a prophetic word from the Throne-room and we speak the word and the Holy Spirit plants it in the womb of people's spirits, where conception takes place.

Recently, for weeks there was a phrase circulating in my spirit -'spilling the seed'. This is known in medical

circles as premature ejaculation. The Lord spoke to me, saying," there has been much seed spilled in my Body through the lack of maturity and youthful zeal of my prophetic people. Many potential plans and gifts have fallen to the ground because my people have no control over their spirits" and the picture I saw was a teenager, his body raging with hormones, unable to control the issue of semen from his body....

Then the Lord led me to Genesis 38. There we find the story of Judah and Tamar and He began to teach me on this issue. In verse 1 we read that at the time this story takes place, Judah withdrew from his brothers. This was his first mistake.

Isolation always leads to deception.

Yes, his brothers had acted unrighteously toward Joseph and there were issues that needed addressing but Judah withdrew from all fellowship with his brothers and in so doing opened himself up to deception. How do we know this? - because the name of the place he moved to was Chezib, which means 'falsified, deceive'. And to make matters worse, he set up lodgings with a man named Hirah. This means 'splendor', but comes from the root word meaning 'to blanch with shame'. Here was a man that on the surface displayed the glory of God but lurking underneath was the opposite, shame and disgrace. This was a wolf in sheep's clothing, and I believe that a

perverse spirit operated in this man. Perversity is when someone recognizes truth but deliberately presents the opposite - there is a duality evident. Judah came under the influence of this spirit and his discernment was severely affected as we shall see.

Anyway, in this ghastly place, he met a woman whose father's name was Shua. This means 'cry of freedom, battle cry'. This woman came from a bloodline that was victorious and strong and free, and poor thing, she is brought to the place of deception through marriage. (many of us have made covenants in areas of our spiritual walks which have only brought us to a place of deception!...)But she holds her head high, carrying within her heritage of freedom in spite of being surrounded by bondage!!

As the years go by she bears a son, Er, meaning "watchful". She has high hopes for him. He was to be a watchman on the wall, protecting all in his care. Er was married to Tamar (a palm tree, erect) She is a type of the Bride of Christ, beautiful and intended to be fruitful. Er was supposed to be a watchman over her but the Word says he was wicked and the Lord slew him. I suspect that he abused his wife instead of protecting her. The Bride has been raped many times by self-centered people, looking only for a place to deposit their seed for their own satisfaction and pleasure. Herein is a warning to the unrighteous

watchmen over God's flock...May God forgive and cleanse us of all unrighteousness by the Blood.

The next child Judah's wife had was called Onan, meaning 'strength, power'. His mother was obviously hoping that he would turn out better than his evil brother! She prophesied over him the richness of his inheritance by calling him Onan. When Er died, Onan was ordered to marry Tamar and as was the custom, raise offspring for his brother (verse 8). But Onan was willful and selfish. He did not want someone else to have the reward for his efforts! He knew that the children would be regarded as his brothers and he would get none of the credit...So what did he do?? He pretended to go through the ritual of intimacy but at the vital moment, he withdrew and spilled his seed on the ground!! He was not prepared to raise a child for his brother. Deliberate disobedience to his father (who instructed him to have children by Tamar) was masked by what looked like obedience....only he and Tamar knew that the full deed had not been done!!! And Tamar remained childless....

Onan is a picture in the spirit of a person who has received a prophetic word from the Father for the Bride and is supposed to co-labor with the Holy Spirit to bring forth God's purposes or pregnancy in the bride, but his heart was impure and he did not want his brother to get the glory for the word he had to give. He had the same thing in his heart as satan -he wanted the

glory. He wanted to be seen, heard and recognized as the originator of the word or seed. In other words, he wanted the glory due to God!! So what did he do???.... Under the guise of bringing a word in season (pretending to deliver the seed to the womb) he goes through the motions but deliberately spills his sperm on the ground. In other words, he speaks too soon and the words fall to the ground...deliberate disobedience masked by seeming obedience...and the person or body of people expecting an impartation of life-giving seed are left high and dry and the womb remains empty.

It seemed like such a good word but there was no fruit borne of it in months to come!!

Selfish ambition in the heart of God's prophetic people will rob the Bride of her fruitfulness. We must repent of any desire to share the glory that belongs only to God and if we are really honest with ourselves, we need forgiveness for the times God has delivered sperm to our spirits and because of a desire to be heard and recognized as having sharp spiritual ears, we have sought the approval of men and released the 'sperm' of the prophetic word out of God's timing -this causes the onlookers to give praise for what sounds like a good word but in reality it is only sperm falling to the ground and brings death to God's potential purposes.. And we have robbed the Bride of her conjugal rights and caused barrenness in her womb. We must ask the

Holy Spirit to teach us to control our spirits, just as a man who has a premature ejaculation problem can learn to control it. Onan's strength was corrupted by self-will. Let us truly surrender our wills to the Spirit. As it says in Proverbs, a man who keeps his spirit is stronger than he who takes a city!!

Jeremiah 15:19 says "If you will separate the precious from the vile, you shall be My mouthpiece." In verse 10, we are told that his actions greatly displeased the Lord and He slew him!! If we will not judge ourselves, God will bring judgment on us. Onan sowed death to the earth and reaped the same in his own flesh.

Poor Judah's wife, she looked in dismay at the way her first two sons had turned out and her heart cried out to God. She named her 3rd child Shelah, which means 'request, petition'. She was calling out to God for a release of the inheritance in his bloodline through her side of the family; she had come from a place where the cry of freedom rang out and she sat, now surrounded by death and deception on every side. Expressed in this child was her desperate plea to God for deliverance and restoration of all that had been stolen from her by the enemy.

Tamar is a picture of the bride, abused and mistreated by so-called watchmen, manipulated and denied her inheritance by wolves in prophets' clothing, completely disillusioned and unfruitful and rejected. It is at this

point that we see Judah's ability to discern has been severely affected by the place he chose to stay in.

He looked at the natural and judged by the sight of his eyes instead of discerning God's hand - two of his sons had been married to Tamar and had met untimely ends so he lays the blame on poor Tamar and refuses to give her Shelah as husband because he is convinced she is under a curse!! Shelah, the fruit of his mother's travail, was exactly what Tamar needed to bring freedom and fruitfulness, but he was denied her because of a lack of understanding on the part of those in authority over her.

The Body of Christ is full of people whose seeming barrenness has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by those in leadership.

They have mistaken rejection for rebellion and laid the blame at the wrong door - and this story seems to suggest that they have done this because of areas needing attention in their own lives that this lack of discernment comes from!! Judah was not open with Tamar about his reasons, but made excuses, saying she was to remain at her father's house until Shelah was grown, when in reality he had no intention of giving her to his son. An underlying motive of self-preservation and a feeling of threat has often seen

people with promise relegated to a life of widowhood in a forgotten corner of church life.

Then we are told in verse 12 that Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. The cry for freedom seemed to have been silenced and Tamar must have grieved the loss of a friend and ally in her desperate desire for fruitfulness. Surrounded on every side by harsh unsympathetic authority, she is so desperate for her shame of fruitlessness to be taken away that she compromises her integrity. She, who began as a tall stately palm tree, began to bend and conform to the atmosphere surrounding her. She was still living at Chezib (deceived) and she began to deceive. She could not get what she so needed through the right channels so she used manipulation and deception to get what she wanted. She behaved like a prostitute and tricked Judah into giving her a child. It was her right to receive a child through Judah's bloodline so she took it by force!!

When the church is denied the right to receive the prophetic word, then people in desperation go to others and demand a 'word' from the Lord. Not only are they using and abusing the gifting of that person but also have acted like prostitutes, hiring out the womb of their spirit to anyone who would issue forth a word. Oh, how we need the cleansing of the blood of Jesus in these areas. God desires a pure bride who can bear a holy set apart seed on the earth for Him, one

who has separated herself from all contaminating influence and will receive only the attentions of her true Husband. In the inner chambers of our intimate relationship with the Bridegroom we are able to receive a pure uncontaminated Word of Life directly from His lips. Why do we prefer to get seed from the lips of man?

Judah, who was supposed to be a righteous man, slept with the 'temple prostitute' of the cult. He was not wholehearted towards God, the duality in his nature caused him to be led by the flesh. The signet ring that she asked of him was a sign of his authority.

He was prepared to hand over his spiritual authority for a single meal for his flesh.

Sounds familiar.....

The prostitute (Tamar) sat on the way to Timnath, which means 'assigned portion', the root word meaning 'to weigh out or count'. God is presently weighing us all in the balances and according to this measure, we will be assigned a portion. Judah's waiting portion was the shame of exposure because he did not deal uprightly with Tamar. Remember he seemingly made provision for her to later marry but in his heart he had no intention of it happening. BUT God sees the motives of our hearts even though people don't and there will be many publicly brought to

shame in the coming days if they are not willing to judge the thoughts of their own secret hearts and repent.

It was Judah's friendship with the perverse man, Hirah that brought him to the place where he succumbed to the flesh and the Spirit of God is warning us to be careful who we surround ourselves with for we become like the people we spend time with.

Judah then had to supply the kid he had promised her in exchange for her favors. Tamah had experience with Judah's lack of integrity which is why she asked for the signet and staff. He would never have kept his verbal promise otherwise.

Then we are shown another weakness in Judah's character...He cared what others thought of him, fear of being seen associating with a prostitute and, of course, pride caused him to send his friend to do his dirty work. Hirah was to take the kid to her. Judah was also selfish as he did not care about his friend's reputation being ruined as long as he was safe. Judah represents unrighteous, Pharisaical people who preserve the outward appearance but inside are full of dead bones. When the woman could not be found (verse 23), he placated his conscience and said, "well, I kept my part of the bargain, let sleeping dogs lie. If we make too much of a fuss we'll be found out and that would never do!!" Judah was prepared to lose his spiritual authority

(represented by his signet ring) rather than be exposed for who he really was. He thought he could carry on functioning without it, keeping up the outward appearance of spirituality. But God is not mocked. Those who have abused and mistreated the Bride and compromised their spiritual integrity to feed their fleshly ambitions and have secretly used the Bride to satisfy their own lusts must understand that God sees and He is not mocked. What a man sows, he will surely reap. Judah was about to be caught in a trap that he would have been proud of if he had thought it up himself!!!....

So it is discovered that Tamar, the loose wench, is with child and she is dragged before the elders, in much the same way as the woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus. And Judah plays the part of the Pharisee to perfection. "Let her be burned!" he cries in righteous indignation and from Heaven, a voice answers, "let him who is without sin cast the first stone" but Judah has gone a bit deaf to the whisper of the Spirit since he started hanging around with the wrong people and frequenting brothels! So, thinking his sin is safely hidden in his own evil heart, he has her brought before him.

