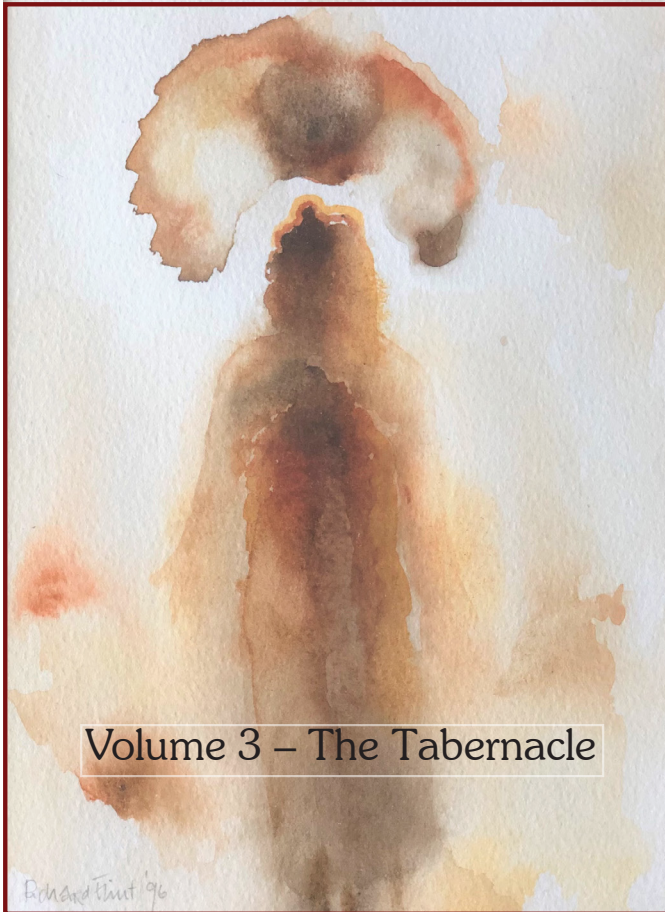


Back to the Future

Rebuilding the Tabernacle of David



Volume 3 – The Tabernacle

Richard Flint '96

Richard Flint

Back to the Future

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The cover picture is taken from
an original watercolour painting by the author
called 'The Forming of Man'

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RICHARD FLINT

Book 3

The Tabernacle of David

Contents

7

1.	Introduction – The Tabernacle of David	29
2.	A Place for the Presence	65
3.	A Place for a Whole Burnt Offering	115
4.	A Place for the Peace Offering.....	167
5.	A Place for the Character of the King	203
	A Place for the King's Gifts	249
	Appendix: The Intercession of Nehemiah	

Introduction to Book 3

The Tabernacle of David

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

2 Samuel 6:18

The journey to become the sons of God culminates at the Tabernacle of David but it doesn't terminate here. For those who have made the journey thus far will have understood their need to endure the death of their self-life and have opened their lives to the work of the Lord God transforming them from one degree of glory to another. ¹ Indeed, this has occurred largely through the

time they have spent within the closet, their very secret place of the Most High. Within which a wonderful spiritual transformative process has taken place. And now, like a caterpillar within its cocoon their nature has begun to be changed into that of the nature of Jesus Christ through the work of Father God in their hearts. As they also learn to walk in obedience and in the fear of the Lord on a daily basis. As they are equipped to bear the very presence of the Lord God in the Ark of their hearts within the bit of the world through which they are walking.

This transformation has been shaped within the secret place of the closet, and developed through the secret disciplines of prayer, fasting and alms giving. Fundamentally, this has been a journey into maturity in the Lord and is marked by qualities of being increasingly blameless and harmless such that they are beginning to shine in the world with the light of the Lord.² They aspire to be led by the Holy Spirit in their daily realities as a daily reality. Indeed, this is a journey that will go on beyond their present wilderness experience and the hope is that they will cross into the promised land of His Millennial rule, as part of his bride being caught up with their bridegroom, Jesus Christ, on His return³. Indeed, John encourages us all to look for a better day.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:2

It is then, and only then, that we will fully become the sons of God and this is the day the whole of creation is looking forward to,
For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:19

As Paul reflects on his own journey, we are only ever on our way.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:12-15

We now change our focus from the daily walk of individual disciple to experience of the individual disciple within the corporate gathering, which is the church or the body of Christ. The church of God into which we are added and accepted as we are saved and then come out of the waters of baptism and into the newness of this new life in Christ. This is, metaphorically, a change of sukkah, for us; from the closet to the tabernacle. At this point in

the scriptural narrative of 2 Samuel 6 we reach journeys end for the Ark of the Covenant and its sacred burden, which is the presence of Him whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. ⁴ The Ark has travelled from Gibeah the dwelling place of Saul, the king after the flesh, and has now reached Jerusalem the new capital of King David, the King after the spirit. ⁵

As we now turn to look at Tabernacle of David we are focusing on the corporate reality of our walk as true disciples. When we become Christians we automatically become part of a new human family; indeed, an eternal spiritual family.

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:5-6

This wonderful spiritual community overtime has acquired the title of the 'church'. As we saw above in chapter 8 this is a term that through religious tradition takes us back to the Roman emperor Constantine, his dubious conversion and the consequent establishing of Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman empire, in the fourth century AD. At this point in its history the church became an aspect of and vehicle for state rule. It became part of the temporal world of politics and power, the power being that

of who ever sat on the throne on earth. Sadly, at this point the throne in heaven and the Lord God's true purposes on earth were largely disregarded. Indeed, this is not an issue solely for those trapped within Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, the protestant denominations also have their own well established thrones.

The word that is used to describe this gathering in the New Testament is the word 'church'. It is a word that is probably is derived from the medieval Greek word *kurikon*, meaning the 'house of the Lord'. What we have, therefore, in scripture is a word employed here which carries with it significant linguistic cultural baggage. Instead of representing the beautiful spiritual gathering of love, humility and unity that is the *ekklesia*, it now describes the building we meet in. The *ekklesia* is a gathering of people bound by relationships, both vertical and horizontal, that have been forged in heaven. The church, sadly, is a crumbling religious edifice created for man by man. Indeed, the Greek term, *ekklesia*, actually means 'a gathering of the called-out ones'. A phrase that captures much that we have been exploring together within the word of God and as such is a term with which we are far more comfortable using moving forwards.

Today, however, we do find ourselves facing perilous times where there do seem to be serious issues concerning the state of the church in terms of its doctrine, practice and its spirit. On the one side, we see a rejuvenated Roman Catholic Church which has found new vitality and purpose under its latest pope, Pope Francis. Indeed, there does seem to be move back to Catholicism even by some

in the evangelical protestant wing of the church. On the other side, however, the evangelical/ charismatic wing has also seemingly lost its way. We say this because we need to recognise the prevalence today of many distorted and, therefore distorting, theologies and even some new age practises that are becoming everyday orthodoxy. However, both, the eastern and western expressions of church, are essentially expressions of a manmade religious structure that has dominated from the time of Constantine. In fact, sadly, much of the elements that we would all recognise as being an expression of Christian orthodoxy have dubious, even pagan, roots ⁶.

Perhaps, as we turn to scripture this is where we are today?

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

In response to this negative picture that we might want to paint of the spiritual state of the church today, surely there is another picture to be found, the more

beautiful and positive picture of what the Lord is doing today. After all what did Jesus say to Peter at Caesarea Philippi?

...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18

Jesus is still building His ekklesia

This scripture from Matthew's gospel is a very important for us because of where Jesus was actually situated a sHe spoke these words. He was literally standing outside 'the gates of hell'. At this time, Caesarea Philippi was the centre of the worship of the Greek god Pan. The actual temple for the worship of this goat hooved god of hedonism was a hole in the ground at Caesarea Philippi, which was known at the time as 'the gates of hell'. The reason for this particular nomenclature was largely due to the kinds of activities that would have gone on within this cave. Therefore, the point that Jesus might have been making is that He could build His church on this rock even here, for even here the devil would be powerless to stop Him. No matter how close He was to the very gates of hell, Jesus would prevail. God is God.

Therefore, in returning to the present-day situation, the Lord desires to rebuild and restore his ekklesia and nothing the devil can do will prevent Him from doing this. Perhaps, it is timely to develop for ourselves a scriptural model of what we discern the Lord to be actually building

today? Indeed, what might be the expression of His body on earth that we would aspire to be a part of, surely it has to be this:

...a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27

Indeed, an expression of His body which is being made ready and a people and a bride who are progressively being prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the bridegroom. ⁷

To help understand what the Lord's end time building project might look like, it will be helpful to revisit some of the ideas that we explored above in chapter 8. Here, we were introduced to this verse from Isaiah

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

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Matthew 9: 17

As is expressed in both this verse in Isaiah and in Jesus'

own teaching the new wine of His effervescent life, love and power is in serious need of being preserved in our day. Indeed, a life, love and power that does need to find a new vessel in which it can be effectively contained and released to a hurting and dying world. A vessel, we suggest, that find its metaphorical expression and hopefully also its spiritual and physical reality in the cluster.

A cluster of ripe grapes fit to burst with the blood of the grape ⁹ within and which are held together, bunched, and suspended from the true vine itself. This is a symbolic picture which is very relevant and redolent for what is happening today. Small groups of believers, hungry for reality and truth, are beginning to gather. They have decided, for a variety of reasons, to leave the system that is the church and to start to be drawn together and to meet together and to find together a new way to be the body of Christ. A cluster of grapes within which the new wine might be found.

An interesting aside to this is that in Hebrew the word for cluster is eshcol and it was in the valley of Eshcol in the promised land that the twelve spies found the huge bunch of grapes that they brought back to Moses and the children of Israel carried on a pole between them. The spiritual truth that we can glean from this for ourselves is that our experience of the cluster should also be a taste of the Promised Land that we all long for. A truth captured by Paul in his letter to the Ephesian cluster.

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:12-14

Indeed, it is through the new wine of the Spirit within us that we too have the taste of the Promised Land of the millennial reign of Christ!

We would also identify that the gathering into clusters, is an important aspect of the rebuilding purposes of the Lord in our day. His desire is to build again an expression of His body that we have recognised as being characterised metaphorically and symbolically by the Tabernacle of David.¹⁰ As such, we also would want to identify what the Lord desires to build today to be closely modelled on what He originally did build, the church that we see in the New Testament, and the principles of love, servanthood and shared lives on which this was built.

To meet together because we are together, and not to meet together to be together. There is a difference!

This is a new, yet old, expression of the gathered body of Christ. Relatively small groupings who meet together, not from any sense of religious obligation, but rather because they want to meet together as friends. As such, they will want the best for one another and, therefore, to carry a heartfelt commitment to do whatever they can to support each other on their onward journey towards Christlikeness.

They would also carry the true Gospel of the real Jesus to the world why there is still time. Moreover, the gospel would be effective because its prerequisites are being met. The words would be underpinned by the reality of love that would be evidenced within the cluster.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

This would be a network, as we find the early church. Moreover, what will be required to develop today is a network of autonomous clusters who are held together in truth and wisdom in the vine by a team of gifted ministers, the four fold gift ministries, who would work between the clusters.¹¹ The spiritual scene is surely set for a return to this model. And locally, this will be a body over which Jesus is truly the head. As the clusters establish a leadership team of elders under this headship, comprising those who are deemed by the gathering to be called by God and who do carry the appropriate attributes. Likewise, others, again specifically attributed for the task, should be chosen to function as deacons.¹² However, what holds this network together will be the brotherly love shared one to another as the Lord decreed, a quality of love that might be represented by the surviving brother, Ahio, in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. A brotherly love described by Paul.

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:9

A love that is God given and God taught. This is the brotherly love that is a reflection of His own love for His body for whom He laid down His love. A quality of brotherly love that will shine brightly in the darkness of our disjointed and dysfunctional society. After all, Jesus has provided all we need.

Why is being part of a cluster and being added to the body of Christ an essential reality for the true disciple? This largely because this is the one place that we can learn to love others. The one place where we can be taught by Father how to love one another. This quality of self-less love is the overarching purpose or high calling for which the body of Christ has been tasked; a love that comes through walking the walk, learning the lessons, dying the deaths and becoming Christlike. Why?

We need others to stress test our hearts.

This love will mean that the Lord will have a true witness to Himself on the earth. Do you not know that there is only one thing that will fully identify you as a representative of the Lord; as a true disciple of Jesus? This is the thing. This is it, the *raison d'être*. you and I to be placed together to learn to love one another, it is as simple as that. However, in reality it is not that simple at

all. For this love does not come cheap. It cost Jesus all He had in earthly terms. For this love is the same profound level of love with which He has loved you and I, which cost Him His life! It is interesting that the early believers were called Christians or little Christs in mockery. The world will always mock that which threatens it and that which it struggles to understand, and the threat that the early church did pose was simply that they shared a profound love for one another; a love that was not easily broken. This is our bottom line, nothing has changed. However, to embrace this we all have to change.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.
1 John 3:23-24

To help us understand the God given purpose of the ekklesia further let us turn to Ephesians 4 where we read the following:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
Ephesians 4:12

Let us break this down phrase by phrase:

- For the perfecting of the saints...¹³

It is as simple as that. The body of Christ is the true spiritual gathering of humanity, gathered in Christ to be God's chosen vessel, through which every believer will come through to some level spiritual maturity and through which the light of the character of His son, Jesus Christ, might shine. By definition, therefore, the gathered body of Christ is the corporate vessel within which the process of transformation and change of the true disciple that we have been exploring will be fully supported and find its fullest expression. The true body of Christ is an essential part of our journey, we need it if we are to truly come through to the level of maturity that we would aspire to come to in Christ.

The picture is clearly a very dynamic and active one. Each one's journey into maturity within the body of Christ will be part of the ongoing fruitfulness of the ongoing work of the ministry of Christ, and will also be part of the Lord's ongoing purposes within each generation to build a living expression of His body. Each journey will be unique, distinctive and yet part of a corporate unity. The words of Paul that follow in Ephesians 4 develop this idea powerfully, where we read:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ...But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined

together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:13-15

Has there ever been a time when we can say the 'till' here has been truly realised? These words of Paul are a description of the glorious body, indeed, the bridal body of Christ made fit for the return of the bride groom. ¹⁴ A body that is yet to be fully realised. Moreover, as we are going to move on to explore, this is the body of Christ that James, the brother of the Lord and a leader in Jerusalem, prophetically labelled as the tabernacle of David in Acts 15 and this is the body that the Lord desires to be built in our own day?

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Acts 15:13-17

Our conjecture here is that the Tabernacle of David is

a metaphorical picture of the body of Christ that we find described in 2 Samuel 6. Indeed, this is the one and only place for the ongoing outworking and completion of the Lordship of Christ Jesus in our lives. Moreover, it is by understanding the spiritual truths expressed within the Tabernacle of David that is described in 2 Samuel 6 that we will understand more clearly the life to be lived within the ekklesia in the here and now to which we have been added. We each need the body and without its reality we will never find the depth of maturity to which each of us is called. The sad reality is that today this quality of body life and consequently therefore the actual experience of body life is so hard to find and many who are looking for it are left stranded, isolated and often hurting through what they have suffered at the hands of the religious system that is the church. However, the Lord is a rewarder for those who do diligently seek him ¹⁶ and our purpose here is to unpack a new, yet old, paradigm that the church might have lost, but which the body of Christ as the ekklesia might be able to find again for our own time.

Therefore, to this end what we are going to move on now to look at is the description of the Davidic Tabernacle that we find in 2 Samuel 6. The spiritual picture we find here will be the gathering place for all those who have heard this call and have decided to follow the Lord into a walk of true discipleship; those who have travelled the way of the threshing floor of Nachon. And we believe the prophetic witness of scripture speaks directly to us and our own day concerning the Lord's rebuilding purposes and his desire to prepare a people made ready for his

return: His Bride.