Tamar, with the wisdom of God, gives the answer "I am pregnant by the man to whom these articles belong Perhaps you recognize them and could tell me who he is??"..... Talk about egg on your face. Judah stands,

publicly exposed and humiliated (the very same treatment he wanted to give her was reaped himself!) and finally he repents and honors his daughter-in-law, making public restitution.

God grant us the grace necessary to repent in private and throw our Pharisaical robes away like filthy bloodstained cloths and return to the simple robes of righteousness bought on Calvary.

Tamar brought forth twins. She brought forth the duality that was in her heart as a result of compromising her integrity before the Lord. Zerah, meaning 'to shoot forth beams, a rising of the light' was the answer to his grandmother's petition. God heard her prayer but what was sowed in compromise was also reaped later down the bloodline in one of Zerah's descendants.

Achan (meaning 'troublesome') trespassed, causing God's anger to burn against the whole of Israel (in Joshua 7:1). Like his ancestors, he was partially obedient and kept some of the spoils of war for himself. He wanted to preserve part of the objects that God said to destroy completely. Do not hold on fondly to things in your heart that God has ordered to destroy. They are part of the enemy's hold on your life and will only bring you death if you do not ruthlessly smash them.

Hidden unrepented areas of compromise will rear their ugly heads in your children and grandchildren if you do not deal with them.

When a word is given from an impure heart prophetically, the fruit of it will be twofold, fruit of the tree of life and fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Tamah bore Zerah (rising of light) and Perez (a scatterer). We must understand that we have two sources of potential seed in us because Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We inherit this seed through our bloodline. We also have the seed of Life within us once we are born again. It is pride that causes us to deny the former seed's existence within because it is the source of all fleshly desire and ambition and seeks to put self on the throne to be worshipped. It is the fruit of this seed that we are to habitually put to death, the deeds of the flesh in Romans 8:13. We need to ask God to take the blinkers of pride off our eyes so that we may see the areas of darkness in us and repent. David said, "Search me and know my heart, see if there is any wicked way in me"

In this hour as never before God is calling us to be clean and holy vessels, that we may bring forth a pure word in its season. This is an apple of gold in a setting of silver, fruit of the tree of life within us and the Bride will be strengthened.

We need to be careful where we are living and who we are associating with in the spirit because our surroundings flavor or contaminate our discernment just as time spent in a smoke filled room causes the smell to cling to our clothing. Let us spend so much time in God's presence that only His fragrance clings to us. Let us reign our spirits in so that we do not spill the seed too early because we seek the praise and recognition of men or withhold the seed, as Judah denied Tamar a husband, and so be guilty putting the Bride in such a place of desperation that she acts in the flesh, demanding and taking by force a word to plant in the womb of her spirit, thus bringing forth fruit of both trees in the earth. Jesus said it was necessary for temptation to come but woe to him who causes one of the little ones to stumble. Let us put the ax to the root of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil growing in our own hearts. It is this tree that bears the fruit of pride, self-righteousness, criticism and hypocrisy. There is a potential Pharisee in each of us, surprise, surprise! God is dealing with our deepest motives. It takes courage to face and deal with darkness within us but if we will allow God to deal with us, we will be vessels of honor, co-laborers with the Holy Spirit in bringing conception and birthing His purposes in these end times.

I believe the Holy Spirit is putting His royal finger on all the areas of intimacy and potential fruitfulness, in our bodies, souls and spirits - purging by fire that we

may once again bring offerings in righteousness. This has been satan's area of greatest attack in the earth. He seeks to defile the prophetic picture that a marriage union and sex are meant to speak – and so his attack is aimed at every level, emotional, physical and spiritual. We are to press in and become a Bride without spot or wrinkle, pure and set apart for our heavenly Bridegroom so that the fruit of our union will be pure and holy... there are two scriptures which put it in a nutshell

2 Cor. 7:1 Therefore, since these great promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring our consecration to completeness in the fear of the Lord.

1 Thess. 4:1-8 Furthermore, brethren, we beg you to follow the instructions learned from us about how you ought to walk in order to please the Lord..... for this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated - set apart for holy living ; that you should abstain from sexual vice; that each of you should know how to control his own vessel in consecration and honor, not to be used in the passion of lust like the heathen who are ignorant of the true God, that no man defraud his brother in any way. For the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we have already warned you. For God has not called us to impurity but to consecration. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards God, whose very Spirit Whom He gives you is Holy.

Praise God for the wonderful cleansing power of the Blood of Jesus. It can reach the deepest corners of our deceitful hearts. May God grant us willing hearts to run in the path of His commandments.

Selah

Chapter Fifteen

Aaron's Rod

In Numbers 16 and 17, Korah challenged the leadership credentials of Moses and Aaron. We are entering into a time where the Spirit of God will expose and judge the motives of men's hearts in the church and just as in the instance with Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the judgment will be by fire. In Num16:1 it tells us that those who rose up were leaders of the congregation, men well-known and of distinction. There are those in the church today who have reputation and renowned ministries but the Lord is looking on all our hearts and not on the outward appearance of spirituality. Verses 3,10 and 13 tell us that these men were full of jealousy, spiritual ambition and rebellion.

The Lord has sent His fire to purge the church in this season.

There is a shaking and reshuffling of ministries and some, even those which are renowned amongst men shall be removed. We have entered the prophetic Third Day and as with God's days, first comes evening and then morning. (Gen 1:5). God has been working a work in darkness which the coming of the morning of the

Third Day will reveal. Moses spoke a prophetic word to this generation in Numbers 16:5 when he said,

"In the morning the Lord will show those who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near Him; him whom He has chosen will He cause to come near Him."

There has been a measuring and a testing and a judging of our lives and ministries in the evening time of the Third Day and the Lord shall be placing His seal of approval on some and removing others. In Hosea 6 it speaks of those whom He causes to come near Him, those He has raised up on the third day to live before Him. In the Hebrew, this speaks of being before His face, living continually in His presence. But the preceding verses tell us that the conditions to the fulfillment of this in our lives are brokenness, repentance and returning to the Lord.

The morning of the Third Day is the prophetic time spoken of in Malachi 3:17 when the Lord takes note of those who fear Him and openly declares them to be His jewels. There is coming a time when those the Lord has been molding and forming under tremendous pressure and in secret shall be given His seal of approval and recognition openly. Both Malachi 3:2 and 4:1 refer to the fire of the Lord that comes to burn up the hay and the stubble and to refine His church.

Korah was a son of Levi, but he was not satisfied with ministering to the congregation and serving in the tabernacle. He coveted Aaron's portion. In the Body of Christ today, there are those who are not satisfied with the position and ministry God has assigned to them and they covet the giftings and anointings of others. James 3:16 tells us that wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition there is confusion and every evil work. We are the priesthood, and the Lord is bringing His fire to purify us that our offerings may be in righteousness as in Malachi 3:3. We also read in Isaiah 4 of a cleansing and a purifying of those in Zion by the spirit of judgment and burning. And then those who remain will be called holy and the Lord will cover our homes, our lives and our fellowships with His glory (verse 5) God cannot bring His glory to a backbiting, envious, dissatisfied Bride. He is sending His fire to shake and to sift and to single out those He is pleased with and those that will fall.

The tragedy was that Korah had a good inheritance from the Lord. His father's name means 'anointed'. But that was not enough for him. When they brought their censors and incense before the Lord, this is a picture of their prayer lives. Our prayer lives are being viewed by the Lord at this time. What a solemn warning for intercessors. Korah's censor was made of brass, which speaks of impurity. Aaron's was of gold. Korah wanted the position and the acclaim but his prayer life was not what it should have been. Sometimes we see the

outward manifestation of the anointing on a person's ministry and covet that but we do not see the prayer life behind it. We do not know their relationship with God, like Aaron who ministered to the Lord. God sees in secret and those who have ministered to Him in their closet, away from the eyes of men, those who have wept before Him and worshipped Him in secret are the ones who will receive His approval before men in the coming days.

All 250 rebels were destroyed but Korah's sons were not killed (Num 26:11) and they went on to write 11 of the beautiful psalms we read today. It seems that their hearts were not drawn after their father's wickedness and even so today, those whose spiritual or natural parents have fallen away from the Lord are still able to access and appropriate the anointing in their godly bloodlines to the glory of God.

I see the Lord's eye running over families and fellowships in these days, looking for hearts who are separated unto Him. Aaron and Korah both descended from Levi who was their great-grandfather but it was Aaron whom God separated for Holy of Holies ministry. In these days a godly heritage is no guarantee of God's favor and anointing. It is our own individual hearts and the state of our secret prayer life which will determine promotion or demotion in His kingdom. It was Aaron's high-priestly intercession that stayed the plague amongst the people and in the coming days we

will see the fulfillment of Job 22:30 "He will even deliver the one for whom you intercede who is not innocent; yes, he will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."

In Numbers 17 we read of the Lord's instruction to lay rods representing the 12 tribes before the ark of testimony in the evening. In the morning Aaron's rod had budded, showing God's approval of him. In the same way, our rods have been lying before the Lord in the evening of the Third Day. The rod represents our lives, our ministries, our authority in the spirit, our inheritance in God. We have been in a time of measuring and judging, we are passing under His measuring rod and some have been found lacking and some have been found ready.

"and the rod of the man I choose shall bud." Numbers 17:5

This is what the Lord is saying. On the morning of this Third Day, the lives and ministries of those He chooses shall bud and blossom and bear fruit. What was it that caused Aaron's rod to bud? It was the resurrection life and power of God. Jesus also rose on the morning of the third day and His Bride shall experience the resurrection power of God upon her on the morning of this same Third Day. However, up until now we have been in the evening of the Third Day and the sifting and shaking and purifying is being carried out. Our works are passing through the fire to test what they are

made of. Then we can rise and shine with the glory of the Lord in the morning, with His approval and authority to rule in the midst of our foes (psalm 110:3).

The Hebrew word 'bud' means 'to break forth, to spread, to fly, to flourish, to spring up.' What a picture of resurrection power! This same word is used in Ezekiel 17:24,

"all the trees of the field shall understand that I, the Lord, have brought low the high tree, have exalted the low tree and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, the Lord, have spoken and I will do it!"

Again in this scripture we see the sifting and judging of lives and ministries at this time. I believe the Body of Christ is going to experience a great reshuffling and realigning, as the Lord brings into the open His jewels. It is a work done in darkness, undetected by man but the morning will reveal the results.

The rod of the man He chooses shall bud!

The word for 'dry' in Ezekiel 17:24 also means 'ashamed, confused, disappointed'. There are those who look at their lives and see only dryness, and a lack of life and power. They feel ashamed, as if they have failed the Lord somehow, like a dry rod before the Lord - but He is saying that He sees their hearts, their desperate hunger for Him and as they remain in that

place of yielded-ness before the Lord at this time, after He has tested and tried them He will come to them as the heavy latter rain that waters the earth. There is an outpouring of His resurrection life that is coming.

In Genesis 1 we read about the first third day. God separated the waters from the land. He uncovered the ground which had been hidden and spoke over it and brought forth it's potential - vegetation, plants and fruit trees each according to its kind. Even so, on this Third Day, God will be uncovering His hidden ones, breathing upon them and causing them to reach their full potential. From deep within the soil of your hearts will spring up that which will nourish and feed others. Those being molded and tried in secret can sense that the day of their revealing is at hand. In the morning the rod of the man God chooses shall bud!

Chapter Sixteen

New Wineskins for Old

The Bridal Company is also represented in the Word by the term 'sons of God'. Those who have been prepared away from the eyes of man will be brought into the light in the season that is before us. Just as a baby emerges from the womb where it has been prepared and fashioned by the hand of the Father, so too, the Bride will come forth into plain view all over the earth. I have been taking a look at the manifestation of Jesus, the Promised Son in order to gain understanding about the way God will accomplish the manifestation of His sons in this hour. Come with me to Luke where He describes the unveiling of the Son of God;

Luk 2:21,22 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord

For many years I read these two verses and assumed they took place together. However, on further study it became clear that they took place in different towns, thirty-three days apart! According to God's law, a child was named and circumcised on the eighth day. Jesus

was named in Bethlehem, but was taken to Jerusalem to be presented as the first fruits offering of Mary's womb many days later.

In Leviticus 12 we read that when a woman had borne a male child, she was required to go through a season of purification that ended on the 40th day after the son was born. It was only on the 40th day that Simeon gazed upon this Promised Son in the temple. I will discuss the significance of this later but first let us look at Simeon and Anna.

Both these people were waiting for the kairos moment when God's Promised Son would be shown openly. These two represent the old and the new order and are a picture of what God is doing in the Church in this Third Day.

**There is a changing of the guard happening
in the Spirit in these days.**

That which is of the previous season is decreasing and that which is of the new season is coming forth.

Luk 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. Luk 2:26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen

the Lord's Christ. Luk 2:27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple

Simeon represents the previous season in God. He was anointed by the Spirit and walked in revelation to a certain extent- He heard God speak. He had understanding of God's timing and ways. He also understood that he was part of that which was passing away and that something new was coming forth. God had promised him that he would personally see the manifestation of this promise before death. "Simeon' means 'hearing'. Until the moment he held the child in his arms, Simeon had only heard about what God was going to do; but finally he saw that which he had only heard of and longed for.

Luk 2:28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Luk 2:29 Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: Luk 2:30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

He embraced this new Holy Thing which God had brought forth, gazed upon it and then stepped out of the way so it could be manifested in all its glory. Simeon, the watchman of the old order, must be laid to rest in order for the new thing that God is doing to come forth fully. The last thing he does, as the baton is handed over to the next season, is prophesy to the Church (represented by Mary):

Luk 2:34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; Luk 2:35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

‘The fall and rising again’ – here he speaks of a death and resurrection. The old dispensation has to pass away and that which has been waiting in the tomb of preparation has to be brought forth in resurrection power during this transition. Old mindsets must be laid to rest and new understanding embraced in order to possess a wineskin that can hold this Third Day wine. It is important to notice the timing with which Anna appears on the scene:

Luk 2:38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord....

At the very same instant that the old is passing away, the new is manifested.

For those brief moments, the two dispensations, the old and the new wineskins, are present together in the same temple. They are very different but for a brief space of time God allows them to be seen side by side. In the same way we see that John the Baptist and Jesus were briefly together in the same area at the same time, the one representing a decreasing season in God and

the other an increasing manifestation of God's promise made flesh in due season.

So too, the two wineskins are present together in the House of God at this time. One must be laid aside and the other embraced to keep in step with what the Spirit is doing. Once Simeon had named and embraced this Man-child, he was no longer seen in the temple. The old passed away because the new had come. This is the challenge facing the Church in these days - having the maturity and humility to acknowledge that what was once a new wineskin, has now become an old inflexible wineskin and must be laid aside.

Simeon represents an old religious paradigm, an old way of understanding. He came into the temple by the Spirit. This understanding that we come to a place in order to be in God's presence, the entering and leaving of a temple, is a mindset that is passing away. The Church is coming into a fresh understanding that in Him we live and move and have our being. Of course we have always known this with our heads, but the shackles of old religious ways have prevented us from living in the glorious liberty and heart revelation of this truth. There is no place where we are not in God and He in us.

Anna represents this new understanding. She never left the temple but dwelt in the presence of God continually. In Anna is embodied the description of the

face of the Holy Thing which God is unveiling in these days:

Luk 2:36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; Luk 2:37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

‘Anna’ means ‘favor, grace’. A hallmark of these sons of God (the Bride) will be the evidence of the favor of God resting upon their lives. She was a prophetess – someone who heard God and conveyed His message to others. She was God’s spokesman, bringing a living word to those in need. What was her pedigree? She came forth from the loins of a man called Phanuel, which means ‘face of God’. Those God is unveiling in this season come forth from before the face of God – they are those who dwell in His presence before His face continually. Phanuel was of the tribe of Asher. The blessing released upon Asher by Jacob as he died was this:

Gen 49:20 Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

The heritage of the Anna Company is the possession of an understanding of the Word soaked with fat (anointing) and the ability to bring forth kingly

revelation (royal dainties) to feed others. This Bride does not serve common food but rather nourishing life-giving royal fare! Moses also released a prophetic blessing upon this tribe (Deut 33:24) as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. It contained four dimensions;

Fruitfulness

Acceptance by the brethren

An anointing and protection upon their every step

Strength for each day

The company that the Lord is releasing shall bear walk in each of these endowments.

The phrase 'of great age' is a very interesting one as the Greek words mean 'to go further, to advance in position or time'.

These people are forerunners - they have gone ahead of others of their day.

They are the spies that have entered the Promised Land and brought back the first cluster of revelation from within the land of His continual presence.

Anna was married for seven years and a widow for eighty-four years. The first seven years in the presence of a husband represent the down-payment or guarantee of the fullness to come; the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The next twelve seasons ($84=7 \times 12$) represent the season of preparation for governmental authority, the time when the vessel is purified and fashioned to be fit to carry the glory. It is the season of widowhood, the time of mourning and fellowship with His sufferings in order to be able to share His glory. It is the period during which the word spoken over Anna's life became flesh in her – she was 'the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher'. This is the title she was known by, but the fullness which this heritage embodied had to be worked in her during those twelve seasons before she could go out in that apostolic governmental anointing and tell all whom she saw about the Christ.

Altogether there were thirteen seven-year periods. Thirteen is the number of years Joseph was in the prison of preparation for rule. It is also the same number of years Sarah lived in the same house as Ishmael before God released a new season of fruitfulness upon her.

The other thing that Simeon mentioned in his prophecy was that this child would be a sign that would be spoken against. In other words, although it had been prophesied and discussed for centuries, that which

God was doing would be disputed and rejected. This is a tragic truth of Church history. The old move always persecutes the new move. Instead of embracing new revelation of Truth and letting go of old mindsets, some prefer to remain with the monument they have built rather than be moved by the breath of God into the fullness of His purposes.

Luk 2:35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Jesus said He did not come to bring peace but a sword. Here, those who can hear God (Simeon) declare that the soul (mindsets and belief systems) of the Church shall be pierced by the sword of the Word of Truth. This will bring a separation between those beliefs the Church holds that are soulish or of the flesh, and that which is truly revelation of the Spirit. Jesus said that our enemies would be members of our own house. Division and separation is coming to the House of God in this season as the man-child Bride is progressively revealed. There will also be a separation within each of us as the Sword of the Word divides that in our belief system that is soulish (of man) from that which is of God. There will be a warring within and a renewing of the mind both individually and corporately as fresh understanding of age-old Truth is released from the throne. During this time, the 'thoughts' ('debatings and reasonings' in the Greek) of many hearts will be revealed for what they are, earthly or heavenly.

The forty days from the birth to the presenting of the first fruits of the womb is a period of purification and purging. The womb ejects its blood-filled lining, that which has cushioned and anchored the child from conception to birth, in a cleansing and purging action. That which is no longer necessary in the lining of the womb of the Church is discarded and the womb is then ready for conception of a new thing. For forty days, the woman lives with the child in the House of Bread (Bethlehem) and there is a separation and discarding of the old within. Then they go together to Jerusalem to be presented to the Father. Of course we are part of the heavenly Jerusalem and are presented on Mount Zion amidst multitudes of angels!

This purification period is also a parallel of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. When He was baptized, God said, "This is My Beloved Son". In other words, He named Him and declared His bloodline connection with Heaven. The forty days in the wilderness are the days of learning to rightly divide the Word of Truth so that we are able to say 'It is written...' while comprehending the whole counsel of God. After the forty-day period, Jesus came out in the power of the Spirit. Anna too, after her twelve seasons of widowhood, was released in the power of the Spirit to witness to all in Jerusalem who were looking for redemption.

The root of this word 'redemption' means 'to loose'. Those looking for freedom from that which holds them captive, are to be loosed in these days. So we see the apostolic ('sent one') mantle is released upon the Church after a season of purging and widowhood and she goes forth from before His face, preaching Christ alone. Apostolic governmental rule (signified by the number 12) is only released upon the fully mature (the number 40). The Message Translation puts the goal of the five-fold ministry like this:

*Eph 4:13MSG until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, **fully mature adults**, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ. Eph 4:14 No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. Eph 4:15 God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love--like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ,*

So we see a separation from that which is soulish or childish and a growth to maturity. The same Greek word for 'fully mature' or 'perfect', meaning 'of full age (i.e. 40)' is used in the following:

*1Co 13:10,11 But when that which **is perfect** is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a **man**, I put away childish things.*

Again we see a laying to rest of the old – the old way of speaking, of understanding and of thinking.

The old wineskin must be discarded. Simeon must die.

The new wineskin must be embraced and in that instant the Anna Company, the glorious Bride waiting in the wings, is released. When this happens, there is a natural consequence:

Luk 2:39,40 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

When all that God wants to accomplish in this transition is completed, there is a returning of the Church to the place from which we left to go on this purifying journey, to our own city. The city is that heavenly city which descends out of Heaven from God. Galilee means 'wheel, revolution' and Nazareth means 'separated, crowned, sanctified'. God sets in motion a spiritual revolution and the Church once again becomes that city set upon a hill, the one separated unto God, wearing her royal crown as the Lamb's wife. Consequently, that corporate Son which grows and multiplies within her care is strong in spirit and full of wisdom, walking with the favor and grace of God

upon them. The prophecy of Moses over the tribe of Asher is fulfilled in the Anna Company, as they are manifested or revealed in the earth.

This Anna company is the capstone being brought forth with cries of 'grace, grace' in Zechariah. The word 'grace' can also be translated 'favor'. So the bridal company goes forth into all the earth with a double portion, 'favor, favor', upon her. It is no coincidence that 'Anna' means 'grace and favor'!