The Tabernacle of David is we believe a way of understanding the end time expression of the body of Christ. Indeed, James, a leader in the church in Jerusalem and Jesus' natural half-brother, declares it to be the very scriptural picture of choice for describing the body of Christ that was being built within the Gentile world through the ministry of Barnabus and Paul. This is demonstrated by the fact that James directly applies the prophesy of Amos 9:11 to this embryonic body of believers in his own day.

The unfolding work of God in our own day is to be understood in the same way, as the final and even the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy of Amos.

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

Amos 9:11-12

James makes this association with the situation in which they found themselves in Acts 15 through the second part of Amos' prophecy concerning the possession of the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen. He does this because this heathen or Gentile remnant, Edom, are described as possessing the Lord's name, which is an apt description of what was

happening as the Gospel was being received more enthusiastically by the first century Gentile world than the Jewish one. Here, we also see the fulfilment of David's prophetic act of placing the Ark of the Covenant with the household of House of Obededom, meaning servant of Edom or the Gentile world that we have noticed above.

This is that day!

Therefore, in accepting that the first century expression of the body can be seen as an expression of the Tabernacle of David as described in prophecy, what about our situation?. For we do need to recognise that the actual context into which the prophet Amos was writing is captured by the phrase, 'in that day'. This is a common motif in scripture and it is always related to the judgement on Israel in the end times and is a reference to 'the Day of the Lord'. Hebrew prophecy is to be understood to be fulfilled cyclically and, therefore, it can have more than one time of fulfilment. Therefore, if we are to recognise that we seem to be fast moving into the last of the days, are we not able to look for its potential fulfilment in our own day? Indeed, what does it mean for us that the tabernacle of David has 'fallen'? What are its 'breaches' and 'ruins'? How is it to be rebuilt 'as in the days of old' in our own time? How far has the original Tabernacle that we see described in the New Testament fallen?

The answer to these questions takes us back to the

essential purpose for the tabernacle. The tabernacle was built originally to house or contain the very presence of the Lord God, this itself was contained within the Ark of the Covenant. As we have it described in 2 Samuel 6. ...the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

2 Samuel 6:2

This is part of the Lord God's own journey from the garden where he would walk in the 'cool of the evening' with Adam, to walking through the desert with his chosen people, where we find the first account of His dwelling with man in a tabernacle.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 25:8

From there He was leading them into their own land, where he would dwell with them in a place of His choosing.

Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there...

Deuteronomy 12:11

And as the veil of the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem is torn top to bottom at the moment Jesus dies on the cross, this presence, the Holy Spirit, is released

and made available to the whole world that He loved so much. His disciples would, from this time forward, know the reality of being indwelt by His presence, such that they were now individually made a tabernacle. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1

Indeed, a tabernacle we see prophetically realised in the Millennium reign on Christ.

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Isaiah 16:5

And ultimately, looking beyond the incarnation of His son as the saviour of the world, and even beyond the millennial reign and His return as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords we arrive at Revelation 21.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Revelation 21:3.

This is, indeed, where we are heading, however, in the meantime there is work to be done in the here and now and this brings us back to the prophecy in Amos ,the tabernacle of David and the end time ekklesia in much need of a rebuild. The corporate expression of God's people in our day, the body of Christ, needs to find again that which it had when James likened it to the Tabernacle of David. To be the gathered group of humanity within which, for our time, the tangible presence of God is expressed.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:15

Therefore, let us begin to explore 2 Samuel 6: 17 and to unpack the spiritual picture that is painted here for us of this reality.

Notes

1. 2 Corinthians 3:18
2. Philippians 2:15
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18
4. 2 Samuel 6:2
5. 1 Samuel 16:13
6. Veola, F and Barna, G. 'Pagan Christianity?: Exploring

the Roots of Our Church Practices ', 2012, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois.

7. See Luke 1:17. The call of John the Baptist covers both the first and second coming of Christ (see Luke 3:17), and in our day we believe that this call once again does resonate throughout the world for those with ears to hear.

8. We are drawing on Jesus' own metaphorical language here (see Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22, Luke 5:38 and John 15) and applying it to this verse.

9. See Deuteronomy 32: 14 for a scriptural reference for this imagery.

10. See Acts 15:13-18, Amos 9: 12. 13 and 2 Samuel 6: 1-18

11. See Chapters 6 and 7, Formed to be a Servant; Leadership in the Rebuilt Tabernacle of David, by the same author, for a detailed teaching on the operation of the ministry gifts.

12. See Chapter 5, Formed to be a Servant; Leadership in the Rebuilt Tabernacle of David, by the same author, for a detailed teaching on the attribution of elders and deacons.

13. Ephesians 4: 12a

14. Ephesians 5:27

15. Acts 15:13-17

16. Hebrews 11:6

CHAPTER 1

A Place for the Presence

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it.

2 Samuel 6:17a-c

A Shared Destination

And they brought in the ark of the LORD.

2 Samuel 6:17a

The first point that needs to be understood is that our journey needs to have a regular shared destination with others. The journey across the wilderness requires both an individual and a corporate 'sukkah' shelter. As God has been dealing with each one of us individually, in our closet and through our daily walk, there is a time when we need to come together with other likeminded folk, because we need each other. This will be a time to gather with those to whom we have been added and with whom we have been wonderfully accepted into the beloved, the body of Christ, the restored and rebuilt tabernacle of David.

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:6

We meet together because we are together. We do
not meet together to be together,
there is a difference!

After all, this has been a corporate venture all along right from the moment that David gathered all the chosen men of Israel at the beginning of the journey.

However, we do need to be aware of our responsibility here. We are each called to actively arrive at this gathering with a view to being an active, available and fruitful element

in the gathering. And further, the part of us that is required to be actively engaged is our Ark, which, as we have recognised, can be viewed as a metaphor for the regenerate heart of the believer. For our heart is our own Ark of the new covenant. Indeed, a redeemed and transformed heart that is indwelt by His very presence, the Holy Spirit. We are called to a gathering of all the Arks and, therefore, to a gathering of hearts; the hearts of those who are meeting together. What a profound and rich place this should be. There is an expression to wear your heart on your sleeve, which means to be open, trusting of others and, therefore, vulnerable. This is precisely what the Lord has in mind for His gathered people.

However, this is potentially quite a scary prospect, and for those who are already carrying scars from being too open, too often in church and with other believers in the past. Can we try again? Can we give the body of Christ another chance? Why, would we? What is prevent us being hurt once again? The hope is that this time we are joining others who are walking the walk. Moreover, this time the harsh controlling attitudes and judgementalism that might have hurt us in the past are in the past. Here, in the Tabernacle of David, we might expect what Paul describes in his letter to the believers in Galatia.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.¹

The gathered body is to be an expression of togetherness. Put simply, this is a time to be in the Spirit. A reality

beautifully described by Paul.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:22

Each week we are faced with a journey in which we endeavour by His grace to move increasingly from the flesh into the spirit. And each day along the way on this journey, as we commune in our closets with Father, and at times in His time fasting and giving alms in secret, we are looking to become increasingly fruitful and to grow to be more like His Son. Having carried the presence all week through all the highs and lows, through all the issues of our lives, through all our deeds and all our conversations, reflecting and enabling Father's refining as we go, when we do meet together, in whatever numbers and in whatever context, we are called to be honest, real and in the moment. Why, because we love, need and trust each other. And this love will be reciprocated, one to another. Our desire is to actively bring into this meeting our hearts and to make His presence available through us to the others who are gathered together with us. This is a precious opportunity for us to share His life, His love and

His burden for one another with one another. We may be tired or we may be elated but it is here within the body of Christ that we are called to look to others to support us to bear our burdens or to help to carry the weight for others as we look to fulfil the law of Christ.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

After all what is the law of Christ?

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

We are not talking here about centrally organised meetings, we are talking about a true meeting in the Spirit where the togetherness expressed is one of God given agape love. A meeting in which the Lord is Lord, has His way and therefore, He can bear the fruit He desires to bear.

The key is that the Presence will be expressed corporately to the extent that it is experienced individually

We need to know that we each bring in the Ark of the

Lord to the gathered body, however, large or small this body might be. Moreover, it is this aspect of His presence that is uniquely expressed in and through us. We each have received something to bring, and that something is Christ in us. We are not clones. We are all different, and yet the Lord has called us together so that as we share Him in us with each other. And it is in this way that we will find a wonderful unity in the Spirit. An experience that is unique to His body, and, sadly, it is also an experience that is a rarity today within the church based religious system, that we encounter on Sundays or whenever.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-7

Was this true when Paul wrote these words? Is this true today? Do we need to find a way back to this truth?

Indeed, we believe that the prophetic picture presented to us by the rebuilt Tabernacle of David might be such a way; a way back to a semblance of this

wonderful reality. In essence, therefore, the Tabernacle of David is a prophetic picture of the corporate reality that is the body of Christ. A corporate reality within which the Presence of the Lord God, the Holy Spirit, has an opportunity to flow between each member and fulfil the purposes that the Lord God has for this gathering. We need to understand that each time the body gathers the Lord God will desire to do new things, after all the Spirit blows where He will. ² The Lord God, as our Father, desires to be in a dynamic relationship with each one of us, bringing about the heart transformation that He requires, and as such when we gather together this is still His purpose and this is HIS opportunity to achieve HIS purposes in the body of His son, the ekklesia. There cannot be any fore ordained programme, the gathering therefore has to also be dynamic, in the moment and in the Spirit. Each time we gather we need to be in Kairos time and not just chronological time.

At the moment, Jesus is too often a head in need of a body,

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.
Colossians 1:16-18

This is His Place

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it
in his place...

2 Samuel 6:17a

The Ark, carrying his presence, had its rightful place in the tabernacle and today the Lord is looking for the same reality. Indeed, such a reality, that He might be given His place in the hearts of His people and therefore in the heart of His body, His new corporate dwelling place on earth—a tabernacle for Almighty God. So that He can build again His ekklesia, 'as in the days of old'. A reality of his dynamic presence and power in his body such that it would indeed be, 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' a bride made ready that 'he might present it to himself'

The effect of the fallen tabernacle that is the religious system we call the church, with its breaches and ruinous and ruined structure is that it isn't fit for purpose; sadly it is not in a useable condition for the Lord God to indwell as it once was.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and

prepared unto every good work.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

Therefore, the work of restoration of the tabernacle is not a restoration of religious system or structure. It is not about what we do, it is about who we are. This is a restoration of a people, a people made ready to be truly indwelt by the presence of the living God together. A people who will be willing to walk the walk of discipleship and to allow the Lord to rebuild their lives, to repair the breaches in their own lives and to raise up walls again in His image. A people who will be a tabernacle fit for the master's use and fit for Him to truly dwell within once more. For as Paul challenges the church of his own day.

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

2 Corinthians 6:16

Today there is too much agreement in the Temple of God with idols? The idolatry of following the latest fad, charismatic church leader or worship leader. The idolatry of travelling to the latest spiritual viral depository. The idolatry of following the latest methodology. The call is for us to separate ourselves, to get out and to get back into the true body and back into the will of the living God for our lives. This can be hard to do. It can be so hard to realise that so much of what you had been taught for so long has been largely wrong. It is a difficult thing to realise that you need to escape the system and come back into

the freedom of His grace for your lives, but escape you must for the stakes are increasingly high. However, just look at the reward awaiting us if we do!

...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

However, Paul provides the only way back to this wonderful promise in the following verse:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Another reason for the presence to be set in the place that the Lord desires for it is explored by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 where we read that it is Father God who actually sets each one of us into the Body of His Son. Just as we read in 2 Samuel that the Ark was set in His place.

As we come together in the body it is Father who will determine the shape of the gathering in terms of the ministries, functions and leadership. That is if

we let Him.

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1 Corinthians 12:18

Was this true when Paul wrote these words? Is this true today? Do we need to find a way back to this truth?

The building of the true body is a spiritual process over which Jesus is Lord, after all this is His bride whom He desires to take home to his Father, to the place he has prepared for her and has promised to her.³ From scripture we can also identify that the whole Godhead is involved in this building process.

- The Father

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1 Corinthians 12: 8

- The Son

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18

- The Holy Spirit

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Acts 20:28

Too often today the church seems to be increasingly following worldly management and recruitment processes. God is seldom given any room to fulfil His church building function? Indeed, the church too often seems to place value on people according to their natural skills and propensities, and thereby, are then being given position, function and promotion that is dependent on these criteria, instead of hearing the voice of God on this matter. After all, as scripture attests God's ways are not always the same as our ways⁴. Lord can see the whole picture and only He knows what is the optimal place, function or even ministry at any time for any of us. Indeed, this will be according to His purposes at not our own; there is sometimes a difference.

Therefore, instead of what might be seen as an obvious rational fit according to our character or skill set, for the Lord what is required for us to be challenged and thereby transformed into the image of Christ. As we are placed in a position where we are reliant on Him and not able to rest on our strength. After all are we not told that the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness? For what we should be dependent upon in all things is his grace.⁵

Sadly, we are too often in Uzzah territory as we rely and rest on our own strength to guide our decision making within church life. We do need to take seriously this function of the Lord as the master builder. Each expression of His body does need to be built according to his specific and unique plan. ⁶

God is God. How dare we try and usurp Him!

To be there for Him and for each other

And they brought in the ark of the LORD... in the midst of the tabernacle

2 Samuel 6:17a,d

As we gather together, in whatever context
and for whatever purpose,
we do need to understand and recognise
that this is the body,
His body.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:18-20

Therefore, when we do gather, even in small numbers, we need to realise that we are entering His place, where he is and he calls us to join Him to achieve His purposes for each other.

The context for the scripture above is body life, body discipline and essentially forgiveness.⁷ We meet with Him in the midst and the challenge for us is to actively join Him there. By actively we mean to be in the spirit, to be a carrier of His presence and to make His presence in you actively available to Him and to the others gathered together with you. This requires some preparation and forethought, so that we are actively bringing something with us into this dynamic spiritual gathering event. Indeed, the wonderful occasion when body comes together to meet with its head.

Jesus is a head looking for a body!

Just as we come into our own closet 'sukkah' to meet with the Father on a one to one basis, the gathered body is a corporate expression of the same dynamic. For as we see above the reward comes from the Father. We meet with the Lord in the midst, in the Spirit and the Father responds actively to the spiritual exchanges that occur here, as they are in faith and emanate from a right motivation. It may be that we have a need or that we have a word that might be the solution to a need.

And we know that all things work together for good

to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 8:28-29

To be in the Body of Christ is to be in RELATIONSHIP

These are His purposes that are being worked out in the lives of those He loves. His purpose being that we become like Him. This is the gathered body.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

As Paul is describing here there are layers of relationships within the body and different levels of active engagement one to another and Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 also provides us with some insight into this, where we read:

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

with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

2 Corinthians 6:14-16a

The key terms for us to understand more clearly from this passage are those highlighted. We will spend some time exploring each in turn in order that we can understand more clearly the relational bonds that tie us together in the body, bonds which lie in the spirit and not in the flesh.

Yoked

We first of all need to understand that we have been yoked together with our brothers and sisters in the body. When someone is saved, as described in Acts 2, they are added to the body.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:41

The Greek word translated 'added' here is the same word that we encountered in 1 Corinthians 12. But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him?

1 Corinthians 12: 18.

This wonderful adoption into the eternal family of God is also described by Paul in two passages within his letters.

Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Romans 8:15b-16

...that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 4:5b-7

Paul is also describing this spiritual adoption into the body at salvation when he writes:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:5-6

We are accepted into the beloved, the Greek word is literally describing us coming into grace, to be endued with special honour or to be highly favoured as we are

set in our place in the body of the beloved, who is Christ. However, what is our place? Jesus describes this process by utilising the image of a yoke.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:29-30

The yoke in farming practise is and was a means by which one or more animals, such as oxen, could be harnessed so that the farmer could utilise their weight and strength to complete a task such as ploughing the ground. Therefore, why does Jesus use this particular metaphor to describe our relational connection with Himself?