Chapter Seventeen

Transition and Manifestation

In the last chapter, I discussed the transition between the old and new wineskin. Now I want to have a look at the life of Abraham, he being the father of faith, to see this principle demonstrated. In Genesis 17, we find God coming to speak to Abraham. The previous conversation between them had been before Ishmael was conceived. For thirteen years Ishmael grew up in the house and according to Abraham's understanding, Ishmael was the son that God had promised to send. However at this juncture, God re-aligns Abraham's understanding and speaks to him about covenant and circumcision.

Hagar was an Egyptian. Egypt is a type of the world and its ways. When the seed of Abraham joined with the ovum of the world, Ishmael was brought forth. Sarai represents the barren Church living with this Ishmael in the house of Faith. She is told that what is growing up in the house is a manifestation of God's promise, yet the child's ways are the ways of his mother. He has been raised on the milk of the world system and so his mannerisms and the way he walks blend in more with Egypt than they should. The general atmosphere of the house is mixture. In my opinion, to a large extent, this mirrors the situation in much of God's house. We have borrowed the ways of

the world. Techniques used for the growth of large commercial companies are borrowed and implemented in the church in an effort to produce growth in numbers and to present a professional face to the world. When the world looks at the Ishmael which has grown up in the House, they don't see Father God – they can see his mother, Hagar of Egypt, in him.

Jesus cannot have a Bride who is part Egyptian!

She must be pure and chaste, set-apart and holy for her Groom. Therefore it is time for God to have a conversation with His Body. It is time for circumcision. It is necessary for the fleshly covering over the source of our seed to be removed permanently. Ishmael was thirteen when he was circumcised. This is the age when a Jewish boy enters manhood. He moves from being under the tutelage of his mother to being under the personal teaching of his father. He is educated in the Word of God by his father.

Similarly it is time for each member of the Body of Christ to stop looking to the pulpit of its mother, the Church, and to begin to sit at the Father's feet and receive personal instruction under the guidance of the Spirit. It is time to grow into maturity and begin to receive meat from the Father's hand Himself. The application of the sword from the mouth of the Living

Word is what brings about the circumcision of Ishmael in the house. It is a painful process when the division between what is soulish (worldly, fleshly) and that which is truly of the Spirit, takes place.

Gen 17:26,27 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Notice that God decreed that every man in Abraham's house was to be circumcised. Both those who have fathered the son that is in the house at this point AND all who are in the house, come under the same knife. There is no distinction in God's dealings in these days. He is coming to circumcise the hearts of leadership and the hearts of the rest of the Body.

Ishmael is also representative of the group of Israelites that arrived at the border of the Promised Land without the covenant mark of circumcision upon them. They were adults but God required that the foreskins be removed as soon as they entered the land. Their parents may have come out of Egypt forty years before but it seems that Egypt had not come out of them for they failed to circumcise their sons and they perished in the wilderness. Any remnant of the ways of Hagar will prevent us entering and experiencing our Promised Land.

Ishmael and Sarai are both a picture of much the same thing; barrenness and the borrowing of a worldly womb in order to produce something that looks like true fruitfulness. There is A son in the house – the problem is just that it is not THE son of promise and if Sarai, the barren Church, is honest with herself, she knows when she looks at this thirteen year old son before her, that this cannot possibly be the manifestation of what God has promised by His Word. The problem is she just does not know how to manifest the promise herself. She is an old wineskin, dried out and stiff. However, God is in the business of producing new wineskins! On the day Ishmael was circumcised, Sarai had a name change! This is significant because ‘Sarai’ means ‘headstrong, willful’. Then God changed her name to Sarah, which means ‘princess, queen’. He actually took one of the letters of His name and inserted it into her name. The circumcision of the son of mixture will begin the re-emergence of the character of God in the Church once again.

It is recorded in Genesis 18, that Sarah laughed when she heard that she would have a child. Basically, she was saying, “ been there, done that, got the tee-shirt. Gone through all the motions of intimacy with my husband for years and years, but nothing has ever come of it; I have brought forth only wind.” This is the voice of hope deferred. It has made the heart sick. There many in the Body who have grown disillusioned with hearing the talk and never experiencing the

results. In fact, living with Ishmael has become too much for them and sickened in heart, they have chosen to eavesdrop from the doorway, rather than be a part of this conversation. The promise God spoke many years previously has never materialized in purity and they have become cynical. They listen to the message that fruitfulness is coming for the Church and they laugh. For these ones, God in His kindness is going to repeat His Word of promise over their lives in this season, just as He did with Sarah. This will cause them, like Sarah, to enter the conversation fully and be a part of what God is doing. No more hiding in the shadow of the tent door, being a silent observer of God speaking to others.

According to Genesis 17:17, Sarai was ninety when Ishmael was circumcised. Isaac was born in the same season the following year. Therefore Sarah was ninety-one when she brought forth the promised son. Do you remember Anna, who dwelt in the temple? She lived with her husband for seven years. Then she had eighty four years of widowhood. This adds up to a total of ninety-one years. After **ninety-one** years, Anna brought forth the message of Christ to all who were looking for redemption. In just the same way, many, many years before, Sarah brought forth the son of promise at the age of **ninety-one**. She did not bring him forth in her own strength or by borrowing the womb of another. She brought him forth by the Spirit, not by might or power, in God's appointed time.

The thirteen years during which Ishmael grew in the house were the years of the trying and purging of the vessel that is the Church, in order to make it fit to house the glory of the manifested Son. They parallel the thirteen years Joseph spent in the prison of preparation.

Following the repeating of the promise to Sarah, the discussion turns to Sodom. The Lord expresses His intention to destroy the city and Abraham begins to intercede for it according to the number of righteous men found therein. Eventually the Lord promises not to destroy the city if ten righteous men be found in it. I have always considered Sodom to be a depiction of great evil and immorality. However there is a very interesting verse in Revelations

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Here it seems that both Sodom and Egypt are spiritual names for Jerusalem. This is an indication that within this city that is known as belonging to the King of Kings, there are characteristics that are not fitting. Worldliness, uncleanness and immorality are found therein. If God's city is to truly be the light of the world, then certain elements need to be dealt with. We also read in Isaiah chapter 1, in a prophecy addressed to Judah and Jerusalem, that the Lord later refers to

them as Sodom and Gomorrah because the faithful city has become a harlot. When the Church borrows the womb of the world in order to produce some semblance of fruitfulness, God is determined to do what it takes to restore her to 'the city of righteousness' again (v 26)

We are told in the New Testament that everything written in the Old Testament was for the purpose of teaching us. Therefore, the description of Abraham's conversation with the Lord about Sodom is more than just a record of Abraham's debating ability. The key lies in the Lord's final statement that if there are ten righteous men found there, then He will not destroy it. Ten men speaks of a tithe company. The tithe is the portion that belongs to God. So if there can be found within the city, the portion that belongs to God, then it shall not be destroyed. Yet we know that Sodom was destroyed. How does this tie up? In Isaiah 65, when the Lord is discussing the sinful state of His people, He speaks about preserving His servants which are in their midst and likens them to the new wine:

Isa 65:8 Thus says the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

When new wine is extracted from the cluster, that which housed the juice is crushed but the juice is

preserved. The former receptacle is discarded but that which is of value, that which is of God is brought forth to bring joy to the hearts of those in the new season. Lot was a relative of Abraham's and he was extracted from Sodom as it was destroyed. Sadly his daughters took the wine of Sodom with them and it was this they used to make their father drunk and then bring forth children of an incestuous union.

The old wine must be left behind with the old wineskin.

We cannot afford to carry anything tainted by the world or the unclean atmosphere of Sodom with us on our journey toward the new wineskin.

After circumcision, Abraham moves location. Once the Church has been through its circumcision dealings with the two-edged sword, it moves to a new spiritual location. However, like his nephew, we find Abraham also entering into compromise on the way to the new wineskin.

Gen 20:1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

Kadesh means 'sanctuary' and comes from a root word meaning 'to consecrate'. However 'Shur' means 'to travel about as a harlot'. Here he was choosing to live

between these two locations, not fully consecrated and in danger of being influenced by the ways of Sodom. He pitched his tent at a place, Gerar, which means 'to chew the cud'. Anyone who has seen a cow chewing the cud, knows that it regurgitates something it has already eaten and chews it again. So Abraham is going over the same old meal as the previous season. He seems to have brought the wine of Sodom along with him and is sipping and savoring it. How do we know this? He operates in deception, passing his wife off as his sister to protect his own skin. Let us learn from Abraham and make sure we do not also attempt to bring our old teachings and Second-Day nourishment into the Third Day.

He is prepared to put the woman who is destined to bring forth the promised son in harms way for his own temporary comfort. This is shortsighted at best because if anything happens to her, he will not get to experience the manifestation of the promise. Furthermore God requires a womb that has never been exposed to another man's seed, to bring forth this promise.

Here, in chapter 20, we see how God protects the wineskin that will pour forth the new wine. Justice and recompense is the order of the day as God supernaturally deals with every area of compromise and injustice toward His Sarah. Beloved, God will protect you from every attempt to defile or bring you

into captivity to the harems of men. He will preserve you holy and set-apart for Himself and the purposes he has ordained for your life! You can trust Him to protect you.

After Sarah is returned to her rightful place, then it is time for her to conceive and at the appointed time, bring forth that which has been grown within her womb.

Gen 21:4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Isaac becomes the first child to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life, setting in motion the pattern of the new wineskin. Eight is the number of new beginnings.

Gen 21:6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.

Sarah laughed because her season of joy had come after a long night of weeping and heartache. A hallmark of the manifestation of the fruitful Bride and the appearance of this promised son will be fullness of joy in the Lord's presence. This joy will be because of the fulfillment and manifestation of long-awaited promises. There will also be a great feast provided by the Father of Lights as this child is weaned from milk and moves on to the meat of the Word.

Ishmael and Isaac may co-exist together for a season but Isaac will not come to full maturity unharmed in the presence of Ishmael's jealous behavior. It is at this point that there comes a final separation between Ishmael and Isaac. The Word records that a man's enemies will be the members of his own household as Jesus uses the sword of separation He came to bring. That which was birthed through the manipulations and scheming of man, and which has the genes of the world systems running through its veins, can no longer dwell side by side with that which is brought forth by God. Mockery is childish behavior and once maturity is reached, childish ways must be laid aside.

Once again the soulish must be separated from that which is born of the Spirit. The house must be single minded, with the mind of Christ. The moneychangers and sellers of doves must be driven out of the temple. The son of promise must have the freedom and space to grow in wisdom and favor within the house and both paternal and maternal graces must lavish their full attention on that which God is raising up before their eyes.

Chapter Eighteen

Delays, Detours and Disappointments

Have you ever wondered why it seems to take so long for the Lord to bring His promises to pass? Many have been holding on to promises received concerning their loved ones or their own breakthrough. We understand at some level that the trial we are going through is purifying and shaping us but sometimes we struggle to understand the timing of the Lord. I personally have prayed using this verse from psalm 118 many times:

Psa 119:82 My eyes fail watching for the fulfillment of Your promise; When will You comfort me?