Does it mean that we are yoked to Him and he will take a lead as we walk together within him across the field of our lives? This is unlikely as He describes Himself as the provider of the yoke. It is His easy yoke that we are being encouraged to wear. Therefore, the actual expectation here within the internal logic of this metaphor is that the outworking of us coming to him is that we will be yoked with others. So that we will share the burden of the Lord with others and our weight and strength will be combined with that of others to complete the task the Lord, the yoke provider, has set for us. Therefore, this yoke is a picture of our bonding with others in the purposes of God within the body, having come into the body through coming to Jesus.

Therefore, our walk in and with Jesus is characterised here as a walk that we need to actively share we others. This is body life and potentially here in the body our walk with Jesus finds a deeper purpose and reality as we walk yoked with others.

It is here, within the spiritual relationships forged in the body that we find the quality of relationships that will enable us to develop our individual capacity to be fruitful and to become a fair representation of Him to whom we originally came. We will be equally yoked, to turn Paul's original phrase around, as we are yoked with the believers with whom Jesus has brought us together under His yoke, the real yoke. For the Greek word used by Paul actually means another yoke, i.e. not the yoke of the Lord. And any other yoke than the Lord's easy and light one will be a yoke of bondage and control. So beware, who are we yoked to, the world or the body and who are we yoked by Satan or the Lord?

Fellowship

Another crucial outworking of the effective working of the body of Christ is the simple truth that it is the God given capsule within which we are to find the love of Christ actively demonstrated through the word, deed and actions of others within which and with whom we are bound together. This is fellowship. The Lord calls each one of us into the midst, to immerse ourselves into the heart of this gathering. This is figuratively expressed in this verse we are exploring in 2 Samuel 6.

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle.

2 Samuel 6:17a

We are to actively bring His presence that is within us and to be present and in the midst of the others there gathered. For the simple reason it is here that we can be loved and supported and it is here that we can love and support the others.

As the Lord leads us He has provided for us through the provision of others and has provided us to be the provision for others.

There is to be a wonderful flow of love and life between everyone so gathered. This was the body life experienced in the early days of the life of the ekklesia and it is what the Lord desires to build again, His dwelling place for His body. Read Paul's letters afresh and see this quality of body life, with its challenges, that is being actually experienced by real people in the real ups and downs of their real lives.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

The Greek word translated as 'fellowship' is used in uniquely here, and it carries the meaning of sharing, which is an essential element of real and true body life. How can we be in relationship if we are not willing to share our lives with each other? Some might find this challenging, however, we do need to work through such challenges in order that we can come through to a new freedom in Christ as we find the strength of His grace to sustain us. Indeed, a freedom where we can trust others with our deepest issues, to be truly humble before each other and even to be vulnerable and accountable. The ultimate expression of this will be people walking together in transparency, because there is nothing hidden.⁸ This would be truly bringing ourselves, and His presence within us, into the midst of His tabernacle.

The term also comes from a root word which means to actively partake of something. So that we are to not to sit passively on the side lines, or in the pew. The Lord would want to call us into the midst. To come in from the cold and to enjoy the warmth at the heart of His body. In His letter to the church at Laodicea the Lord challenges the body there to be hot for God and not lukewarm.⁹ Therefore, let the friction of body life do its work and bring us to a warmer place in Him. For it is as we fully immerse ourselves into body life and work out the relationships within it, with fear and trembling, that we are actually being given wonderful opportunities to work out our own salvation. We will have to learn to walk through painful and difficult situations whilst at

the same time keeping our hearts pure before God. Even maintaining our love for those who might seem for a time to be our enemies. It would be here that we will learn so much about ourselves and how far we still have to go. It is here that truth will be forged in our inward parts and it is here that Father will help us to know wisdom in the hidden place our hearts. ¹⁰.

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; (and in the body) Holding forth the word of life...

Philippians 2:12b-16a

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:2-3

Communion

Communion is the translation of the Greek word *koinonia*. This Greek term consistently carries the idea of being in partnership with others. A partnership such that we will need to learn to work together to get the work of the Lord done. A partnership which

demonstrates true charity, which is love in action.

At the heart of the Greek word *koinonia* is a root word which means a singularity and, therefore, it carries the concept of working in unity. We are therefore working together with a singularity or common purpose.

...they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2: 1b

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship (*koinonia*) of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:9-10

Indeed, our fellowship with one another has a starting place with and through our fellowship with Jesus. If our fellowship with Him is sweet so will be our fellowship with one another. The apostle John has much to say about this in his first epistle.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...

1 John 3:6-7

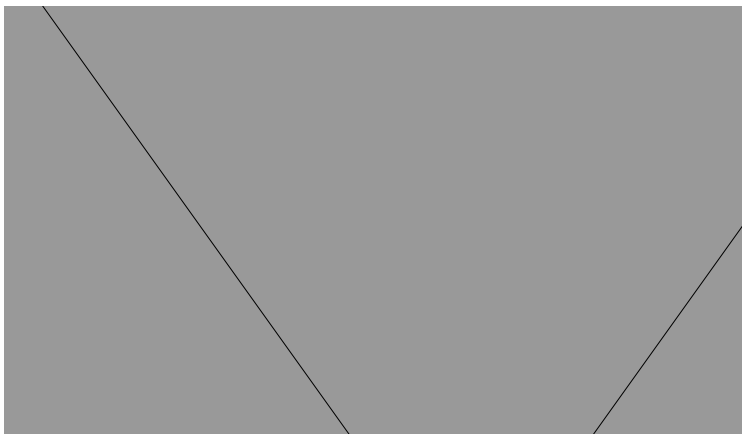
Concord

Concord is the translation given to the Greek term, symphonesis, which is also used uniquely here. It is the term from which we get the word 'symphony', which is the harmonious combination of a multitude of different musical instruments to produce a wonderful sound. However, for the instruments to come together to produce the music with all its melodies, cadences and to be given its changes in tempo it requires two other crucial elements. A symphony produced by an orchestra requires both a musical score and the presence of a conductor. Likewise the gathered body will also require its own written manuscript and its own conductor to make sense of the words within the ever changing dynamic that is body life. We need to be people of the word and people in the Spirit for the body to function to its potential and to produce something which in its own way is wonderfully harmonious.

...but be filled with the Spirit;

Ephesians 5:18c

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all



Part is the translation of the Greek term, *meris*, from which we get the word 'merit', and it carries the concept of an individual's allotment or portion. It is the same word that is used in Ephesians 4.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:16

This term is a reflection of our God given unique place in the body of Christ. As we have seen, Paul makes it very clear that church building is a function of the Godhead.

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1 Corinthians 12:18

God desires to place everyone where He wants them in His Church, because there is a place that is just right for them.

God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Romans 12:3e

God has provided us with enough faith to be fruitful in the place He has chosen and for the task He has chosen us to do.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.

Romans 12:6a

God has provided us with grace we need to be fruitful in our spiritual gifting in the place or places he has chosen for us in His body.

Agreement

Agreement is the translation of the third Greek term which is used uniquely in this passage. The word is sunkatathesis and it carries the concept of something being laid next to something else

There are echoes here of the building work described in 1 Peter: 2, of living stones being laid together, particularly as Paul describes the church at Corinth as a temple of the living God. Each of us is a brick in the hands of the master brick layer.

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-5 NKJV

This is a very redolent idea for us here as we are reflecting upon the building purposes of the Lord. We need to recognise that we are the very building materials with which the Lord is intending to build this tabernacle. And being part of the body will enable us to become a living stone that will find the place in which we are a perfect fit. As Father is able to knock off our rough edges. As the Father works on us and as we do what we can to work on ourselves we will end up potentially even as part of the walls and foundations of the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold,

silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13

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

Revelation 21:2

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

Revelation 21:18-20

But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

1 Corinthians 3:10c

The walls of the New Jerusalem are built with the hearts of true disciples.

The King's Pitch

...the tabernacle that David had pitched for it.

2 Samuel 6:17e

Let us reflect here upon the sukkah, סֹכֶה the fragile ephemeral structure that the children of Israel were commanded to build once a year during the feast of tabernacles to remind them of their journey across the wilderness towards the promised land under the leadership of Moses. A journey during which the Lord God proved to them that He was faithful as He met their physical needs and sustained them for forty years. Also it was a journey during which the Lord revealed His name and his character and at the same time challenged the children of Israel concerning their own heart and character. As we read in Deuteronomy.

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

Deuteronomy 8:2

As we have seen above this is the same structure that the prophet Amos describes the end time rebuilt Tabernacle of David to be, Amos 9 literally reads I will raise up the sukkah of David.

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will

raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old...

Amos 9:11

As we have seen this has an individual application as the believer's closet and it clearly has a corporate application as well. As we have seen this is actual prophetic metaphor that is chosen to represent the burgeoning first century Gentile Church.¹¹ Therefore, as we gather together within the body we can also understand that we are gathering within a corporate sized sukkah. Indeed, we can find a reference to this in Genesis 9.

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

Genesis 9:27

Japheth developed into the grouping of humanity which we can identify as the Gentile nations of the first century world and Shem became the Jewish and Arabic stock of humanity. This prophecy is foretelling, therefore, what we are saying here, that the tents or tabernacles of the children of Israel, representing the descendants of Shem, will be inhabited by the Gentiles. Amos 9 prophetically verifies this,

That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

Amos 9:12

It is then directly applied by James to the Gentile church and in the Greek translation of the Hebrew of the Amos prophecy that we have in Acts 15 we read the following:

That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,
and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,
saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Acts 15:17

No doubt as a consequence of this Paul, to whom James was referring in Acts 15, is able to teach a clear confirmation of our understanding of this to the body of Christ in Corinth.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that
the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Therefore, we also have the same dwelling place when we gather together, a corporate sukkah.

And at the heart of which, in the middle of the hebrew letter Kaf, is the same dot we noticed when exploring the individual sukkah. Let us see if we can find this dot in scripture?

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:20

Here is the dot, the dot represents Jesus in the midst of His gathered body. No matter how small as long as they are gathered in His name He will be there. It is interesting to note that the crucial attribution to be in His name is the same here as we saw it in Amos' prophecy and which is repeated in the version in Acts. We who are gathered are called by His name, we are little Christs, Christians. And in scripture to have the name means you also carry the character, well we are at least on our way.

We also need to understand that we gather with Him, we gather in HIS PLACE.

He has pitched His tent with us

Why do we find the presence of Christ in the midst? This is because he has not finished with us, there is still work to be done, and His Father's work still needs to be completed. Moreover, this work starts with us and our hearts, but ends with producing an expression of His body which shines out in to the darkness of the world with His light, the light of His glory.

But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay,
and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy
hand.

Isaiah 64:8

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of

darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

2 Corinthians 4: 6-7

Therefore, having come to an understanding that the corporate reality that is the Tabernacle of David is the place that is built for His presence, a presence that is carried within the hearts of all those gathered. In addition, this is His one and only place which is and always will be His throne in the centre of His gathered people. We do need to understand that the Lord wants 'his place' back. He wants to once more to sit in His place of lordship and authority at the heart of his people who are called by His name, to sit on the throne of our lives individually and the throne of the ekklesia.¹² This fundamental truth lies at the heart of this whole journey that we are called to make, the journey from flesh to spirit. The journey of true discipleship. Paul describes the Lord Jesus' place in the following terms using the metaphor of the body in Ephesians, where we read the following:

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name

that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 1:20-23

Christ is the head over all things to the church; He is the Great Shepherd ¹⁴ and He desires to be given His true place. For the establishment of the Tabernacle of David now is both a preparation for and a prophetic witness to His Millennial rule and reign from His throne within the millennial Tabernacle of David.

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Isaiah 16:5

A tabernacle meet or fit for the master's use. We now need to explore the purpose for the tabernacle and for those ministering within it. However, what might this tabernacle look like? Perhaps as we have seen above Isaiah 65, might give us some prophetic insight?

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

Isaiah 65:8

This verse which is found within an end time prophetic scriptural context also carries imagery of which we are very familiar within the teaching of Jesus,

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Mark 2:22

A dynamic effervescent experience of the body of Christ within a gathered reality that is captured by the symbolism of a grape cluster. Therefore, what can we glean from this image?

The groups will be limited in number. An average cluster will carry between about 12 and 30 grapes, this is not a precise science. However, what can be said is that the number will not be huge. Small enough to facilitate the building loving relationships, one with another. Otherwise known as genuine friendship. Quality, strong and committed relationships within which the life of the vine can once again flow between us and from us into the world.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants;

for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

John 15:12-17

In the words of Star Trek Next Generation's Captain Pic,
'Make it so!'

Notes

1. Galatians 6: 1, 2
2. See John 3: 8
3. See John 14: 1-3
4. Isaiah 55: 8, 9
5. See 2 Corinthians 12: 9
6. For a scriptural study on decision making in the Body, see the final chapter in 'Taking the Form of a Servant' The Scriptural Principles of Leadership in the Rebuilt 'Tabernacle of David'; A Leadership Model for Our Time and Any Time Within the Body of Christ' by the same author, which is a companion piece to this book.
7. The binding and loosing element of this scripture is

often used as a pretext for a distorted understanding of spiritual warfare which is taught as a prevailing 'truth' today in evangelical\charismatic churches.

8. 1 Corinthians 4: 5

9. Revelation 3: 15, 16

10. Psalm 51: 6

11. See Acts 15: 15-18

12. Amos 9: 13

13. Hebrews 13: 20

Chapter 2

A Place for a Whole Burnt Offering

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

2 Samuel 6:18

Once the tabernacle was pitched and the Ark was in its place the work could begin.

David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD

The journey has always had a destiny, we have not been wandering aimlessly. To the contrary, the journey, as we have discovered, has been a journey into a transformed character and nature, it has been a profoundly significant learning experience as we have developed for ourselves an understanding of fear of the Lord and walking in obedience, we have also developed into true worshippers. And all this has been underpinned by a secret life of discipline developed in relationship with Father in our closet and beyond. Through it all, we have found the way to carry His presence within our lives and to actively present Him into the midst of the gathering that we now recognise symbolically as the Tabernacle of David. What now? There is work to be done and it is time to begin to build upon the foundation of Jesus in our lives within this new corporate reality.

According to the grace of God which is given

unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble...

1 Corinthians 3:10-12

It is time to raise up the fallen tabernacle, and repair the breaches and allow the Lord to raise up the ruins, and to do a rebuild job such as it was in the days of old. For we now have a firm and secure foundation and it is onto this that we can begin to build. We now the materials to build with- our lives, our hearts and our sacrificial service.

Indeed, a service that is characterised in symbol by the two types of sacrifice that we find made within the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. These are the burnt and peace offerings. These are the two types of sacrifice that were made within the newly established Tabernacle in Jerusalem that we see identified in the verse above. ¹

Indeed, as we begin to unpack the spiritual significance of these two types of sacrifice that were performed within the tabernacle of David we will see that they do inform our understanding of the ongoing work or ministry of the mature disciple within the gathered body of Christ. The journey has been and always will be in preparation for our effective service within this rebuilt tabernacle of David. This will be a service that is expressed through the sacrifices we make within it, namely sacrifices that

can be likened to a burnt offering and a peace offering. Moreover, as we will see, this in turn will be a preparation for our service in the Tabernacle of David during the Millennial reign of Christ on earth, following His second coming, as indicated by the verses below.

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Isaiah 16:5

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3:21

Therefore, let us tread carefully and with fear and trembling as we make our way into an understanding of these things. In this chapter we will be exploring the first of these sacrifices, the burnt offering.

And David offered burnt offerings... before the LORD.

First of all, we will need to understand something of the function of the burnt offering within its original context within the sacrificial cult of Israel. The burnt offering sacrifice within the Temple worship in Jerusalem left nothing but ash, the whole sacrifice was burnt, every part of the animal, nothing was left, everything was consumed by the fire.

And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God...
Deuteronomy 12:37

Here, we are reminded of Paul's challenging words in Romans 12, where we read:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.²
Romans 12:1

As we have been exploring above, the call is for a people to give themselves wholly to the purposes of God. This is the quality of sacrifice that the Lord is looking for from His people. A bride giving herself totally to her bridegroom. Have we not already learned that the path of a true worshipper is path marked by sacrifice, just think of the oxen and fatlings? The 'olah'³ or whole burnt

offering is a description of the ongoing life of the true disciple. We are effectively under new ownership and should live accordingly. Particularly, in terms of our life within the body, as we have seen in the previous chapter, we are called to actively bring the whole of us and the whole of Him in us, by His presence, into the midst of His tabernacle. This idea of total self-less devotion is captured wonderfully by the following parable.

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Luke 17:7-10

The current culture within the church is too man focused. The church does everything it can to try to attract man to come through its doors and then to keep him by slick professionalism and entertainment, without realising that the spirit of God had left some time ago. We need to realise that the focus and the culture needs to change. We need to learn to be a servant and to share the same mind as the Lord.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ...But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, ... he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:5,7a,8b

This will not come naturally to everyone, for most of us it will be quite a challenge. However, this is fully in line with everything we have already explored. Are we not already carrying our own cross on a daily basis and we are surely familiar now with the narrow path we are walking in the valley of the shadow of death? ⁴ We simply have to remember to bring our cross with us when gathered in the Body. There will be many lessons to be learned as we walk with others in the Body, and no doubt many opportunities to die to self here as well.

The House of God has always been a house of sacrifice, not of false comfort.

What does the burnt offering represent for us? The burnt offering produced light, heat and smoke in the original Tabernacle and the same, spiritually speaking, will be produced when its true sacrificial function is found once again. Therefore, what do these three elements of the fire of sacrifice spiritually represent for us as we look to be part of this end time rebuilding project? What do we need to look for and aspire to be? Let us take them one at a time.

Light

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

It is important that we notice the grammar here. In verse fourteen the 'you' or 'ye' is the second person plural form which is therefore referring to the corporate body of Christ. Therefore, it is the gathered body, which carries the light of the Lord for the world⁵. However, in verse 16, the second person singular form is used, so that this verse is referring to the individual disciple. Therefore, here, it is the light of the individual disciple that shines before men through their good works. The key to understanding what this means for us is the scriptural context in which we find the Lord's teaching here. These verses follow the beatitudes, and therefore need to be understood as the consequence or outworking of this previous teaching. The Beatitudes being the path of sanctification.⁶ Therefore, it is only as an individual has allowed Father to transform their hearts, such that they carry the character of His son, that we begin to shine. A light that might impact those around us, even within the church and show them a better way. Indeed, Paul says something very similar in Philippians 2.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Philippians 2.15

This is the light that the Lord will use to draw others towards Himself and the salvation He offers through the cross, when they encounter individuals within whom they see the reality of the cross at work. Indeed, what is this light? How do we shine brightly in Christ such that others are drawn like moths to a flame? The key to understanding this is to be found in the teaching of John.

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

1 John 2:8,10

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

The light is love and love is the key

- The rebuilt Tabernacle of David will shine with the

light of sacrificial love, a light that comes at a cost,
as we allow our flesh life to be burnt away from us.

Heat

i. Heat means conviction and heat comes from friction.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Revelation 3: 15-16

These are the opening words spoken by the Lord to the church in Laodicea or the expression of the end-time church, as it is often understood. Jesus is not happy with their lukewarmness and is looking instead for true heat or true coldness in His body. What does He mean by this?

The key is to understand the geological context of the town of Laodicea. Ice-cold refreshing water was available from the mountain stream above the town; however, by the time they reached the town with it, it was lukewarm and no longer refreshing. And similarly, in the valley where the two local rivers met there were hot springs, however, by the time the water was transported to the town it was now merely lukewarm and good for nothing. Therefore, for the Lord the issue is one of drawing directly from the source. Coming to the fountain of life for both our refreshing ice-cold water and for the cleansing quality

of the hot spring.

This interpretation is verified by what the Lord goes on to say to the end time church:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:18

What this seems to be teaching us is that the key to enjoying the cold refreshing living water or the hot water of his presence bubbling up within us is in both cases to go to the source.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 7:37-39

The call on the church is to be a wellspring for the living water.

The good news for us is that the Holy Spirit was given

as the ekklesia was born on the day of Pentecost. We now have the source of this living water within us as our spirit is indwelt by the very Spirit of Christ. His presence is carried by each of us who have come into His body through the cross. However, sadly, today how many of the wells are blocked, how many of the wells are full of all sorts of worldly rubbish in terms of the distorted teaching that emanates from so many pulpits. Like in the days of Abraham's son Isaac, the wells need to be dug again so that the living water can once more flow.

There is often some confusion as to what Jesus was referring to as He made His dramatic intervention in the Temple. What does it mean for us to have rivers of living water flowing out of our bellies? The biblical text tells us that it represents the future indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but when does the Holy Spirit flow out of the belly of a believer? For what purpose does the Holy Spirit flow out of the belly of a believer? Perhaps, John helps us to understand this later in his Gospel narrative? For in John 16 we read the following description of the ongoing function of the Holy Spirit within the life of a believer.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.
John 16:7-8

It was expedient or a much better situation for His

disciples that Jesus was to leave them. What He is saying here is quite remarkable. The disciples were going to be in a better position once Jesus had left them. How could this possibly be true? Essentially this is because once He had left them and once He and the Father ⁷ had sent 'another' who would be the same as Him then they would have Him, Jesus by His Spirit, on the inside rather than the outside. His life would be being carried within their life by His Spirit. They would be carriers of His presence within them every step of their way, rather than trying to keep up with Him on the dusty roads of Israel.

Therefore, what this tells us is that the Holy Spirit will flow out of us and touch the world; this is the river. Indeed, this is a river that will touch the world with conviction. A river that will flow out the sanctified reality at the heart of each one of us. A river of love, joy and peace that will touch those we touch. A flow of the Holy Spirit that will convict them of their sin, their need for salvation and the threat of judgement awaiting them. In short, this is the work of the Holy Spirit and it is a work that is to be achieved in and through each of us as we are walking the walk. At times, most times, we will not even realise this is happening, it is a work of the Lord.

Paul describes the impact of this river in his second letter to the church at Corinth.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto

God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

The crucial point that needs to be understood here is that the degree to which we have sacrificially offered ourselves to the Lord will determine the degree to which we carry His fragrance.

This scripture can also provide us with another way of understanding a foundational principle which we have been exploring throughout on our journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem. A journey through which we are being prepared to carry the presence of the Lord in fear and obedience. We have been walking with King David as he has learnt some difficult yet vitally important lessons along the way. Lessons which have involved death, confusion and despair. However, the result was that David was able to carry the presence as a true worshipper right into the heart of the tabernacle and to finish the journey.

Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 2 helps us to understand that as we carry the presence on our own journey through our lives on a daily basis then this presence, the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, will make an impact on those around us whether we realise it or not. We exude the sweet savour of the Lord. And as this sense of the presence is released from us as we connect with those around us through our spirit, life style and the way we express ourselves it will have one of two affects. People will either

be drawn to the presence or they will be repelled. Who is sufficient for these things indeed?

The question we do need to ask is how exactly the presence of the indwelt Spirit would be convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgement? What would be the process? From the moment that the Holy Spirit was sent His convicting influence would be communicated through the spirit, lifestyle and the way the true disciples express themselves both in the world and in the body. For the Holy Spirit will convict the world through the quality of His life in us and this quality can be summed up in one-word, love. No one will ever be convicted by our harsh judgementalism or by us looking down at them from our ivory tower of self-righteousness. It is the love of Christ that they see in us and in our lives that will bring conviction as they are able to contrast their own life with what they see in us which is Him and not us, by His Spirit.

This is the sweet savour of Christ that will impact those we encounter as we walk before them carrying His presence, one way or sadly the other.

The key is not to give the Gospel, but TO BE the Gospel!

- The rebuilt Tabernacle of David will be a channel for the conviction of the Holy Spirit

ii. Heat means passion

What does it mean to be hot in the Lord? A phrase found in scripture describes as to be:

...fervent in spirit; serving the Lord

Romans 12:11b

The Greek word translated as fervent here literally means to be boiling hot, just like the water bubbling up from that spring near Laodicea. The word in question here is 'zeo'. Therefore, everything we do for the Lord, which should be everything we do, should have this level of energy and vitality. How we do anything is how we do everything, we never know who is watching. We find in scripture individuals who are described as carrying this passion.

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord;
and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught
diligently the things of the Lord.

Acts 18:25

The man in question here is Apollos and he is described here as having the 'zeo' spirit but also that He was a teachable disciple of the Lord and that his teaching ministry was underpinned by diligence. He was fervent in spirit and diligent in practise. The Lord is looking to instill a passion in his people, in all we do, we are to be hot, to carry a fervent spirit like Apollos.

The rebuilt Tabernacle of David will be a place for
those who have a passion for the Lord

iii. Heat means friction

At work when using a flint and steel to create a spark that will ignite a fire I am creating an intense heat through the friction caused when the two parts of the flint and steel come into contact. From very simple materials a spark is formed which has been measured to be as hot as lightning. The cause of this heat, put simply in the vernacular, is that two things have been rubbed up the wrong way. How redolent this is of church life. So often two people rub each other up the wrong way over an issue of theology or a misunderstanding about who was going to do the flower arrangement this week. However, the heat of the spark is often enough to start a fire, but not in a good way. Too often things can escalate as others are drawn into the dispute and soon things are out of control and people sadly walk away with burnt fingers.

What we do need to find once again is a capacity to love one another enough, especially at these times, to forgive. A pastor friend has a nine word phrase which he encourages people to employ when faced with fraternal friction and it is:

I am sorry, please forgive me, I love you.

This also works within a marriage as well. The key for us is that we do have an amazing capacity to forgive, it is God given. Let us remind ourselves of what Jesus imparts

to His disciples.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

John 20:21-23

We have been given something very special here, which if positively utilised will help to overcome any time of fellowship based frictional heat. Indeed, what does Jesus actually teach His disciples concerning forgiveness? Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:21-22

The onus is on us to forgive, whether the other party deserves it or not. The onus is on us, and always on us and our capacity to be able to douse the heated flames of relational friction with a bucket full of love, mercy and forgiveness will be determined by how far we are on our journey. For as Jesus hung alone on the cross naked and humiliated before the whole world he set a benchmark for us in terms of forgiveness and His words still resonate down through the centuries to us today.

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Luke 23:33-34

Paul describes beautifully in his letters the quality of forgiveness that should be evident in the life of a healthy body.

I therefore,... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Ephesians 4:1-3; 5:1-2

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are

called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Colossians 3:12-15

The Tabernacle of David will be a place for love
expressed in sacrificial forgiveness

iv. Where do we find we this heat (the
positive kind, that is)?

To answer this question, we need to return to the letter
that the Lord wrote to the church that was at Laodicea,
where we read the following:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,
that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that
thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy
nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with
eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:18

We need to return to the source of things and this
is the counsel or advice that Jesus gives to each one
of us and to the church more generally as the church
at Laodicea is symbolic of the church of our own day.

- Exchange our worthless self-driven fool's gold for the real thing, as his gold is proved in our lives through becoming overcomers in Him and by His grace.
- Exchange our filthy rags of self-righteousness

with His garments of salvation and robes of His righteousness.

- Exchange our spiritual short-sightedness with His eternal vision for our lives.

The key being His next piece of wise counsel.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.⁸

Revelation 3:19

We are still walking the narrow path that leads us from Gibeah to Jerusalem; a walk that continues within the gathering. The Lord still loves us, His ekklesia, enough to do what needs to be done to help us sort out our self-life and to prepare us for His eternal purposes. This will always involve the occasional rebuke and chastening. However, the challenge for us now is to respond to the second part of this verse. To be zealous and to repent. And here we are back to the issue of heat, for the Greek word translated as zealous is more or less a transliteration of the Greek term zeloo, which has a literal meaning to burn hot. Therefore, the way back to being hot in the Lord is simply to repent, however, the call here is for us to actively exert ourselves to make this repentance real. This is no time to play games with God and our walk before Him both as an individual and as the gathered body. We need to be honest, to recognise our need to turn our lives around—from our hearts, to our thought life and this will then feed into our actions. In short, a return to the much neglected

path of sanctification, the narrow path that leads us from Gibeah to Jerusalem.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3:20

Are we listening? Knock, knock is any body there who might respond to the knocking of the Lord in these perilous times. Two aspects of this verse do need to be noticed. First of all, Jesus is actually on the outside and He is trying to come in! Do we realise what this is telling us today, if we accept that the Laodicean church is actually a description of the end time church, our church. We have missed the Lord; the Spirit of Christ no longer resides within this church as it stands. This is a false church. This is a spiritually dead and cold religious system.

The second aspect that should catch our attention is that the Lord is not looking for an end time revival of any great size. Why do we say this? Look at his level of expectation here. He says 'if any man...'; He is only expecting one at a time to respond, to open the door and to enjoy restored fellowship with Him. Chilling stuff indeed. However, look at the reward on offer to those who would hear His gentle tapping on the door.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

8 Revelation 3:19

He is looking for us to respond to his call and his counsel and to join Him in His Millennial reign, the key for all of us is the quality of our spiritual ears and our hearing.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 3:22

In fact, we only need one good ear!

Smoke

The sacrifices that we make will inevitably leave their mark on us. At the end of my working day as I return home it is always possible to detect that I have been doing some Forest School activities, because I always carry on my body and clothes the unmistakable smell of the fire we have been using in the woods. Likewise, if we have been truly walking before the Lord in obedience and have encountered our own times of testing we will always carry the fragrance of Christ wherever we go. This is because the fire of sacrifice that has marked our lives goes with us and has shaped us- we are back on the threshing floor of Nachon once again. As we walk in the midst of His body or in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation we should be noticeably carrying the mark of the Lord in our life and within our character. Here we are back to the journey from Gibeah

to Jerusalem learning how to carry His presence and taking the opportunities to die to self along the way. The challenge for each one of us is to sacrifice all so that we might shine with His light, the light of His character, and to exude His sweet fragrance, a fragrance that is always a little smoky. So that we might enable Him by His fragrance to touch the hearts of those we live amongst. Likewise, the challenge for the gathered body is to also be a gathering that might also be characterised in a similar way. For, as we have seen above, it is the true church in its plurality that will be that city set up on the hill of our communities, towns and even our nation to shine with the light of the real Good news of Jesus Christ and not just hoping the new cart will do. The gathered church is also called to carry the fragrance of Christ and not just the stench of the oxen.

The end-time Ekklesia is a house of prayer

There is another potentially very profound outworking of the 'burnt offering' metaphor as it applies to the ministry to be delivered through the rebuilt tabernacle of David that will be seen in our own day. For there is work to be done. As we have already recognised the sacrifice produced smoke, therefore what further spiritual symbolism can we find here? Essentially, the smoke of sacrifice can be understood as a metaphor for a ministry of intercession that is the fruit of an intercessional lifestyle.

The corporate dwelling place was, is and will always

be a house of prayer.

This was clearly the intended function for the Solomonic temple, as we see here:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

2 Chronicles 7:14-16

The prophet Isaiah looks towards a future time when a house will be established that will carry both sacrifice and prayer.