So often it seems that all the signs are pointing in the right direction and then suddenly there is an unexpected turn of events and one is catapulted back into the waiting room and left to wrestle with hope deferred and to re-examine one's movements, wondering whether somehow one has inadvertently derailed God's plans. When this happens repeatedly, exhaustion is the overriding feeling and yet, because we truly hold onto a God-breathed Word of promise, it eventually bobs to the surface of our hearts once again just like an inflated life-belt. Not even the biggest wave or the strongest under-current can keep it submerged indefinitely! The breath of God can not be kept down – His words rise toward the heavens from which they

came and do accomplish the purpose for which He sent them! However, it is the time between the speaking of a promise and the embracing of its fulfillment that forms the crucible in which we are forged as suitable earthen vessels. And it is precisely here where we desperately need understanding of God's ways – otherwise we are tempted to doubt His character and integrity!

One time when I was wrestling with the reason for the delays, detours and disappointments we encounter en-route to fulfillment-point, the Lord whispered, "these are my synchronizing tools" and I had the impression of a number of different clocks all being adjusted so that they would display the same time and strike in unison. I was immediately reminded of Joseph languishing in prison, seemingly wasting the best years of his youth. Yet the Holy Spirit reminded me of psalm 105:

Psa 105:16,17 Then He called down a famine on the country, He broke every last blade of wheat. But he sent a man on ahead: Joseph, sold as a slave.

Suddenly I understood - God knew the famine would be coming upon Egypt and so years before that happened, He began to set in motion a plan which would not only counteract the effects of the famine but also bring the family of Jacob to Egypt. God's plan was embodied in a man – Joseph. In order to produce a

vessel which would effectively carry out the elaborate plan, God instituted a remarkably complex and, at times baffling, series of experiences in the life of Joseph. It wasn't only about Joseph but also about every person whom his life would touch along the way. Eventually they ALL benefited from what God did through Joseph!

To our human minds, the shortest route from A to B is the most preferable. However, God has the welfare of more than one person in mind. John 3:16 tells us that God so loved THE WORLD that He sent His only Son. When God is unfolding His plans, they are intended for the good and the benefit of far more than just our little inner circle. What God was doing with Joseph was intended to benefit not only his family but the whole nation of Egypt! This is where the picture of the clocks comes in. Some of those clocks were running fast and had to have their hands turned back. Others needed moving forward. Every single one needed adjustment in order to synchronize them to strike at the appointed moment with the large central clock. In the same way, in Joseph's case, God kept Joseph in prison until the appointed moment when the warning dream was given to Pharaoh. If Joseph had been let out years earlier, he would have blended back into Egyptian society, probably finding work in yet another government official's house. He may even have tried to return home. God needed Joseph to be in prison when the butler and baker were there briefly. There needed

to be a connection made between the butler and Joseph because God was going to use the butler in order to position Joseph exactly where He had planned years before for him to be.

Psa 105:19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of Jehovah tried him. Psa 105:20 The king sent and loosed him; Even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free. Psa 105:21 He made him lord of his house, And ruler of all his substance; Psa 105:22 To bind his princes at his pleasure, And teach his elders wisdom. Psa 105:23 Israel also came into Egypt; And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

The detours Joseph took firstly to Egypt and then into the prison house were God's synchronizing and positioning tools in order to fully complete the promise He had given Joseph in dreams in his youth. The disappointment Joseph experienced when the butler left prison and forgot about him and the delay in his release date served to synchronize the clock of Egypt with God's prophetic purpose for His people Israel.

So many have focused on Joseph arising to rule in Egypt and dispensing grain in the time of famine. Yet God's positioning of Joseph accomplished so much more than this. Joseph was instrumental in causing Jacob and his sons to immigrate to the land of Ham, as the above psalm states. If it had been any other man dispensing grain in Egypt, Jacob's sons would just have

fetches supplies and returns home. God sends Joseph ahead in order to prepare a place of safety for His people. Influence with Pharaoh means that Jacob's family is assured safe passage through Egypt to Goshen where they can pasture their herds. This places them in a geographical position where the next chapter of God's promise to Abraham can play out.

Egypt also represents the world. There are those whom God has prepared in pits and prisons in order to bring them to a place of influence in the world at His appointed time. They are there not only to bring wisdom and strategy but to draw God's people out of their holy huddle and into the world outside where the greatest harvest the church has ever seen is waiting to come in. Joseph caused Benjamin, the son of the right hand, to be brought to light in Egypt. Previously Benjamin had been hidden at home in his father's house. At God's appointed time Joseph was instrumental in bringing Benjamin into view. For those who are waiting in prison and wrestling with the reasons for the delays, detours and disappointments they've encountered, know that God is preparing to use your life to bring Benjamin out of the insular little gatherings we call 'the Father's house' and manifest the Son of the Right Hand, Christ, in the world. In His appointed time....

Jesus was both the Son of Man and the Son of God. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief until

His resurrection. Then He ascended to the right hand of the Father and is now seated and reigns as the Son of God in power. Joseph as a type of Jesus also was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief until he arose from the prison to a place of glory and honor as Pharaoh's right-hand man. Benjamin was called Benoni, 'son of my sorrow', for the first seven days of his life. Then came the eighth day, the day of naming and circumcision, when his father declared him to be Benjamin, 'son of the right hand'! Benjamin's first eight days of life are a précis of Joseph's first thirty years and a picture of what God is doing in the lives of His sons as he prepares to unveil them to the world.

Timing is everything and hindsight brings understanding! Simply put, God sees the whole picture and we are aware only of our own little portion. God unfolds His plans for the good of all involved. He is so determined to fulfill His desires for our lives that He even works trans-generationally in order to put everything into place and synchronize events in time with His eternal purposes. Let's look at the generation which came before Joseph and see how God used delays, detours and disappointments as tools in manifesting His determined purpose.

Jacob desired to marry Rachel and did whatever was required in order to marry her.

Gen 29:18 And Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him a few days, for the love he had for her.

Yet the morning after his wedding, he discovered he was married to her older sister. Talk about disappointment! How heartbroken Rachel must have been to see her father deviously dressing up her sister as the bride and then to be told she could marry her beloved after he had spent a week's honeymoon with Leah! I sense some of God's people have experienced this. They have seen some sort of fulfillment of God's promise but there is an ever-present Leah marring their experience. This is not the way they had pictured the unfolding of the promise – why is heartbreak mixed in with joy? Isn't God powerful enough to have prevented Laban from carrying out his deception? There is a crowd, not to mention the two nursemaids!! Can you call this a fulfillment of the promise of God? There seem to be too many actors on this stage – someone must have the wrong script! Or so it seems until we realize that the play that God has written has many more scenes than we envisaged and the grand finale is not even going to be played out in this generation of the family!

If we take a few steps back and try and see this story from the perspective of God's plan which would continue to unfold in the next generation, we realize that if Jacob had married Rachel straight away, he would never have married Leah because he would have had his heart's desire. Also, having completed his seven years of work for Rachel, the couple would have left to seek their own fortune elsewhere.

Leah was a very necessary part of the whole plan because she provided Joseph with most of his older brothers! Synchronization, delay, detour – God's positioning tools! If Jacob had married Rachel first and she had borne Joseph as their first son, who would there have been to feel jealous of Joseph and sent him off to Egypt in chains? The older brothers were a very necessary part of shaping Joseph into the vessel ready to carry out God's ultimate purpose for him! So Rachel's disappointment, her barrenness and the delay in conceiving Joseph, all contributed to the synchronizing of the clocks and the provision of the other players in the unfolding drama of God's secret plan.

As Rachel watched son after son being born while she remained barren, she secretly wrestled with God, being shaped in the process into a vessel which would be meet to raise the young Joseph in his early years. The fact that she named him Joseph, meaning 'He will add', is evidence of the strength of her faith in God as a

fulfiller of her heart's desire. She effectively was saying that Joseph was the first-fruits of her womb, there was more to come. This was not all there was to the fulfillment of His promise to her. For many in the Body of Christ, they too have joyously embraced the first-fruits of the manifested promise. Yet, when the remainder has come forth bringing days of wracking pain and heartache in the birthing process, they have called this portion 'son of my sorrow', Benoni, and have let go of life, closing their eyes and giving up.

Remember, Beloved, just as Jesus experienced sorrows and was acquainted with grief for a season, just as Joseph had a pit and a prison, so too for those who are bringing forth the promises of God into the earthly realm, there is appointed a season, seven days, of sorrow and death. But glory, hallelujah, there is always an eighth day, a day of elevation, a day of name-changing, a day when the Son of the Right Hand is lifted up and declared in the earth. From the grave of those who have laid down their lives to bring forth the Man of Sorrows, the Son of God will be glorified and given His rightful place.

So, my precious brothers and sisters in Christ, keeping all these things in mind, view your own situation. All those places where delay seemed to derail God's promise and yet you held on; all the times where breathless expectation gave way to disappointment as the pictured manifestation took wings and

disappeared; every signpost which you thought was a confirmation but which led you on a long detour; do these mean that God is not going to bring to pass His Word to you? Of course not! A Word uttered by the mouth of the Eternal God cannot return void – it WILL accomplish exactly what He sent it to do; just as Joseph accomplished exactly what God sent him to do! All the places that caused you to doubt your ability to hear or God's ability to complete, were in fact just instances where the Almighty hand needed to further synchronize earthly clocks in order to bring an outcome for the good of many more people than you are aware of!

All things DO work together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose, even the delays, detours and disappointments. We can't see it now but one day hindsight will make it plain. Until then, let us breathe a sigh of relief, we haven't missed the train, passed the turn-off or derailed God's purpose. Let us trust the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of God.

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and His paths past tracing out!

When our hearts are submitted to Him, there is nothing the enemy can do to destroy or abort God's spoken plans. We are safely in His hand and He is busy working all things for our good and His glory. He will

get you where you need to be right on TIME. Chairos and chronos time will coincide and our lives will resound with the chimes of His glory.

Psalm 57:2AMP I will cry to God most high, Who performs on my behalf and rewards me - Who brings to pass His purposes for me and surely completes them!

Chapter Nineteen

Oil from the Tree of Life

Jesus is the Tree of life or as psalm 36 puts it:

'for with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.'

Jesus, the Tree of Life, is also the Tree of Light. He is also depicted by the branch of the olive tree, the natural Israel into which we are grafted. Isaiah 11: 1 says:

'and there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots shall grow and bear fruit.'

Jesus is referred to also as the Root of David in Revelation 5:5. Jesus also declared in Revelation 22:16 that He is both the Root and the Offspring of David. He is both the Root and the Branch.