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Isaiah 56:7

And how did the Jesus describe the Temple of His own day, having over-turned the tables of the money lenders? He is clearly echoing the words of the prophet when he

says the following:

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mark 11:17

Likewise, for us, the Lord has chosen and sanctified a new house of prayer. However, there is a significant price to be paid. The witness of scripture indicates that before listening to the prayer

God will first look at the character of the person who is doing the interceding. We see examples of this in the lives of the key intercessors of the Old Testament, such as Noah who was perfect in his generation ⁹. Abraham who is described as a friend of God. ¹⁰ and Moses who was described as the meekest of men. ¹¹ And in the New Testament James makes this profound statement:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James 5:16a

We, therefore, have the two important elements of the burnt offering coming together here. The spiritual symbolism of the burnt offering challenges us first of all to be fully sacrificial in our walk before the Lord and within His body and then this in turn will prepare us to be a people of such quality in Christ that the Father will move mountains. ¹² Indeed, it is by both of these elements coming together that we become useable for

the profound function Father has prepared for us to fulfil: to be the sweet fragrance of Christ, and such a fragrance that might touch His heart and even change His mind.

This is because as our self-life is burnt up it releases a sweet savour that Father has always relished. A truth we see amplified in the first mention of a burnt offering in the Bible. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.

Genesis 8:20-21a

This scripture is important because it is the record of the first time that a burnt offering was offered to the Lord God, and this first mention establishes its essential function. This is the first mention principle yet again and therefore what we have described here concerning how the Lord God responds to burnt offerings is normative. The burnt offering released a savour or smell that the Lord God found sweet. The impact of the sacrificial aroma went even further because it tempered the anger of the Lord God and it even changed His heart concerning mankind. The savour had an intercessory function then and it still does today. Obviously, the sacrifice is now of a different kind, however, what is the savour that will still impact Father? The answer from scripture is the prayers of the saints;

the prayers of those walking the path of sanctification and true discipleship. A people prepared and made ready for the task of intercession.

There is a clear association in scripture that can be identified between the prayers of the saints and the aroma of sacrifice that reaches the very nostrils of the Lord God. In Revelation we are given a window into the very throne room of God, and here we read the following:

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 5:8

The prayers of the saints, we are told, are actually collected in golden vials and the prayers are described here as odours. Why are the prayers of the saints described as odours? The Greek word translated as odours is *thymiama* which is described in Thayer's Greek lexicon as an aromatic substance that is burnt. Remarkably, therefore, what do we have here? Scripture itself attests to the fact that the prayers of the saints are our burnt offering.

Further, in Revelation 8 we are then shown that these vials are taken and actually offered on the heavenly golden altar in His presence so that Father can experience and enjoy their sweet savour directly.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

Revelation 8:3

What is important is that we need to realise that the burnt offering of our prayers is acceptable and accepted by Father as long as it comes out of a place of sacrifice. If they do, then we need to know that the prayers offered at this time will prosper in that for which they are sent and will have eternal consequences. Without the sacrifice and it being consumed by the fire of the Lord then there will be nothing for God to savour. However, if we are willing to pay the price to deny self and to pay the price to walk humbly before our God then our prayers will be acceptable and accepted in the very throne room of God.

Sweet smelling aroma is released by the heat of the sacrifice offered.

The Spirit of Elijah: there is work to be done

- If we believe we are in the end times.
- If we believe that the Lord is returning soon.
- If we believe He is the bridegroom returning for

His bride.

- Then, is there a preparatory work to be done for his return?

Before Jesus' first incarnation John the Baptist was sent, before His second will there be a 'John the Baptist' generation in the ekklesia who will be charged with the same calling? The ministry of John the Baptist was fundamentally one of soggy intercession as he took those who found him in the wilderness by the Jordan through the waters of preparatory baptism.

Is there a work preparatory work of intercession that we might be being called to?

This is what we will now move on to explore.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1:17

The motivational spirit or anointing that John the Baptist was operating under is described here as being in the spirit and power of Elias. On the face of it, this might seem strange to us since Elijah is not shown to have been a prophet who baptised anyone. Therefore, out of what aspect of the ministry of this great Old Testament figure is John operating? What is the spirit of Elijah? And in what way does it impact or inform us concerning God's intercessory purposes for the body of Christ today?

To answer these questions, we do need to turn to the account of the prophet Elijah in scripture. When looking at Elijah's ministry in 1 Kings there are significant features which do speak to us down the centuries and to which we are able to relate and respond. First of all, we need to notice that the essential problem that the prophet was called to address was one of spiritual adultery in the nation. This was because the northern kingdom of Israel was increasingly embracing the sordid cult of Baal worship which involved both child sacrifice by fire and temple prostitution. As the prophet himself says:

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

1 Kings 18:18

The world and its worship were increasingly encroaching into the spiritual life of the society of the day and essentially the problem lay with the leadership of the nation at this time, the king was Ahab who had married a Zidonian princess called Jezebel. A name we are probably very familiar with today as a prevailing spirit of the age and as such a tool of the enemy that is ravaging the church. Ahab, a weak man, and Jezebel a strong and driven woman, presented quite a toxic leadership team for the nation. Hence, there was significant spiritual confusion and enemy infiltration at the time of Elijah as there is today.

The consequence was that the nation was under judgement from the Lord God and was suffering a significant period of drought. Indeed, no rain would fall until the prophet said otherwise. Perhaps, we can liken this situation with our own time and our own spiritual situation? The drought for us might not be a physical one, but as the word can be likened to water,¹³ the church in our own day is desperately gasping for the water of the word, for some scriptural truth and perspective at this time of deep spiritual confusion and enemy infiltration by the same spirit of Jezebel. Therefore, what is to be our response? How does this relate to us and speak down the centuries to us?

In the final verses of the Old Testament we read the following:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD
Malachi 4:5

Malachi then goes on to describe the future end time ministry in these terms:

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.
Malachi 4:6

The use of the phrase 'lest I come' here does seem to suggest that the future ministry of Elijah will have both an intercessory or restorative function which is

helpful as we try to make a connection with the restored tabernacle of David of our own day. By this phrase the prophet is communicating from God that His preference is for mercy rather than judgement, but things do need to change. Moreover, in terms of the Kairos timing of this intervention we are told that it shares the same time frame as the prophecy in Amos. This is an end time event just as the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David will be, for they both come before the terrible day of the Lord.

Moving forward in scripture this prophecy is applied in part by the angel Gabriel as he communicates with the priest Zacharias concerning his coming son, John the Baptist. The last of the prophets of the old covenant whose life and ministry will be to prepare the people of Israel for the first coming of the Lord Jesus.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the 'disobedient' to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1:16-17

John the Baptist fulfilled his calling as the herald for the first coming of the Lord, but what about the Lord's second coming, was this prophecy fulfilled in the first coming of the Lord? Did John the Baptist have anything to say concerning the second coming of Jesus? In Matthew we do have an extensive example of John the

Baptist's original message where we read the following:

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 3:10-12

John's message clearly goes beyond the Lord's first coming, covering his second as well. A second coming when He is coming to gather up his wheat in to His barn. Indeed, His second coming is also marked by a judgement of fire. However, who are those being judged here?

In His first coming we are told that, He came unto His own, but His own received Him not, (John 1:11) this referred specifically to Jesus' own Jewish nation at the time of His first incarnation. However, when He comes again we are told that He will also be coming to thoroughly purge his floor, He will also be gathering his wheat into the garner and then He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. This time he will be coming with fire and his fire will test the quality of the fruit and the work of His people, the church, both Jew and Gentile, or as Paul describes them the Israel of God.¹⁴ We know this

because this same judgement of fire is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3.

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

Therefore, surely, we do need to recognise that John the Baptist's prophetic message and the spirit and power of Elijah, that it carries, do speak down through the centuries to us as we ourselves look expectantly to the return of the Lord. And clearly, as we see the way the world and the church are going we can surely identify that perhaps soon and very soon we are indeed going to see the King. Isn't this the time, therefore, that the people of God, His wheat upon His threshing floor, are required to be prepared and made ready for this coming? Are we ready? Or do we still require to learn the lessons of the other threshing floor that David encountered in 2 Samuel 6: Nachon's threshing floor.

There are questions that we do need to ask ourselves at this time. What is the quality of our work and the quality of our fruit, and how will it be judged? A quality that is largely determined by what is truly in our hearts. What is our driving motivation to serve the Lord? Are

our hearts really ready for the fire of the Lord that is to come? There is no time to waste, who knows when Jesus will be returning. The answer is to expose it to the fire of the spirit of Elijah now. And this will be our burnt offering, an offering that is acceptable to Father as He enjoys its sweet savour. Let us open up our lives to the Lord afresh and give Him permission to try us, to test us and to show us what sort we are and what sort our work is. Thereby, we might truly see what is really in our heart and therefore to know what is really in our heart ¹⁵. After all, if we want to experience the rain then we need to go through the fire- this is the message of Elijah. Let the refiner do His work in your life now so that you won't be disappointed.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the 'disobedient' to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1:17

Just as preparation was required prior to the Lord's first incarnation, the same will be true for his second. There was a call then for true repentance and there will be one again. Therefore, there will be a new day for the spirit of Elijah at the end of the end times; this time it will be expressed through those with ears to hear or who have diligently hearkened to the Lord God and who have received the wisdom of the just.

This will be the people gathering process that we have been exploring within the tabernacle of David above, involving as it does the process of heart transformation of true discipleship. The journey by which we are transformed into the sons of God and made ready and prepared to be part of the bride at the return of the bridegroom.

Moreover, it is at this point that we need to realise that there is work to be done, not for ourselves only but for others, the disobedient. This is the time that the Lord desires us to be put to work as part of His end time gathering purposes.

We are being prepared to stand in the gap, not for the world but for our brothers and sisters who are increasingly becoming trapped in the distortion and confusion and even heresy of what passes for Biblical teaching today. The great falling away has already started, therefore an intercessory rescue mission is required.

The hearts of the disobedient will be turned to the wisdom of the just.

Therefore, there are three questions that need to be answered at this point, who are the 'disobedient', who are the 'just' and what is their 'wisdom'?

Who are the disobedient? This is helpfully defined for us by Paul.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Titus 1:16

And also, by Peter.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be 'disobedient', the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

1 Peter 2:7-8

Paul and Peter both seem to be saying that the 'disobedient' are those believers who we might define as being hearers of the word, but not doers. They haven't allowed the words of the Lord to transform their hearts and change their lives as the Lord intends for all of us, such that they truly become His disciples. They are not truly on the journey, they may be walking as followers, and turning up to church every Sunday, but where are they in their hearts? They are walking the broad path and not the narrow way. Therefore, this scripture as it applies down the centuries to our time suggests that there is a group in the church who specifically need rescuing and bringing into true discipleship such that they will be prepared and made ready. Indeed, they probably are totally unaware that this is an issue, due to the paucity of truth and the tragic

distortion within Christian teaching today. Therefore, their disobedience is not particularly wilful, it is merely due to their ignorance or their lack of true wisdom. We, therefore, need to be ready to intercede for those in the church who the Lord can still reach with His truth.

As we saw above, He is knocking at the door and waiting for a response from the inside. As we intercede, we are amplifying the sound of His knocking.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 7: 7-8

What is the wisdom of the just? Paul again seems to answer this question quite succinctly.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

The wisdom of the just, simply said, is being in Christ, those who are actively engaging with the purposes of the Lord for their lives, which involves sanctification, his work of refining, reworking and retuning every area of our lives to him and his Lordship. The just are those who are making the journey, this journey into true discipleship. The distinction being drawn here is

between church going followers and true disciples, a distinction with which we are already very familiar. Surely Paul is describing those who are on the journey and for whom the tabernacle of David is being restored against those for whom it is still fallen, breached and in ruins.

Therefore, what is happening here? The spirit of Elijah that was ministering through John the Baptist empowered and motivated him to pay the price to stand in the gap for his own people prior to the first incarnation. In our day the Lord is looking for a people to be empowered and motivated by the same spirit to pay the price and to stand in the gap for their own people-the 'disobedient'-prior to the Lord's second coming. After all, wasn't obedience the key issue for David as he made the journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem.

The context for this work is given by the last phrase which reads, 'To make ready a people prepared'. There are two preparatory processes that lay behind these two phrases that do require unpacking. The first expression 'to make ready' is drawn from the oriental custom of sending a retinue before kings on their journeys to level the roads and make them passable. This prophetic description of the role of the John the Baptist before the Lord's first incarnation is clearly what is described here:

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his

paths straight.

Mark 1:2-3

Therefore, it will be the same for us as we move in the spirit of Elijah in our own day, through our intercession a way can be made so that these individuals or even whole churches can turn and be rescued; brought out of the lies and into the truth.

Moreover, the second part of the phrase 'a people prepared' is an expression used of making buildings or a people ready for an important visitor, such as a king, so that they are adorned and equipped with all that is necessary. I well remember the efforts the local council made when our city was visited by Prince Charles a few years ago.

For us the preparation that is necessary is marital.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Isaiah 61:10

Therefore, it will be the same for us as we move in the spirit of Elijah in our own day, the bride will be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. Therefore, these two

phrases are different aspects of the same process. We need to prayerfully intercede that the Lord does have a way in to be able to access the hearts and minds of the 'disobedient' believers with His truth and His call and then we need to intercede that they, the 'disobedient', have access themselves to all that the Lord wants them to have.

However, will prayer be enough? Will prayer alone be able to complete the work? Intercession also needs to be characterised by burden bearing. There will be a sacrificial price for us to pay. It will cost us to stand in the gap and to offer ourselves for the purposes of the Lord in His end time preparation of the bride. How much will it cost?

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

It will involve carrying our cross and being willing to step with love into these church situations of 'disobedience' and to take the truth with us. So that the 'disobedient' might hear and see another reality through our words and more importantly through our lifestyle and thereby the Lord might be able to reach their hearts by His Spirit. However, the key will always be that we:

...speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4:15b

Isn't this the message of Jude? The context into which he is writing he describes as the following:

...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 3b-4

In the same way, we also need to be contending for the faith in our own day amongst our own brethren. We need to realise that the church is under attack, indeed, an attack that is designed to rob the bridegroom of His bride. We, therefore, do need to be in there fighting the good fight through love and mercy if and only the Lord wills it. The motivation here is so important, this has to be motivated by love and motivated by the burden we are carrying in our hearts for our brethren.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude 20-21

We do need to keep ourselves right before God and strong in Him, and as we look towards our brethren struggling under the weight of the deceptions of our own time our response needs to be the intercession of prayer in the Holy Spirit, keeping in the love of God for them and looking for mercy. And as Jude continues, we can perhaps see what will be necessary in our own day, we will have to even get our hands burnt, another burnt offering.

And of some have compassion, making a difference:
And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
Jude 22-23

We do need to be in there with them, so that at the right time and in the right way we will be there for those who will be willing to hear the call and to respond. And, as it is described in Jude, it will be like pulling them out of a fire before they are consumed by it.

Therefore, there is need for intercession at this time and to physically stand in the gap for our brethren. Our intercession does need to go beyond prayer, it needs to also be characterised by being an active presence in churches that we might not choose if it would be our choice, but it isn't our choice. This is where we need to be taking the presence, His presence. He is Lord and obedience, as we have seen, can be painful and can be a challenge to what we might want. This is no time to stay within our comfort zones. However, let us be guided by Father, don't let us be a spiritual martyr to a cause

that isn't His. There will need to be potential fruit to be plucked from the fire for the Father to send us. It also requires that we don't just turn up religiously week after week to merely fill a pew, but that we actively build relationships as an expression of the compassion that Jude encourages us to be motivated. So that we will be close enough that we can reach into their lives and enable the rescue to take place.

There is also another potential aspect to this, however. John the Baptist was lead to operate in the wilderness, indeed, he characterises himself as being the fulfilment of the prophecy from Isaiah when challenged by the Pharisees concerning his identity.

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet
Esaias.

John 1:23

The people were drawn to him in the desert, likewise as the Lord builds his ekklesia in the wilderness outside of the religious camp of the church we can expect people to be drawn to Him in the wilderness. We do find this idea expressed in Hebrews.