When we investigate the Hebrew word for 'Olive', we find that it is the word 'zayith' which is used for 'the tree, the branch or the berry'. The other Hebrew word translated 'olive' is 'shaman', which means 'richness, anointing, liquid grease from the olive' and comes from the root word meaning 'to shine'. This word 'shaman' is only used in 1 Kings 6 where the doors and cherubim for the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple were made

of olive wood. They speak of the richness of the anointing to be found within the Holy of Holies. The olive is symbolic of the fruit of the tree of Life. It is also symbolic of the anointing. If we eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life we will live forever (Gen 3:22).

In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the wise virgins made sure that they not only had oil in their lamps but they also had spare oil.

Oil in abundance is found in the dwelling of the wise.

The oil comes from the olive which grows on the olive tree. Therefore the abundance of oil in our lives is dependent on our being connected in to the source of supply, which is Jesus. It is by dwelling in His presence, abiding before His face that we are assured of a continuous supply of oil in our lives.

In Zechariah 4 there is a description of a lamp stand with pipes connecting it to the olive trees, so that it is continuously supplied with oil. When the angel is asked what the significance of the pipes is, he speaks the Word of the Lord of hosts; 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit'.

Nothing of eternal value is accomplished in the kingdom by the strength of man. The lamp stand is a picture of the Church which God intended to be the

light of the world. However the menorah cannot supply light by its own effort. It needs a continuous supply of oil, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, to make a difference in this world. Christ wants His Bride to be, not a lighthouse, which gives flashes of intermittent light to ships at sea, but a house of light, continuously filled with the light and power of God so that the nations will be drawn in. The Church is intended to be a light shining in the dense darkness for the lost and hurting to run to. In Isaiah 32 it speaks of a king ruling in righteousness and princes reigning with justice. Each of these princes will be:

'like a hiding place from the wind, and a shelter from the storm; like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.'

Righteousness and justice are the foundations of God's throne.

He wants to be enthroned in the midst of us, with each of our lives displaying the character and light of Christ. Within our hearts there has to be an establishment of these two foundations, righteousness and justice. Only then will we be able to execute His reign upon the earth and allow His kingdom to be established on earth as it is in heaven. So the Lord is dealing with areas of unrighteousness and injustice in our lives. In Isaiah 11 there is a description of Christ in verse 3:

'He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes or the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness and justice shall he judge the poor...'

This is a pattern of the way the Lord wants us to live; not by our natural senses and in the flesh but rather by His Spirit executing righteous judgments in the earth on His behalf. In Isaiah 59, God describes His chosen fast:

'to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free.....then shall your light break forth as the morning and your healing shall spring forth speedily; your righteousness shall go before you and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard'

We all want our light to break forth and the glory of the Lord to follow us - but for this to happen there has to be a dealing with areas of unrighteousness and injustice. The places we have allowed these two things to remain in our hearts and lives hinder the breaking forth of His light in our lives. God's light shines when His oil has filled us and been lit. So as we abide in His presence, yielding to the convicting and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit's searchlight, there is a continual separation of darkness from light and an increase of the store of oil within our spirits.

If we look at the process which is used to obtain oil from the olive, we understand that it is in the place of

pressure, within and without, that the oil is yielded. 'Gethsemane' means 'oil-press'. It was in this place that Jesus wrestled with himself until He could come to the place where He said, "not My will, but Yours be done". It is at the place of dying to self that the oil of God's anointing is released. It is at the place of pressing that the ability to be the light of the world comes forth.

Paul understood this principle very well. In 2 Corinthians 4 he describes a life in which one is pressed but not crushed, struck down but not destroyed:

'always carrying about in the body the same putting to death that Jesus suffered, so that the life of Christ may also be shown forth in our bodies. For we who live are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus may also be evidenced through our flesh.'

This sounds rather burdensome until we read further on in verse 17:

'for our light , momentary affliction is ever more abundantly producing for us a lasting weight of glory-beyond all measure!'

Dying to self produces glory in our lives and in proportion to the measure we allow ourselves to decrease, Christ will increase within us. The more death to self, the more life and light flows out to others.

**If we want to share His glory, we have to
share His suffering.**

There is no other way to have the glory of God in our lives. What comforts us is that we do not do this in our own strength, but rather through the power of God because He is working in us both to want to do and to carry out His good pleasure. God's Word has a self-fulfilling power inherent in it, which causes our lives to come into line with what He has spoken over us. As Isaiah 61:11 puts it:

'For as surely as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring forth, so surely the Lord God will cause rightness and justice and praise to spring forth before all nations.'

God is going to do a work within His Church that will cause the foundations of righteousness and justice to be established and praise to be given to Him. The light and glory of God is going to again be seen in His Church and he shall rule from the midst of her. This is the 3rd-day Church described in psalm 110:

'The Lord will send forth from Zion the scepter of Your strength; rule then, in the midst of Your foes. Your people will offer themselves willingly in the day of Your power, in the beauty of holiness out of the womb of the morning; to You will spring forth Your young men who are as the dew.'

God is restoring holiness and purity to His Bride, so that He may dwell in the midst of her. His desire is for His glory to find a resting place within His Church. He wants His Bride to be without spot or wrinkle, a holy habitation for a holy God, shining forth light to the nations.

Chapter Twenty

Dressing for the King

Once Esther had had her year of beauty treatment with oil and spices, she had to dress to bring pleasure to the King. Only the keeper of the house, a type of the Holy Spirit, knows what touches the King's heart, what garments will cause him to fall madly in love with her the moment He sees her. Only He knows what adornments and jewels she should wear. If we are wise like Esther, we will not approach our Bridegroom clothed in the rags of self-righteousness but rather in the garments which are heaven's dress code.

1 Peter 5:5 gives instructions on the kind of clothing which is pleasing to our Beloved:

'Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility for God sets Himself against the proud but gives grace to the humble.'

Colossians 3:12,13 also have advice for us:

Clothe yourselves as God's representatives, by putting on behavior marked by tenderhearted pity and mercy, kind feeling, a lowly opinion of yourselves, gentle ways, and patience. Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if anyone has a difference against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has freely forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And above all these put on love...'

The way we behave provides a garment for our hearts. We are so concerned about our outward appearance but the Lord is looking at our hearts because He sees not as man sees. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are all attitudes and behaviors that are seen externally but they will not be manifested unless our hearts have been clothed with them first. There is a putting off of the old nature and an opening up of the heart to receive the new nature. 1 Peter 3:4 explains that our emphasis should not be on the outward appearance but that our beauty should be the inward adorning of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible and unfading charm of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. The Lord doesn't want his people clothed with the garments of religion which have an outward appearance of spirituality but leave the heart untouched.

Proverbs 3:3 instructs us to wear mercy and kindness around our necks, attached so firmly that they cannot be stripped from us. These are not attributes that we take off and put on when we think the situation demands it. The Lord wants us to operate in mercy and kindness in every circumstance that we experience. Then we will be displaying the character of our King. Proverbs 4:8,9 speak of the adorning that Wisdom bestows on the Bride:

'she shall give to your head a wreath of gracefulness; a crown of beauty and glory will she deliver to you'

This is the tiara which Jesus wants His royal Bride to wear upon her head! Wisdom not only decorates the head of the Bride but also provides her perfume - in Song of Songs, the King comments that His Beloved's garments have the odor of Lebanon (Songs 3:11). 'Lebanon' comes from the Hebrew word 'lebab' which means 'the heart, the feelings, the will, wisdom'. God desires for His Bride to have a heart of wisdom; to be able to discern between good and evil and to make the right choices (remember Mary who chose the good portion of sitting at Jesus' feet). This will cause our garments and our lives to carry the fragrance of Christ.

When we walk into a room, the perfume emanating from our lives should cause the other people there to turn round and take note that we have been with Jesus. 1 Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ Jesus is our wisdom. So as we spend time in the close embrace of our Beloved, His fragrance will be transferred to us and permeate our garments. People will smell we've been intimate with the Bridegroom because His aftershave will be upon us!

What other jewelry does the Bride of Christ wear? Isaiah 49:18 speaks of the Bride putting on her bridal jewels:

'lift your eyes round about, and see; all these gather together and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you Zion, shall surely clothe yourself with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does.'

It is speaking of souls coming into the Kingdom. The Bride who captures the heart of the Bridegroom is a soul-winner. She ornaments herself with the lives of those she has harvested for the Kingdom. Proverbs 11:30 says that he who is wise captures human lives for God. Once again Wisdom plays a role in dressing the Bride for her Beloved. No wonder Proverbs 4:7 declares that wisdom is the principal thing.

The Bride of Christ is also clothed with a garment of praise. She worships God in spirit and in truth and understands Isaiah 43:21

'the people that I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise'

She knows what feeds God. In the intimacy of the secret place she will give the Lord what he hungers for. Leviticus 21:6 describes something that feeds God:

'they offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy'

It is our holy lives laid upon the altar and consumed by fire that is the bread that satisfies God's hunger.

Whatever we give from the depths of our hearts freely as priests, holy and set-apart for His purposes, becomes food with a pleasing aroma to God's nostrils! Jesus says that He stands at the door and knocks and if we let Him in, He will eat with us and us with Him.

**Intimate communion with God is a banquet
where both are fed.**

We are not just servants waiting on God's table; we are sons, eating with our Father; we are the Bride dining with her Bridegroom. As we pour out of our hearts the kind of food God loves best, He, in return, feeds and ministers to us. We learn from the Word that He desires to feed us with the finest of wheat and honey from the rock. But what would He like to eat first? Song of Solomon 5:1 gives us a clue:

'I have gathered my myrrh and my spices, from your sweet words I have gathered the richest perfumes and spices; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk'

But where does He get the honey and wine and milk from? We find the answer in Songs 4:10 and 11:

'How beautiful is your love, my sister, my promised bride! How much better is your love than wine! And the fragrance of your ointments than all spices! Your lips, O my bride,

drop honey as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue'

It is the words of love and adoration poured out of a worshiping heart that minister to and feed God. He is hungry for the love of His people and longs to hear the voice of His Beloved, telling Him of her love for Him.

Jesus said that He had food to eat that His disciples knew nothing about; 'My bread is to do the will of My Father'. When we break the bread of our wills and say, "not my will but thine be done", as Jesus did in Gethsemane, then God is fed and when He is fed, then He in turn feeds us (" and there appeared an angel from Heaven, strengthening Him in spirit'). May the meditations of our hearts be sweet-tasting to the Lord so that we would become one of His favorite dwelling places!

God the Father desires for the Bride of His Son to have the Spirit without measure (a limitless supply) just as Jesus had. Christ operated in the fullness of the Spirit; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2). We have all received a measure of the Spirit, a down-payment and guarantee of the fullness to come.

We see a picture of this in the book of Ruth. She received her first measure of barley when she was out

gleaning in the fields (Ruth 2:17). Then Ruth washed and anointed herself and, wearing her best clothes, she went down to the threshing floor at night and lay at Boaz' feet. When he noticed her, she asked him to spread his wing over her. In other words, she was proposing to him! He instructed her to remain at his feet until morning.