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp,
bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing
city, but we seek one to come.

Hebrews 13:13-14

There we will be waiting for them with the Tabernacle of David. For, if the disobedient reach out to us in

whatever way we do need to be ready for them in compassion and love. And this is the motivation we also need to underpin any calling to intercede and to stand in the gap for them, so that when the hearts of the disobedient are turned to the wisdom of the just they find a loving place of acceptance and truth. The task for the just, therefore, is to be part of the Bridegroom's end time preparatory purposes, so that the disobedient, be they unsaved or saved, have an opportunity to have their hearts transformed and their lives prepared so that they might take their place as part of the bride themselves. This task is an intercessory calling that brings us back to the whole burnt offering that we have explored above.

Therefore, there is a call for a people to come together to stand in the gap and to develop a dynamic intercessory ministry of prayer and fasting. Indeed, we believe the tabernacle of David will be a gathering in which we will be:

...building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude 1:20-21

And from here we will be sent out into the church around us as missionaries carrying the mercy, love and truth of God.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us

to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20a

Indeed, it is time for us to take intercessory responsibility in our day and for our day, to sound the trumpet. In Ezekiel 33, we see a clear scriptural principle that applies to those who do have revelation and insight with regards to the spiritual condition of their time, their people and their nation they have a responsibility before the Lord to sound a trumpet!

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is

taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Ezekiel 33: 1-6

It is time to blow a trumpet!

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.

Joel 2:15

What can we learn here? This is an extremely serious undertaking before the Lord.

For someone to take responsibility in this way involves a profound heartfelt connection with the situation for which they are responding. And clearly, because the consequences for getting it wrong are so severe this not to be taken lightly. However, how are we described in Luke, the just who have wisdom? Therefore, we can see the sword coming and, therefore, by definition we have the responsibility to sound the alarm whether we like it or not. Also, this clearly applies to potentially any land, which includes our own, because it reads, 'When I bring the sword upon a land', sometimes the word has a specific focus on the land of Israel, but not here because it says, a land and not the land

And lastly, the Hebrew word used for watchman here is interesting because it carries the root meaning to shine, to be a light, a beacon/lighthouse. Therefore, we can think about a different aspect of our intercession here, it is not all about a prayer meeting. Wherever we are, we are called

to be a beacon for a different reality that might cause the 'disobedient' to start to be challenged in their hearts. By this perhaps we are providing God by His Spirit with material to work with within the 'disobedient'.

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

1 John 2: 8-10

This is the light that we find bathing the freshly born creation, the love of God. This is the light that needs to shine in and through us to our brothers and sisters as we come alongside them to help to find their way to the freedom we have found. To provide them with a path out by His Glorious light shining through us.

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Proverbs 4:18

There is a call to develop 24/7 intercession¹⁶, where our sacrifice of prayer and fasting will ascend to the Father as a sweet savour and move his hand.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break

every yoke?

Isaiah 58:6

There is a call for a people to be burden bearers for the church; the tabernacle of David that is fallen, that is breached and that is in ruins, because.

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

Amos 9:11

Closing the Breach

It is at this point that we can draw a wonderful symmetry between the two halves of the passage of scripture with which we are dealing in 2 Samuel 6. Perhaps we do need to be reminded of the way in which David responded to death of Uzzah the drover as the ark of the Covenant was being carried from Gibeah to Jerusalem. We find his reaction described in the following way.

And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

2 Samuel 6:8

David describes this intervention of Godly judgement on Uzzah, and therefore also upon David as well, as a

breach, and he then even names this geographical location thereby reminding everyone who travels through here of this particular event. This is a place on earth where the Lord God moved in such a way that one man died as a result. However, what does David mean by using the term breach here?

The Hebrew word that is used here is *perets* and it carries a meaning of a break in a wall such that something is able to burst through. So that here the spiritual wall that was protecting Uzzah as he was helping to transport the Ark was breached by his act of touching the Holy thing of God. And as we saw this act was the tip of a much greater issue of disobedience by David in the way he was transporting the Ark. For which Uzzah pays the ultimate price. This narrative and our understanding of it is also now helpful in supporting our understanding of the end time intercessional purposes of the lord God which are to be exercised by His true body on earth.

The Lord is building once more His *ekklesia* and this will require the breaches of what has developed within the church in our day to be repaired and closed. The breaches being the accumulated areas of error and disobedience perpetrated over the last two thousand years of the history of the religious system that is the church in our own day. Indeed, a work of rebuilding and restoration that comes right out of the heart of the Lord and which will see the building of an end time expression of the glorious *ekklesia* that Paul describes; a beautiful bride being made ready for the return of her

bridegroom.

That he might present it to himself a glorious church (ekklesia), not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27

The call is for us to be a sacrifice both individually and as we are gathered together. A sacrifice that releases the heat, light and the smoke as the dross in our lives is burnt up. A sacrifice that releases us to be truly fruitful in Him in this time in which we are living.

Amen

Chapter 3

A Place for the Peace Offering

Moving on to the second sacrifice that was offered as the new tabernacle for the Ark of His presence was inaugurated by David in 2 Samuel 6.

And David offered... peace offerings before the LORD.

2 Samuel 6:17

This sacrifice, the offering of peace, is described by Edersheim as, the most joyous of all sacrifices. ¹ This would be the final sacrifice of the day within Temple worship in Jerusalem and would as such establish that indeed peace with God had been secured through the sacrifices offered that day. Here we are reminded of Jesus' words when, he said, It is finished. ² It was on the cross that he obediently made the final and complete sacrifice for us all. Therefore, when we gather together within the tabernacle of David this is the time for us to joyously glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this

building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 9:11-12

This is an opportunity to gather together and enjoy the peace of the Lord, the peace of His completed work.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27

Peace has a name and His name is Jesus Christ

Indeed, one of the first mentions of the phrase 'peace offerings' in scripture does provide us with valuable insight spiritually speaking how this form of sacrifice will find its application within the rebuilt and restored Tabernacle of David.

And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the LORD be of the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. ³

Leviticus 3:6

What we learn here is that this is an offering that is a corporate offering unto the Lord God, it is to be an offering that comes from out of the gathered flock. The Lord is looking for a flock that is at peace, that knows

His peace, and which carries to a hurting and discordant world the true meaning and reality of peace.

It is also an offering that is to be without blemish. Through the cross we each enjoy imputed righteousness, however, there is still the ongoing challenge to walk in holiness, both in the body and in the world.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord...

Hebrews 12:14

The Hebrew word translated as 'without blemish' carries the meaning of complete, whole, entire, sound or perfect, a corporate goal that is clearly stated by Paul.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ...

Ephesians 4:13

And ultimately as His bride we even have the same phrase:

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27

It follows, therefore, that it is profoundly important and significant for us that the final attribution that the

true disciple will acquire as they complete their journey through the beatitudes is to be a peacemaker.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Matthew 5:9

This is our highest calling if we understand the beatitudes as a continuum along which we are encouraged and expected to travel. Indeed, this has been the journey that has taken us from Gibeah to Jerusalem; from the flesh into the spirit. This has been the journey where we have made progress dying to self and learning how the presence of the living God is to be carried within the Ark of our hearts and on the shoulders of our lives. As such the other six attributes have prepared us for this calling. For the other six beatitudes are Godly character traits which are required to be internalised or written on our hearts. However, the seventh, peace-making, describes the impact these six will have as they shine out of an individual who has so learnt Christ. Peace comes when the peacemaker has paid the sacrificial price, and in this Jesus has lead the way for each one of us.

In effect, the beatitudes are an abstract or overture of Jesus' teaching and by their acquisition an individual, in the Lord's own estimation, will be both the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As such then and only then will we have the capacity that will enable us to light up the world with Jesus.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

This is where the Lord desires the transformational effect of His teaching to take an individual and, therefore, by extension to take the gathering of likeminded believers that will be the Tabernacle of David; the gathering together of all who are travelling this narrow way into the gathering place He has instituted the ekklesia; His very own body. This is intended to be that city of lights which is set upon the hill and that cannot be hid. Paul captures this reality when he writes:

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:15

Therefore, we can recognise how important our calling to be peacemakers is as it is presented by Jesus as the culmination of the six spiritual attributes of the beatitudes that are to be acquired by the true disciple. We do not believe this is in preparation for a career in the United Nations but it is the one and only preparation for an individual to truly be consistently fruitful in both the world and in the body of Christ. Clearly both the world and the church do require peacemakers today. The

Hebrew concept of peace which is carried by the Hebrew term 'shalom', is a peace that is found in wholeness, the peace that is offered is therefore the peace of a restored shalom. Man and God in restored wholeness, walking once more in the cool of the evening together.

- Peace-making in the world, but not with it

To take the world first, the Gospel itself is described by Paul as the gospel of peace.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:13-15,17

Paul is making an important point here, for God there is no distinction between the Jew or the Greek both require the same means of salvation through the cross of Christ. ⁶ Indeed, wonderfully, it is through the cross that God makes his offer of salvation to the whole world, no matter who you are and what you have done.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory

of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...

Romans 3:23-25

To fully understand this aspect of the peace making purpose of Christ it will be helpful if we follow Paul's teaching as he unpacks for us how this wonderful unification for the Jews and Gentiles has been achieved in Christ. The key conceptual component for us all to understand is the promise of the seed or the seed of the promise that came through Abraham.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 12:2-3

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 Paul compartmentalises humanity into three basic groupings..

Give none offence, either to the Jews or to the Gentiles or to the church of God.

1 Corinthians 10:32

Jews

Gentiles

Church
of God

So that at any one time since Christ, the whole of humanity falls into one of these three categories, a Jew, a Gentile or born again believer. Indeed, in Romans 9:6 Paul importantly creates a distinction within Jewry itself.

For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.

The point being that to be truly a Jew it is more than just perfect lineage, there is a requirement for true faith. This is a fundamental challenge to the spiritual complacency of the 'chosen people' that was an essential aspect of the message of John the Baptist.

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Matthew 3: 8-9

Jesus also delivered a similar radical challenge to the people who were following Him.

I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

John 8:27

Abraham's seed is a spiritual seed which needs to find

receptive soil in the heart of an individual, both Jew and Gentile.

However, Paul also uses the symbolism of an olive tree to demonstrate that the Gentile church is dependent on the Jewish spiritual heritage for its very life and growth.

...and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness (richness) of the olive tree.

Romans 11:7

Paul states in his letter to the Ephesians that an essential unity, or as he describes it a 'one new man',⁷ has been created between Israel and the church.

...that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross.

Ephesians 2:16

There is only unity in and through the cross

How can we bring all of this together? Let us turn to Paul's letter to the Galatians where we read the following:

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Galatians 3:6

Reference is being made here to Genesis 15:6 where

the key issue for Abraham and his acceptance as a friend of the Lord God is one of faith.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
James 2:23

And, therefore, for all who would walk in his blessing, this point is clearly stated by Paul in the next verse, where we read:

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.
Galatians 3:7

In the following verse Paul makes some stunning assertions.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."
Galatians 3:8

God is described as preaching the gospel to Abraham and that the justification of the Gentiles by faith was always God's intention. As we move to the end of the chapter Paul brings this theme to a dramatic conclusion. He asserts here that we essentially share this same faith of Abraham there is now no distinction through race,

culture or gender.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Our unity is in Christ, and as such we now all share the same seed of Abraham.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29

In Christ everyone, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, share the same seed of Abraham and therefore have a share in the same promise, and therefore: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

We now share the same Spirit. In Christ and through the indwelling Spirit the picture has now changed'

Jews Church Gentiles
of God

Therefore, through Jesus you are either:

1) A believing Jew who is therefore of the seed of Abraham and through faith in Christ a member of the body of Christ

2) A believing Gentile who is in Christ and therefore of the seed of Abraham through Christ and a member of the body of Christ.

3) A non-believing Jew

4) A non-believing Gentile

(Groups 3 and 4 lie outside of the blessing of Abraham and are in need of salvation)

We also find this same issue explored by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, where we read:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.

Ephesians 2:14

Paul is making the point that in Christ Jews and Gentiles find an unlikely unity, using here the picture of the wall in the temple which prevented Gentiles from

accessing the Holy Place, on pain of death. That wall has now gone, and one body, containing both Jew and Gentile, has been created in Christ by the cross. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.
Ephesians 2:15-16

Salvation is just a heartfelt call away for anyone. However, the problem that Paul goes on to address is that this wonderful message of the absolute availability of peace with God for everyone, the good news of the gospel of peace, does require messengers. The message needs messengers. Therefore, once again we are back to those who have been prepared to both represent and to carry this message; the peacemakers. An idea clearly expressed again by Paul when he writes the following:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us,

who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Indeed, this is not a new idea it can be found in Isaiah.

Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Isaiah 52:6-7

God's plan all along has been to prepare a people to be peacemakers, people who are equipped to be living examples of His gospel. Words are important, but these words of the gospel that contain the power of eternal life and death have to come from a vessel that is a living representation of their truth. If this is not the case then the words are likely to prove unfruitful because of the inherent problem with their delivery system; a lack of integrity or truth in the inward part. People will see through this and recognise it as hypocrisy.

We need to be become the gospel of peace and not just be able to talk about it!

And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And

straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

Mark 1:17-18

Interestingly, these are the first words of Jesus' teaching recorded in scripture. However, they do set the pattern for all that is to follow. Even here we can identify that the Lord is establishing an important principle. Although salvation is merely a heartfelt call away for anyone, everything else will take time. There is a process of becoming. Elsewhere we read the following:

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Luke 9:23

Perhaps, it will prove helpful if we were to bring these two challenging statements together to illustrate how this process of becoming a fisher of men might work.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.

The ultimate destination for the true disciple is to become like Christ and in following Him we will catch men. This is the story of Peter. ⁶ In Luke, we read the following account of Peter's response to the miraculous haul of fish that Jesus had guided the Capernaum fishing

fleet to catch.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Luke 5:8-11

How do we understand this passage? Instead of being overjoyed that his bills had been paid for the next six months, why was Peter so affected by this miracle? It is interesting that the Greek word translated 'astonished' literally carries the meaning of to be rendered immovable. Peter had come to a place where he was overwhelmed, beyond the fishing and beyond the fish he suddenly had become aware of his true place and status before Jesus. Is this not the same place of immovability that David came to at the threshing floor of Nachon, where we are told that at that moment he feared the Lord God and that he could do no more than stop the journey he was on and to park up the Ark until he could make some sense of his situation?

This is the journey and until we come to this place of true brokenness before God we are not fully prepared

to be a peacemaker because something of us is likely to get in the way, and the only person anyone really wants to encounter is not us but the prince of peace within us. And just like Him we minister to the needs around us through our brokenness. We are each called to walk humbly before our God. And as we do, as we read here, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. Until the henceforth there can be no going forth at all.

From this moment the beatitudes have truly done their work and we are prepared to truly enable the Lord to impact others through our life, both deeds and words. Indeed a preparation Paul teaches within the context of the disciple's spiritual suit of armour.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:15

To conclude this section it will be useful to reflect on a prophecy from Jeremiah that might help us by providing for us a prophetic context for our calling as peacemakers in the world, indeed, the unique part of the world that only we inhabit.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Jeremiah 29:7

It is important for us to understand the original context for this prophecy. This scripture is written at a time when the people of God were adjusting to life in exile in Babylon and the prophet is challenging them to spiritually embrace their circumstances. For them to understand that this, their misfortune, is a work of God and that they can still find fulfilment and peace where they are. The basic message is that the people of God, who have been exiled to Babylon, should seek to become peacemakers wherever they have landed. To actively seek the Shalom God given peace for the city in which they now lived and to intercede for those they are now living among. And the promise is that their peace will be sustained by the peace they have helped create.

This prophecy also speaks down the centuries to us. We too find ourselves living within an increasingly alien culture, indeed, a culture and society that would call itself post-Christian, if not anti-Christian. Therefore, what is to be our approach? Do we hide away and create a Christian clique or bubble? Or do we respond actively and positively and recognise that the calling to be peacemakers takes us in to the midst of this perverse and crooked generation and challenges us to shine as lights? The calling of the peacemaker is to be willing to stand in the gap and to live the sacrificial life of Christ before our neighbours, class mates and colleagues at work. A life not of arrogance and religious pride, but of love, humility and empathy. A life that will effectively make peace between God and man. A life lived as a catcher of men.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?
2 Corinthians 2:14-16

For as we saw in the last chapter it is the Holy Spirit within us who has been tasked to flow out of us through our words, deeds and attitudes and to convict the bit of the world we are interacting with of sin, righteousness and judgement. The key is to become a vessel that is truly fit for the master's use.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.
2 Timothy 2:19-21

Peace-making in the body

The second application of the calling to be a peacemaker is within the body of Christ itself. We do need to know that potentially the body of Christ is the only gathering of people on earth where true, real and lasting peace will ever be found. As we have already stated peace as a concept finds its fullest expression within the Hebrew word 'shalom', a term which carries the meaning of something that is fully whole. This is the peace that Jesus came to restore, an essential wholeness at the heart of a broken and fractured humanity. Indeed, a brokenness which is seen today most acutely within human relationships. It is only within the body of Christ where broken lives can be made whole, and where we can learn to trust, forgive and love once again. This is Paul's prayer at the end of his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica.

That the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

And a more wonderful truth is found within what the apostle declares to us next.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Our successful sanctification is not dependent on

us or on our level of faith, rather it is dependent on the faithfulness of our faithful God of peace who will do it!

However, for the gathered body to truly be an oasis of peace that is to be enjoyed by everyone, it will need those who are already gathered to be creating this positive spiritual environment by already walking the walk and not just talking the talk. Individuals who are creating an environment of peace within the gathered body by their lives and lifestyles. Individuals who are walking the path of wholeness which we again recognise as the way of the beatitudes and a path that will enable those who have trod its path to become effective as peacemakers in the body. We can recognise that peace making within the body is the means through which every individual is supported to come through to true wholeness in Christ, which is true shalom. To this end Paul does provide us with a clear and succinct definition of the true purpose of life in the body for every individual believer; it is...

For the perfecting of the saints...

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:12a-13

This is the same idea, the Greek word translated 'perfecting' here carries the meaning to completely fix, or to make whole something that is broken. The overarching purpose, therefore, of the body of Christ

and of those who would live and function within it is to support the ongoing work of the Father in the lives of those who have been added; a work of renewal and restoration of their body, soul and spirit. A responsibility that is captured by Paul when he writes the following.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

The body of Christ is the place for each of us to find shalom. Indeed, a place where we are able to find peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with each other and reflectively even peace with whatever part of humanity that has ever caused us hurt and pain. It should also be the place where we find true fellowship or even true friendship, now there is a radical thought. So that we can move beyond the weird and frankly often unreal types of relationship that pass for friendship within the church at the moment. This kind of conditional love that is dependent of our obedience to the church's group think and thereby unthinkingly following after the latest vision or 'spiritual' fad passed down by the leadership from their untouchable ivory tower.⁷

Indeed, having gathered His disciples together to partake of the final Passover seder before his crucifixion, Jesus modelled true leadership by even serving His

disciples naked and thereby making Himself totally vulnerable and transparent before them, before washing their feet. He then went on to reveal to them the truly radical agenda of the agape love that was to underpin both their leadership and the ongoing life in the gathered body wherever it was to be found.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

John 15:12-17

From Jesus' words here we can say certain things about the quality of the relationships that are to be expected within any gathering that would want to be recognised as the body of Christ. To begin with the gathered body of Christ in whatever form it might take is to be rooted, grounded and founded on just one simple maxim:

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

John 15:12

And if we were able to truly achieve this there would be one result for certain, there would be peace. However, He never said that this would be easy. If there is one thing that the enemy will be attempting to undermine it will be our witness of agape love, one to another. This is why Paul is both realistic, honest and forthright in challenging the problems in the early church.

I ...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:1-2

The precondition for true peace and health in the body is always the revealed and imputed righteous nature of Christ, which is the fruit of the journey that needs to be taken through the beatitudes. There are no short cuts. However, to help us achieve and maintain peace in the body Jesus actually provides us with all that we might require through his teaching.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three

witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Matthew 18:15-17

The key to maintain peace within any gathering of the Lord's people is to live openly and honestly with each other. If someone causes you any kind of offence then in a positive spirit of gentleness and love take them to one side and tell them. Keep it between just the two of you, no one else needs to be involved. And hopefully you can forgive one another and move on, offence and baggage free.

The problem we too often have is that when we are in anyway offended we will talk to others, to try to get them on our side and to stand with us against the other person. They will then feel a need to talk about this with others and so it goes on. In psychology speak this is called triangulation. This is also called gossip. In addition, sadly, by this process a significant group of people will have potentially been drawn into this petty intrigue and will have become polluted by it. In the vernacular, they have become slimed. In the process, we have become entrenched in our bitterness concerning the other person and the other person now has more than one person with issues against them.

Jesus' answer to this is keep it between the two people involved so that no one else initially needs to be involved. The next stage where it is shared more widely involves

others but again this is within an open and honest process that is designed to bring about reconciliation. This is not meant to be about anyone taking sides, but only about restoring the peace. The final stage is one of a judgement being made to keep the body pure from someone who is unrepentant or unforgiving and who would be a danger to the peace of the whole.

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:15

If the church was to adhere to this one simple disciplinary practise then so much pain and division would be prevented. If everyone, whenever, they have been hurt or offended in any way, would go to the person concerned and talk about what has happened then again things could be nipped in the bud. As, hopefully, they would both come to place of peace and forgiveness and to be able to move on in restored relationship. How much healthier would the condition of the church be if this was to happen. However, this is not always the easiest thing to do, people, egos and baggage are often involved? It is usually easier to find a third party who knows the offending party and to share 'in love' what has just happened. The Bible describes this as the little foxes which spoil the vine, i.e. the foxes eat the fruit, so the vine is unfruitful.⁸

Paul provides a list of the issues he found in the church

in Corinth that still have some resonance today.

Lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.

2 Corinthians 12:20

Let us explore these issues so that we might understand where the church in Corinth was going astray and, hopefully, be able to see and understand that there is a better way for us.

- The first term, debates, actually carries the meaning of a difference of opinion, a falling out.
- There was also jealousy, jealous is zealous passion that has gone bad. It is the same Greek term for both jealous and zealous. And at its root it means to boil over. Jealousy is very destructive, the green eyed monster, and it demonstrates an inherent insecurity in the person involved.
- Outbursts of wrath are never good, the Greek term here is thymos, not orge which is the other word for wrath and usually related to God's wrath. This is also on the dark side of passion, again the blood is running hot and a negative anger is involved.
- Strifes, translated as selfish ambitions in the NKJV, are next, and this is related to someone using the church as a means by which they come to some level of prominence, we could possibly call this

church based social climbing. The issue here is that the individual's motivation is distorted.

- Backbiting might follow the previous issue, as an individual would put others down to further their own ends, this literally means evil speaking or gossip.
- Whisperings would be the means by which the backbiting would be achieved in the church, the term is actually related to the magical murmuring of a charmer of snakes.
- Swellings is a description of what happens in the hearts of those caught up in these things, they become puffed up in the sense of their own importance, otherwise known as self-pride.
- These would then result in tumults, the Greek for which is actually defined as instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, and confusion. James sums up this sort of situation when he says:

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

James 3:16

Basically the bond of peace has been, not just lost, but shattered as the church is so often today split apart by such things.

It all begins with a falling out and the problem is,

that because the hearts of those involved are largely unprocessed, the issues grow and eventually destroy all concerned.

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Matthew 9:16

The problem is that the pieces of cloth in a situation like this are unshrunk. The distortion, the disruption and then the destruction always come from within the unsanctified hearts of those involved. The individual concerned may mean well at first, their intentions might be to serve the Lord and to serve the body, but lying lurking within them, and within us all, is the potential for a trip up. This is called the self-life and in church life an important unrecognised and therefore undealt with wrong motivation is often ambition. This is why the journey is crucial. We all, each of us, have to come to the tabernacle through the threshing floor of Nachon, there is no other safe way. We all need to discover for ourselves, by actually experiencing the death of Uzzah, the death of our own strength. Our strength is not just expressed physically, it can also be expressed through our personality, our will, our ego and even our natural gifting. But it all has to be brought to the cross, and left there. The walk of true discipleship is so important, so that our hearts

are actually prepared and we are, therefore, not so vulnerable to the things we have just explored. However, there will always be a risk.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

In Matthew 18, Jesus simply says go and have a chat. We need, individually, to take responsibility for the stuff that affects us and to be honest, but be honest in love, and to be in the moment. This will be part of our journey, facing up to our responsibility to maintain church health and unity, no one said it would be easy. We need to grow up in these areas, to bring things into the light and to give no place to the devil. It is significant that this teaching follows directly from Jesus' telling of the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew. This is because, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus desires to keep His whole flock together.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 18:14

It is also significant that it is followed by Jesus' teaching on binding and loosing; the true scriptural context for this teaching for which is actually maintaining relationships and walking in forgiveness. Indeed, forgiveness is the most powerful selfless virtue that we as Christians do possess. When faced with the most heart breaking pain,

such as with the loss of a loved one, Christians do have a remarkable capacity to release the people responsible for that pain. And this speaks so loudly within a society, such as ours, which itself is so full of anger, bitterness and has a thirst for revenge and litigation. Christians, it seems, have an almost a unique capacity in this regard to forgive, because we follow an example set before us by our Lord, and we each know what it is to be personally forgiven.

Jesus concludes the parable of the unforgiving master with a chilling statement:

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.

Matthew 18:34-35

However, we do need to understand what the Lord is saying here, He is not saying that through his unforgiveness the man has lost his salvation. The issue is that if we don't forgive, then it will be us who suffer and who will be damaged emotionally and spiritually by the experience until we are able to let the people go with whom we have the issue. These are the tormentors. Indeed, we will stay in torment until we pay the price of forgiveness, sadly, some never do.

There does need to be church discipline and we will need it in the tabernacle of David to prevent the sort of issues we saw in the passage above and by this, hopefully,

we can all come to a place of maturity in Christ, and to be prepared and made ready for His coming⁹. Hopefully things won't get that far, if we are walking the walk and not just talking the talk. However, to reiterate, the responsibility always rests with us to do the right thing and to take the initiative, don't wait for the other person to make the first move. Be loving, but be decisive. We all, each one of us, need to walk the walk of forgiveness, particularly with our brothers and sisters within the Body. Indeed, this is the one most powerful way that we can bring conviction on those around us in the world as it sees in us love in action¹⁰.

We are once again reminded of our journey from Gibeah to Jerusalem, from the flesh to the spirit. For it is as we walk that these tests will come and our response is crucial, like David we need to take responsibility for our own lives, choices and the way we deal; with others. Our love does need to be tested. There will be no love without the walk. Why is this? This is because, as we saw with David, it is while we are walking on our journey carrying the presence that stuff happens. And this is the stuff of heart transformation in our lives.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Ezekiel 36: 26-27

Life in the body will require us to have the heart of a peacemaker!

Only a new heart will enable us to love the unlovely and even to love to the max which is to love those who hate us. Indeed, this is the kind of love that Jesus describes as the perfect true expression of a quality of love that we share with the Lord God ¹¹. Only this new heart will change our nature so that we will have the spiritual fruit, such as humility and meekness. And this change will only come about through the applied impact of the Beatitudes on our hearts ¹². Therefore, for us to love one another in all situations will be dependent on the extent to which we have allowed the love of God to shine into our own hearts; again this is a process and a process through which our capacity to love will grow.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

The Body of Christ is called to be a place of peace because it is a place of love. The gathered body does need to be more than just its meetings. The relationships do need to be more than the strange type of church based pseudo-friendships that are underwritten by

church affiliation and which disappear into antipathy or worse when the affiliation is broken. Surely we can find a new and more profound way to be brothers and sisters in the Lord? A place where the agape love of God can truly be experienced and shared. Indeed, there is a profound connection with this reality and with the great commandments as identified by our Lord.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:27-40

Love needs to underpin everything we do, or say (or even think) in the rebuilt tabernacle of David, love for God, for our neighbour and crucially for each other. For it is by this that 'all men know that ye are my disciples'¹³ and without this how can we claim to love God.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 John 4:20-21

Therefore,

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

1 John 4:7

However, this love that we often find so challenging is not some disconnected feeling, it requires to be expressed within our lived lives, having fun together, being sad together. Being real with each other in the real issues of life. And what a witness this would be!

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

The rebuilt tabernacle of David does need to be life affirming, a place of warmth and at times a place of fun. For too long the only fun to be found in body life has been, sadly, only within its dysfunction. After all doesn't Jesus encourage us to expect life in all its abundance?

The human condition is fundamentally a social one and from the beginning, God's judgement has been that, It is not good that the man should be alone. Obviously, the context is different here, but the truth remains. We can only experience the abundance of life when that life is experienced with others. A truth expressed by the poet John Donne when he wrote that,

'no man is an island'; we thrive on social connections. And Father desires that we enjoy a life rich in healthy life affirming relationships, these are to be enjoyed within our families, and friendships, and these need to also find expression within a shared life in the body of Christ. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

John 10:10b

What is this abundant life?

The Greek word that is translated 'abundantly' in John 10:10 carries the following meanings:

- over and above, more than is necessary, superadded
- exceeding abundantly, supremely
- something further, more, much more than all, more plainly
- superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon.

However, what is more informative is that the word used here for 'life' carries the following meanings,

- of the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God
- life real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed, in the portion even in this world of those who put their trust in Christ

One aspect of this abundance, is the quality of our life lived together as it is expressed in and through the love we have for the Lord, for each other and for our neighbours. It is chilling to note that a reason the Lord God gives for the children of Israel coming into His curses is precisely because:

...thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.

Deuteronomy 28:47

Father wants us to celebrate his blessing and goodness in our lives, and He wants us to celebrate this together. To achieve this we can imagine that that the agape meal, that seems to have been very important for the early church, will be reinstated within the rebuilt Tabernacle of David.

Why is celebration, fun and expressed joy important? This is important because by celebrating His abundance of goodness in our lives, we are actually truly honouring or hallowing His name.

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed,
The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious,
longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.
Exodus 34:6

His very name which demonstrates that the Lord God, Himself, is abundant in goodness. We will give the last word of this section to Paul.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Philippians 3:12-15

The third and final outworking of the peace making is in response to the intercessory ministry that we identified in the last chapter. Here we recognised that there was work to be done in terms of reaching out to those within the religious system that is the church who are trapped in the false teaching and the false structures and for whom the Lord might be calling. The scriptural context for this was the previous offering, the burnt offering, which we identified as having an outworking in both intercessory prayer and intercessory action. Recognising as we did that by this we might be cooperating in the end time work of the Lord to make ready and prepare a people for His return; the bridegroom coming to claim His bride.

This, therefore, will be another important understanding of the purpose and calling of the peacemakers, in other words those that have already been made ready and prepared. The task in hand here is to do what they can to facilitate the way forward for others and to provide a true

expression of the body into which they can be restored. There are in effect two processes of restoration that need to be achieved. Let us remind ourselves how the tabernacle of David is described in Acts.

After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.

Acts 15-16

The first process of restoration that is required is a restoration of the spiritual structure of the church, such that it might once again be a spiritual house that has been built by the Lord. The second is the restoration of the actual restoration function at the heart of the body, such as understanding true discipleship and the way of sanctification, starting with understanding true salvation.