When she arose very early in the morning, he asked her to bring her mantle and he measured out a further six measures of barley for her. Ruth expended no effort to get these measures, but only presented herself at the threshing floor, rightly prepared and lay at his feet until the morning. The mantle represents her call and giftings, which received a further impartation of six measures poured into it. So in total she had seven measures, which represents the fullness of the Spirit or the Spirit without measure.

If we will cleanse and clothe ourselves to please our Bridegroom, wear the perfume of His choice and go to the threshing floor, scorning the shame and opinions of man, we will be presented with an opportunity to lie at His feet.

Ruth went to the threshing floor uninvited, to a place where women were not welcome, risking the scorn and rejection of those who were there. The threshing floor represents the place of separation and refining. Are we willing to prepare our hearts and go there, even though

our reputations are at risk? Then Ruth did something else that was culturally out of order. She asked Boaz to become her husband. Usually the man was the one who did the asking in those days. Are we willing to take risks, to break out of our cultural molds and express the hunger of our hearts for Jesus, no matter what others think?

Notice that this meeting between them took place in secret. Others did not know she was there and Boaz instructed her to leave before anyone saw her. It is in the secret place that you will express your hunger of Christ and in turn receive the fullness of the Spirit. It is a private transaction between you and your Bridegroom, unseen by the eyes of others. This place where Ruth remained all night is the place where the Bride of Christ must be found, at His feet, in a posture of worship and abandonment, until the morning of the Third Day.

Ruth received her remaining six measures in secret but she carried it into town to her mother-in-law. Others were fed and blessed because of Ruth's choice to prepare herself, die to pride and her own reputation, and go to the threshing floor. What happens between you and God in the secret place of your prayer closet is seen by no man, but your Father who sees what you do in secret, will reward you openly. The mantle of your anointing will bear the mark of the fullness of the Spirit and many will be fed and blessed by your life. It is a

Bride that bears the glory of her Groom that is a fitting crown for her husband, so do not fear the threshing floor and the process of refining for there is a glorious afterward awaiting you. Proverbs 12:4 proclaims:

'a virtuous and worthy wife is a crown to her husband'

We want to become a Bride like the one described in Proverbs 31; one who is far more precious than jewels, and her value far above rubies and pearls. We want to hear the voice of our Bridegroom boasting of us, saying:

'many daughters have done nobly and well but you excel them all. Charm and grace are deceptive, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised! Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates of the city!'

For this reason, let us put our hand into that of the Holy Spirit and work with Him, not resisting the areas He wants to work in but submitting willingly to every beauty treatment He, in His wisdom, may decide to apply to our hearts; so that when the Bridegroom comes, we may be found ready, without spot or wrinkle, radiant with the glory of our Groom. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Chapter Twenty-One

Is That Isaac up Ahead?

All the beauty treatments that the Bride goes through are for a purpose. When the Bride has made herself ready and put the finishing touches to her whole outfit, she is then ready to go to the wedding and be joined to her groom. Although the months of preparation have been arduous and exhausting, they are behind her now and all she can think of is catching sight of the face of her beloved Bridegroom waiting for her at the altar.

Rebekah had been on a long road away from security and all that was familiar in order to join herself to this man she had heard so much about. Let us focus on the point in time where Rebekah catches sight of Isaac at the end of her journey with Eliezer.

Gen 24:64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and she saw Isaac. And she dismounted from the camel. Gen 24:65 For she said to the servant, What man is this that walks in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master. Therefore she took a veil and covered herself.

Rebekah had been on this journey by faith. Up until this point she had never set eyes upon her bridegroom. She had embarked on the trip, having only met his servant and having received the gifts sent for her. Along the way, Eliezer had shared things about her

betrothed with her, so that she had some idea of what to expect, but until this moment, she had glimpsed him only with the eyes of her heart. She had to ask Eliezer who this man in front of her was. Then once she received the confirmation, she took a veil and covered herself. This signified that she was set-apart for her husband and that he would only see her face to face in the intimacy of the marriage tent.

In the same way, there are many who have been journeying with the eye of faith towards their appointed destiny in God. The unique gifts they carry testify to the unchanging fact of their being chosen and set-apart for a specific purpose. They are not brides who stand on the auction floor, ready to be wed to the highest bidder. They have been chosen before the foundation of the world to be conformed into the image of the One who paid the bridal price for them and they will bear His name alone. They will not be known by the name of any denomination or work of man – I am of Paul or I am of Apollos. They will be known only as belonging to Christ, the Anointed One.

Therefore it is vitally important that they receive the confirmation that the one that they see coming closer and closer is indeed God's appointed mate for them. Is this the beginning of the fulfillment of all that has burned within them for so long? Is this the one, or should they look for another?

We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which He has prepared beforehand for us to walk in. Are these the good works specifically chosen for us; is this door the one He has prepared for us or is the time of preparation not yet over. Is there another leg of the desert journey still to go? We can only seek confirmation from the Holy Spirit, Who has been our companion on this journey. Only He Who knows the face of God can confirm to us whether we have reached our date with destiny.

1Co 2:9 But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1Co 2:10 But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1Co 2:11 For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 1Co 2:12 But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.

For some of us, there have been so many false starts, so many hopes dashed to the ground, that we have resigned ourselves to being content with prison life. After all, like Joseph, we still function in the favor of God within these limited parameters. Joseph had thought that he would be released soon after the butler and baker ascended from the prison depths. However, two long years passed before the butler's memory was

divinely prodded. Whatever the finishing touches were that the Lord needed to put to Joseph's heart before his rising into his appointed destiny, these were surely the two hardest years of Joseph's captivity. All his mindsets about the way God's promise would be fulfilled fell shattered into the grave of his hopes and dreams. Even the gift God had given him in interpreting dreams had not bought him a release. He had to learn that it was not about his giftedness but about God's precision timing and the eternal purposes of a whole nation.

In just the same way, Beloved, your release into the purpose God has ordained, will affect far more than just you and your narrow circle of present influence.

God carries the nations in His heart.

God so loved the whole world that he sent His Son. He has not been fashioning you into an instrument only to have you touch one or two. You are to be a witness even to the ends of the earth. The living letter of your life will be read and passed on from hand to hand, profoundly impacting more people than you will ever realize this side of heaven. Therefore, God has taken great pains to ensure that what is written upon the tablet of your heart, makes plain and clear reading, no smudges, no ambiguity, just words that pierce the hearts of the listeners.

The word 'workmanship' comes from the Greek word meaning 'poem'. You are God's poem and as poets know, some of the lines flow easily from the pen. Others must be tasted and tried over and over before they sing and march with the same rhythm as the preceding lines. God has weighed each living word He has etched upon your heart and yes, it is the writing or engraving that has caused you such pain - but once engraved there, no storm or rain will be able to wash them away. Even after you die, your life will still speak.

When Joseph came out of prison, he was emptied of self. No longer was he the brash young man, prophesying his own future glory. He was not even the seasoned prisoner declaring that he had the answer for the butler and baker's confusion. When he stood before pharaoh, he knew that in himself, he had nothing to give. Only that which was given by God Almighty would be an answer to Pharaoh's perplexity.

Gen 41:15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and none can interpret it. And I have heard it about you, saying, you can understand a dream to interpret it. Gen 41:16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, Not I. God shall answer the welfare of Pharaoh

We are only useful to God when we become emptied of ourselves, our spiritual ambitions, our desires for greatness and our need for the approval of men.

When Rebekah received the confirmation that this was indeed her destination, the Bible says she dismounted or descended from the height at which she had been traveling. She knew who she was, the betrothed of Isaac. She knew where she had come from – she had left all to follow him. She knew where she was going to – a life of intimacy and fruitfulness with the son of promise. Therefore it was time to descend. Descending speaks of dying to self. The path to life is via the grave. This is one of the ways you can recognize your Isaac. If you do not have to descend to reach him, then it is a counterfeit, designed to lure you into deception and bondage.

**The enemy will always offer you a crown
without a cross.**

He offered Jesus rule over many kingdoms, without the necessity to go the route of the cross. He took Him to a high place to show him the kingdoms. You will not inherit and rule with Christ from a lofty place. Jesus became a servant and washed His disciples' feet. If this one who claims to be your Isaac does not involve ministering to the needs of others from the lowly place of a servant, then do not even give him a glance, but ride on to your true destiny.

The Jordan River is the crossing place into the Promised Land. "Jordan" means 'to descend'. The

crossing place into the experience of your promised land will involve you dying to self and laying down your lives that others may live. Remember the priests stood on the Jordan river-bed, bearing the ark of God's presence, until all the people had crossed over. They did not rush over and leave others to make their own way. God required them to remain in the place of death to self for as long as it took to bring every last one over to the Promised Land. These priests held the presence of God before the faces of men as they passed over.

Your laid-down life bearing the presence of God is for the sake of others, just as Jesus demonstrated. He died to bring many sons to glory. You are one of them. Now you are coming to the place where you will be conformed to the image of Christ, in laying down your life so that others may become sons and daughters of God.

2Co 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

2Co 4:12 So then death works in us, but life in you.

Rebekah had to part company with the vehicle that had transported her to her destiny. Although it had been an uncomfortable ride, those camels had brought her geographically and spiritually to the place of

appointment. However, she had to leave the camels to embrace Isaac.

Genesis 24:10 tells us there were ten camels. Ten is the number of trial and testing. First Rebekah had to water those camels – it was an exhausting and thankless task. However, her demonstration of servant hood resulted in her being chosen as the bride of Isaac. Eliezer did not choose her because of her beauty but because she passed the test. You too were chosen because you demonstrated servant-hood and selflessness in the fulfillment of the test which the Holy Spirit brought you.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

A goldsmith only stops the refining process when he can lean over and see his face in the molten metal. So too, your trial of faith has been to bring you to the place of bearing the Lord's reflection. Then people will be able to see Christ in you.

Joh 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, Joh 13:4 He rose up from supper and laid aside His garments. And He took a towel and girded Himself.

Jesus served others throughout His walk on earth but there came a time where He began to serve to an even greater degree, leading to the cross and His death for their sakes. This transition began with the washing of the disciples' feet. This was the lowliest task. No rabbi would have performed it but Jesus was demonstrating for them a different priesthood – a priesthood of servant-lovers who would lay down their lives for others.

So Beloved, as you have made yourself ready on this long dusty wilderness journey, the time is at the door for you to fulfill your appointment with destiny. The distance between you and your bridegroom is decreasing and what was once just a dot on the horizon is now coming into focus. This is what you were born for. But where is this meeting place with your Isaac?

Gen 24:63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the beginning of the evening. And he lifted up his eyes, and looked. And behold, camels coming!

Your date with destiny is in the harvest field! God is thrusting out laborers into the harvest fields for the hour is late. You will have to set your face like a flint. Others will try to dissuade you from giving your life as you know it, away. Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he tried to prevent Him going to the cross. Of course Peter did not understand that the path to life is death at that stage. So too, those around you will not

understand this choice you make to lose your life for His sake. Nevertheless, may the words of Jesus Himself bring you comfort:

Mar 10:29 And Jesus answered and said, Truly I say to you, There is no man that has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and the gospel's sake, Mar 10:30 but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life.

Selah

Chapter Twenty-Two

Parting Company with Camels

When Joseph was called out of prison and found favor with Pharaoh, he could have demanded that Potiphar and his wife be punished for his unjust imprisonment. He could have demanded justice. However, he had come to the place of understanding that all that had befallen him was for the purpose of bringing him, fully prepared, into the place God had appointed for him. At that juncture he still hadn't seen his dream fulfilled and his family bowing down to him, but he had made peace with the strange process of preparation God had used to make him what he needed to be. So he forgot what was behind and pressed on to take hold of that for which he had been born. He let go of the unanswered questions, the injustice, the rejection and moved forward to possess the place God had appointed for him. By the time he saw his brothers again, he was able to reassure them that they too had only been a part in fulfilling God's plan:

Gen 45:5 And now do not be grieved, nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here. For God sent me before you to preserve life.

What Joseph suffered was not only for the benefit of Egypt but also to prepare a place of refuge for his

family during famine. He understood the reasons for what he had been through and so too will you, when you are brought into the fulfillment of what God is preparing you for.

Isa 54:16 Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. Isa 54:17 But no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper

Yes, it is true – the very agent that has been stoking the coals and increasing the fiery heat in your life was allowed by God to shape you into a weapon fit for His purpose. This is why it is possible to bless those who curse you and to love your enemy – God causes ALL things to work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. However, we can usually only see this with hindsight; when we turn round and review the road our lives have taken. Then we discover that the very things we thought would surely break us, have only served to strengthen us. Sometimes the beauty treatment for the Bride takes the form of a fiery furnace!

Rebekah must have been so tired of those camels by the time she came to the end of her journey. Yet it was those very camels which had carried the gifts she had received at her betrothal. Beloved, the very agents God has used to put you through a time of trial were in

actual fact the bearers of betrothal gifts from your Bridegroom.

Just as Haman caused Mordecai such sorrow and travail and yet proved to be the person that the King commanded to bestow garments and honor on Haman, so too, your 'Haman' will be an agent for blessing in your life. Mordecai was also given the house of Haman and all his riches after his demise. Blessing is coming from unexpected quarters!

Those camels became the vehicles which transported Rebekah to her Isaac. No doubt she had to water them many times on that journey and they were smelly and uncomfortable to ride on, but they were God's appointed mode of transport to her destiny. Beloved, that which has caused you great pain and suffering and been a fiery trial and testing of your faith, has actually been carrying you closer and closer to your Isaac. In fact, I am sure you can testify that as you focused more on what the Holy Spirit was teaching you about your Isaac, the camels faded from your consciousness and you were swept up in savoring the delights of all that the Spirit was showing you. Perhaps you will even give that camel a quick kiss as you slide down to meet your destiny.

The important thing is to separate from those camels before embracing Isaac.

Let go of all bitterness and desire for revenge. Release every agent of pain and molding in your life up to this point. Do not approach your destiny with the stench of unforgiveness clinging to you. Say to the Father, "lay this not to their charge – forgive them, they didn't know what they were doing." Gracefully descend and then move forward towards your appointment in the harvest-field. Your Isaac has been watching you approach and is coming towards you. Now take hold of that for which Christ took hold of you!!

Chapter Twenty-Three

Who, me, Lord?

Have you ever had the experience of being in a room and someone gets your attention from across the room but you are so surprised at being called that you look behind you to see who they are talking to? In these days, that which the Lord has prepared for us is far beyond what we could ask or think. So when we finally see it, we are unsure if this is really our appointment or if it is someone else's. Sometimes we have waited so long for release; we cannot grasp the fact that we are at last being called out of the grave and into the light of His favor. This is why the King will call you by name when it is your turn!

Lazarus had waited for the Lord to come while he was sick and losing strength but He didn't arrive. Finally he succumbed to death and it seemed that the great potential which his life held had come to nothing. There was great mourning. Then four days later, Jesus appeared. It seemed that He was far too late to do anything about Lazarus. Perhaps that is how you feel. All your dreams have turned to dust and your soul has lost its song. Well, listen now for the call of the Resurrection and the Life, "Lazarus, come forth!" Can it be true? You glance behind you. Surely He meant somebody else; after all, you are so used to others

around you being released, while you remain in this prison of preparation! Yet, there it is – He used your name! An invitation is issued in the name of the one invited. You might feel like Cinderella but if the invitation bears your name, then you are invited to the feast! Remember that the Hebrew word for ‘tomb’ means ‘a stack of sheaves’. In other words, the tomb becomes a place from which fruitfulness springs forth in God’s perfect timing.

Joseph too was called out of prison by name. Finally, it really was his turn! Other prisoners had come and gone and not once had his name been called – until his date with destiny. The king sent and released him and very quickly everything changed. One minute he was wearing prison issue and the next he was handed the king’s signet ring and fine garments and given free rein to do as he thought best:

Gen 41:41 So Pharaoh commissioned Joseph: "I'm putting you in charge of the entire country of Egypt." Gen 41:42 Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his finger and slipped it on Joseph's hand. He outfitted him in robes of the best linen and put a gold chain around his neck. Gen 41:43 He put the second-in-command chariot at his disposal, and as he rode people shouted "Bravo!" Joseph was in charge of the entire country of Egypt.

One other person I want to draw your attention to is Mary, the woman who was a dedicated follower of Jesus. Her heart was broken by all that had transpired and she must have felt partly responsible in a way for what had happened to Jesus because she had prophetically anointed Him for His burial before the crucifixion. Perhaps she went over every detail and wondered if she had made a mistake in pouring out the contents of her alabaster box. Yet she also knew that she had responded from her heart under divine unction. Now here she was, very early on the first day of the week, walking towards the tomb where the Man that embodied all her hopes and joy, lay buried.

Perhaps, you too are wondering how you came to find yourself making this journey, in darkness, to the place where your dreams lie buried. That word that seemed brimful of the life and power of God, has fallen to the ground. It seems that all you can do now is worship from a broken heart.

Mary was carrying spices to dress the body and even as she walked, the horrific scenes of the crucifixion must have run through her mind. She was confused and hopeless and disillusioned at the turn of events - and the discovery that his body was missing only increased her suffering. She was willing to accept that her Beloved Jesus was dead but she wanted to have a place of mourning that she could return to; a memorial

place to sit and remember all that could have been. Even if He was dead, she wanted to pour out her love for Him by attending to His broken body.

She lingered at the tomb after the other two disciples had left but did not recognize this One who stood before her. How is this possible? Remember her last memory was of mutilation and brokenness. She was looking for a dead body, marred beyond recognition. The resurrected Jesus came to meet her, whole and restored. He didn't fit into her mindset of mourning and loss.

I want to say this to you, precious saints: your Isaac might not look like you expected. All you have been through and your own interpretation of what the Holy Spirit has shared with you, have caused you to have certain pictures in your mind of the face of your Isaac. Your experience thus far has been loss upon loss and breaking upon breaking. However, this Jesus that comes toward you very early in the morning of the Third Day is challenging your mindsets. This is why He has to call you by name.

Joh 20:14 After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him. Joh 20:15 Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?" She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can

care for him." Joh 20:16 Jesus said, "Mary." Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

Beloved, the time of trial, the scourging and the death and loss of all you held dear, were your teachers. However, the final lesson is not one of loss but of restoration and reconciliation with the Father. Why is this important?

Because the message your life carries is not to be one of trial and tribulation only.

Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning. The Third Day message is one of hope, of life, of resurrection and reconciliation. There has to be a time in your life where you receive beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. Then you can be an oak of righteousness where the Lord plants you. The river that flows from under the altar (Ezekiel 47) does indeed descend into the desert, speaking of death to self; but when it flows into the sea, the message it carries is 'life from the dead'.

Mary received a garment of praise in exchange for her spirit of heaviness and ran from that place with a message of resurrection power to all who would listen. This is God's intention for you – your life will bear the testimony not only of the evening of the Third Day, but also of the morning!

Jesus also used Simon Peter's name when He met with him on the beach after the resurrection. He brought him to a place of restoration of purpose and direction. There was no confusion any longer as to Peter's destiny. He brought him face to face with his Isaac and confirmed his calling. He was released from the prison of self-condemnation.

So, Beloved, whether you are a Joseph serving faithfully in prison, or a Lazarus wrapped in grave clothes; no matter whether you are a Mary worshiping in the place of loss or a Simon Peter who has returned, disillusioned, to his old way of life; all that you have been through has prepared you for this moment. This journey you have been on with the Spirit, has caused you to make yourself ready – and your name is about to be called. The Holy Spirit is about to introduce you to Isaac!

Your life will be a living letter, carrying the message of Isaiah 61 – the Spirit that is upon you opens the eyes of the blind, unlocks the prison door, sets the captive free, exchanges beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. You are to be living proof that the Lord is upright and faithful to His promises. You will be able to enter the harvest field saying, "such as I have, give I unto you!"

Although you have felt uprooted and without a solid foundation, you will be called the planting of the Lord. Although the journey has been long and hard, you are about to enter your Bridegroom's embrace and enter the place of intimacy and fruitfulness. He is your home. You are rooted and grounded in Christ now, not in earthly things. You are not held by places, possessions or people. Christ has become your all in all. The Bride has made herself ready - You are ready to be set in place!

In the evening of the Third Day, the Bridegroom lifts His eyes and sees the Bridal Company coming toward Him and His heart leaps for joy. This is what He suffered and died for; this is what He has longed for; one who is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh; one who has set herself apart in holiness for Him alone, forsaking all others and keeping herself only for Him; a Woman who is the crown of her Husband, willing to gird herself with a towel and wash other's feet. Beloved, we see in a mirror dimly now, but then we shall see face to face and we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. As you walk towards Him, hear the words He speaks:

Son 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Son 7:12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give you my love.

Selah

Epilogue

I leave you with the words of a song which flowed one morning in worship before the Throne of the Lamb:

How beautiful Your precious Bride
As she rises in the earth
In holiness, clothed in pure white
How beautiful, how beautiful.

Mature men now walk the earth
Subduing kingdoms by Your Word
And loving not our lives to death
We overcome, we overcome.

We give our lives to serve Your Name
We come O Lord to do Your will
And by our words and by the Blood
We overcome, we overcome.

Arise and shine, true Church of God
For now His glory rests on you
Though darkness covers all the earth
His light has come, it shines in you.

How beautiful Your precious Bride
As she rises in the earth
In holiness, clothed in pure white
How beautiful, how beautiful, how beautiful...

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