For Jesus tells Peter and His disciples quite clearly that He, and no one else, would build His church.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18

The geographical and scriptural context are important here in understanding this statement from the Lord. The rock on which the church will be built is not Peter or any other individual with unfulfilled leadership ambitions. The actual context within the passage refers back to Jesus'

previous statement in which He positively affirms Peter's recognition of Himself as the Son of God. Jesus discerns this as a profound revelation that has come to him from the Father. This is the rock on which the church will be built. It will be a gathering of individuals who individually have for themselves received this revelation of who Jesus was, is and forever will be. This is the living spiritual house that Jesus still desires to build. Earlier in Matthew's gospel Jesus makes a similar statement within a dialogue or prayer between Himself and His Father.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Matthew 11:27

Here again Jesus is exploring the essential purpose for his mission on earth to enable individuals to come to a place of personal revelation of the love of the Father, the cross and our desperate need for them both. This is salvation.

Indeed, throughout our time exploring these few verses in 2 Samuel 6 we have been reflecting upon the quality of the relationship that the Father desires to have with those who have received this revelation. We have been effectively exploring what this relational yoke actually looks like as it impacts the life of an individual as they carry the presence. A presence which is the proof or earnest of the fact that they are now being actively transformed day by day as they spend time alone with

Father in their closet. Indeed, a transformation through which they are learning of Jesus and learning how to be in Him in and through the issues of their lives. And we have seen that the Lord desires once more, as we see in the book of Acts, that there is a gathering together of those who have found such purpose and such revelation in their lives.

The geographical context for Jesus' words, as we saw above, is that he was actually standing close by a place that at this time was known as the 'gates of hell'. Caesarea Philippi was the centre for the worship of the Greek god Pan, the goat like deity that was worshipped through everything immoral and hedonistic. At this location there was an underground temple that had been created within a cave and this was called the 'gates of hell'. Therefore, there is a great significance for Jesus to make this statement here. There may be a play on words here, such that anything that might come out of the gates of hell could do nothing to undermine or challenge His work as he was going to build His church, and build it even in places like this.

Indeed, what might this look like for our own time and our own context? A verse in Isaiah might help us here.

Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster.

Isaiah 65:8b

There are clear echoes here of a familiar metaphor from the teaching of the Lord.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Matthew 9:17

Perhaps, again as we explored above, this is a day of new things and of small things. Small groups being gathered together by the Lord, meeting in homes and in the heart of communities. Small groups, clusters, which are built on agape love and true friendship within which the new wine of the Spirit of God can flow. Gatherings that will become hubs for the gospel of peace as the peacemakers are fruitful in their calling. This will also be a gathering in which the peacemakers will also make peace in a different way as these new expressions of the body of Christ become safe places for those who are being gathered out of the systemic church. These individuals are the fruit of the intercessory work we identified as being required in the previous chapter. Here we will see a fulfilment of the law of Christ that Paul describes in Galatians 6.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

Here they will find the true peace they are looking for as they come back to the Lord and find again His easy yoke and His light burden.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Here within the body their work of preparation can continue, as they move towards their own shalom wholeness in Christ. Here they will individually be built again and restored as they return to the true fold of the Lord.

The Breaking of Bread

The peace offering was a mark and celebration of the finished and accepted work of sacrifice and in the body of Christ we are again commanded to partake of a sacrament which marks for us the finished and accepted sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the communion, eucharist or the bread and wine. A sacramental marker of our own state of peace before God and before one another. Indeed, the centrality of this sacrament and its spiritual purpose and function within the life of the believer and the church needs to be rediscovered in these days.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

John 6:51

The communion or sacrament of the bread and the wine is much misunderstood. There are two extremes within the church as to how this is to be understood, on the one hand we have the Roman Catholic belief in transubstantiation; that the bread and wine actually change into the real body and blood of the Lord in the mouths of those taking it, On the other we have the usual evangelical protestant position which sees it as something commemorative or merely as a symbol. The truth, however, lies somewhere between the two. For, although we cannot go so far as to claim that the substance of the two elements changes, we do need to recognise that in faith there is spiritual sustenance imparted as we partake of the bread and the wine. This we understand through the Lord's own teaching in John 6, where time and again He makes the same point to His disciples.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

John 6:57

How else do we eat or drink Jesus, except within the sacrament of the bread and the wine. And clearly from

what Jesus says here there is a connection between a consumption of Him and our spiritual strength and our capacity to live by Him. The disciples, we are told, initially did struggle with this teaching as for them it would have carried a literal meaning. However, following the events on the night before He went to the cross, we now have this idea expressed within a sacrament that is both figurative and spiritually real for those who approach it in faith and expectation.

The question we might want to ask at this point is how often should the bread and wine be taken? Practise in church world varies, such as one Sunday a month or every Sunday. However, what seems to have been the practise within the early church, particularly in the church in Jerusalem? What evidence can we find in scripture? The only scripture that might help us here is potentially quite challenging.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart...

Acts 2:46

Grammatically what is this verse telling us? That there were certain things that the early church did on a daily basis: meeting in one accord in the Temple and to also break bread from house to house, we can infer this because the 'and' which precedes the phrase 'breaking bread' connects this activity precisely with the activity to which it is connected, the daily meeting in the

Temple. The daily aspect of this, therefore, applies equally to both activities. This, therefore, does provide for us a wonderful window into the body life that was enjoyed in the early church, one of togetherness and sharing their lives with each other every day. Moreover, a crucial aspect of this was the breaking of bread. This seems to have been an everyday part of this shared lifestyle. Indeed, breaking of bread seems to have been a normal and natural part of their fellowship together. What did they understand about it that has clearly got lost in translation since then? The key to our understanding what they seem to have understood is found in the phrase that ends this verse, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Does this mean that they also enjoyed food together on a daily basis, which may have been true, but this not what is meant here? To understand what is meant here it will be useful to refer back to where the term 'meat' is used prior to this by Jesus and indeed used within the same context of the breaking of bread.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he

shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

John 6:53-58

If we were to take this teaching at face value then Christianity would go further than even the Catholics and would be a strange cult built upon cannibalism. And for some who did hear these words they came to this conclusion and walked away. Clearly from the far side of the cross and the institution of the sacrament of the breaking of bread by the early church we can see that there is a significant amount of symbolism within the words of the Lord spoken here. Essentially, therefore, what is He saying?

I. Eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood is important as whoever eats His body or drinks His blood:

- Will receive eternal life
- They will be raised up at the last day when He returns
- They dwell in Him
- He dwells in them
- They will live by Me
- They will live forever

II. Not eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood is important as whoever does not eat His body or drink His blood:

- They will have no life in them

III. His body is meat to be eaten and His blood is a drink to be drunk.

IV. His body and His blood can be likened to the manna, which was eaten every day.

This is what Jesus says clearly here in this scripture, how can we gainsay it? How can we understand it? How should we respond to this teaching? Is an important element missing from the life of the church? Is there a need to re-evaluate the place, role and function of the breaking of bread within our church experience and even in our experience as a disciple? Is this what the early church understood, and has this understanding been lost over time? For as we have read, they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They seem to have had an understanding of the importance of eating the meat of His body and drinking the drink that is His blood on a daily basis. No doubt, this was as they took the sacrament in faith knowing that it was having the positive effect that Jesus said it would have. Which as we have seen from Jesus' own words was a means to access the Father's grace to enable them to live out their indwelt life and to look forward with hope and expectation to their eternal reward. Indeed, this also supported them to be carriers of His presence, the Holy

Spirit, as Jesus explicitly says that through eating His flesh He would be a living presence in our lives.

As we look at the passage of scripture in 2 Samuel 6 surely in verse 19 we have here a clear prophetic description of what we have just been exploring in John 6?

And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

2 Samuel 6:19

All the elements are here. There are the two emblems of wine and bread and placed in the middle of both is a good piece of flesh. Has there ever been more of a 'good' expression of human flesh life than Jesus? Jesus, indeed, was the perfect expression of humanity, the one and only sinless man who gave His body, shed His blood and gave up His life that we might find His eternal life in us. The difference between the two kings is that it was only King Jesus who gave of His own flesh for all the people as well as to women as to men.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now

justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Romans 5:6-9

Returning to the application of this sacrament in the body there is also the other side of this spiritual culinary coin.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1 Corinthians 11:25-29

Let us remember that the tabernacle of David will essentially be the place of His presence and 'the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.' (Exodus 4:24) and as we have learned on the journey, the threshing floor of Nachon can be a scary place. And there are physical, as well as spiritual consequences, for those who do misuse this sacrament. Indeed, for these consequences to be a reality this has to be more than merely commemorative or a symbol, because Jesus' words make it very clear that this sacrament does carry a very real impact for good or ill on those who partake of it.

We also believe that the term used here, not discerning the Lord's body, is also an important one and it has two significant applications. When we do come to take this

sacrament we come from a place of faith, a place of salvific certainty, in short we come as a believer. Secondly, we also need to come in a state that is ready and prepared to do so when we can, having a pure conscience before God and before one another; that we are at peace with ourselves and the body. Indeed, we can see here how the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount will apply here, for this sacrament is our altar.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

The gift we bring to the sacrament of the bread and the wine is ourselves and this gift does need to be in a worthy condition before we partake of it with regards to issues of forgiveness in our lives. This is why taking the breaking of bread on a daily basis made sure the early church maintained its peace and unity. However, we do also need to know that His grace is always sufficient for us no matter where we have been and what we have done; this a place to come to actively feast on the Lord even when we feel morally unworthy. This is a time when the Lord beckons us forward to come to Him even when we are weighed down by the world and our life within it, so that we can feed on Him and be spiritually replenished so that we can find rest for our souls.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to the one place where:

Mercy and truth are met together; and righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Psalms 85:10

Jesus' prayer still awaits its fulfilment.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they also may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John 17:20-23

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your

heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27

Notes

1. Edersheim, E. *The Temple its Ministry and Services*, Hendrickson Pub., Massachusetts, 2002, p.99.
2. See John 19:30
3. The first mention is in verse 1 and has the same form of words but refers to the sacrifice of cattle.
4. The verse prior to the verse used here (10: 12) is a clear rebuff to those who hold the belief in a dual covenant in which the Jews are to be treated differently to the rest of humanity.
5. We now share the same Spirit. In Christ and through the indwelling Spirit the picture has now changed Ephesians 2:16
6. For this aspect of the teaching I am indebted to the teaching of Maurice Barratt in 'Will the Real Christians Please Stand Up: Radical Christianity Series Volume 1', Chapter 3. *The Call of Peter*. Barratt Ministries Publications, 1998
7. See *Taking the Form of a Servant; Leadership in the Rebuilt Tabernacle of David* by the same author for a full exploration of the scriptural model for true Godly leadership within the body of Christ.
8. Song of Songs 2:15
9. The issue of church discipline and church leadership more generally will be dealt with in the next book.

10. John 13: 34, 35

11. See Matthew 5: 44-48

12 We will focus on the Beatitudes in the next chapter

13. See John 13: 35

Chapter 4.

A place for the character of the King

And as soon as David had made an end of offering
burnt offering and peace offerings, he blessed the
people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

2 Samuel 6:18

We are moving on to explore the narrative of the
establishment of the original Tabernacle of David

following the offering of the two types of sacrifice and to ask an important question. What does it mean to be blessed by the King? For our own context within the body of Christ, we are waiting for our king, King Jesus, to return to earth, to take His place on the throne of David within the tabernacle of David that will be in Jerusalem and to rule and reign on the earth from this location during His Millennial reign. ¹ This is our hope and faith filled expectation, a hope and expectation that is prophetically described by Isaiah.

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Isaiah 16:5

In the meantime, Jesus is ruling and reigning within the hearts of His disciples by His Spirit, as He sits at the right hand of His Father in heaven. And to answer this question for us; wonderfully, through the Cross and the indwelling presence of His Spirit King Jesus has provided a way for His true disciples to walk in blessing, His blessing. The blessing that He has provided is the opportunity to be transformed day by day and to develop a Godly character within the context of their own lives.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and

sanctification, and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

A character that carries a stamp of spiritual authenticity and which is a true disciple's personal and individual preparation, and their equipping to rule and reign with Christ in His coming kingdom. This transformational process is required for all, simply because we cannot stay the same, for Father loves us too much.

Literally, as we have seen above, like a butterfly, we are being metamorphosed, transformed from the inside out. Our new man is being created in Christ Jesus as we walk the walk He has set before each of us and as we actively use our closet, that special place of intimacy with Father. Indeed, as we do this our new man will grow and develop and become our new living breathing, walking and talking reality, Him in us. The character of Christ expressed and actively demonstrated through us; our character and our lives.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

This 'same image' is His image and as we walk before Him the image others see reflected becomes less like us and more like Him. So that:

...ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of

God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Philippians 2:15

In using the 'light' motif Paul is making a clear connection with and reference to Jesus' own teaching within the Sermon on the Mount, where we read:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

The point Jesus is making here, which is determined, again as we have seen above, by the scriptural context of these verses, is that the light that will shine out of both the individual disciple and therefore out of a gathered group of liked hearted disciples will be His light. The light of His character demonstrated within and through the life, words and deeds of a true disciple and true expression of His gathered body. Indeed, this is the very light of His character that has been hard won by those who have trodden the path of the beatitudes. The light is the direct consequence of the reality in the hearts of those drawn to be together. And there are no short cuts.

The same idea is expressed by John in the prologue to his gospel, where we read:

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 1:4,9

And here we are reminded of the first day of Creation and to the preexistent light that bathed the embryonic universe.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Genesis 1:3

In Jesus these words of the Father still ring true for the true disciple. As we let His light into the dark corners of our being the darkness of our life is turned into His glorious light!

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, He is the way back to the Father. This spiritual life is the light of men and the way back to the Father and the way to begin to shine with this quality of life is described a few verse later, where we read:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

John 1:12

We need to receive Him and His life and then begin to

exercise the indwelt power to become the sons of God he would have us become. And this is walking through the beatitudes. Through this teaching Jesus at the beginning of His ministry is redefining what it is to actually be blessed within the spiritual economy of God. No longer is God's blessing within a person's life to be defined by any outward show of health and prosperity as we find it within the Old Covenant. Now the God determined sign of true blessing in the life of an individual walking before Him will be a changed and refined nature. The new has come and the old is gone. Indeed, this new nature is the very nature of Jesus Himself.

To be blessed therefore we need to take hold of the Godly character of Christ and to allow Father to make it our own as we walk with Him through the issues of our lives by the Spirit. This is why it comes right at the outset of the Lord's teaching ministry, it is truly foundational and everything else is an outworking of this and as we have seen in the previous chapter this will culminate in an individual becoming a peacemaker. In the Old Testament we are given the Ten Commandments and then what follows is the detail, perhaps we can view the Beatitudes and the teaching of the Lord in the same way.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Matthew 5:3-12

Moving on from the individual, however, the Beatitudes and their outworking within the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is the essential foundational teaching that speaks directly into these issues of maintaining and sustaining a healthy corporate body life. The quality of the Godly nature of the gathered body will be directly determined by the quality of the nature of those gathered within it. After all it is the body of Christ that is described as having the potential to shine like a city that is set up on a hill. Therefore, by definition it is the body of Christ that is to corporately carry the character and nature of Christ. People often say 'I like Jesus, but it is the church that I have problems with'. Surely it should in reality be difficult to make such a distinction if the church were truly representative of our Lord with veracity, integrity and authenticity?

Jesus, himself, does seem to recognise this distinction in the teaching that flows out of the beatitudes when one pays particular attention to the use of the personal pronouns in the passage in Matthew 5.

Ye (2nd person plural) are the salt of the earth

Ye (2nd person plural) are the light of the world

Let your (2nd person singular) light so shine before men, that they may see your (2nd person singular) good works, and glorify your (2nd person singular) Father which is in heaven.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the light is a spiritual metaphor for the character of the Lord and therefore, what Jesus seems to be saying is that the body corporate has a responsibility before God to shine with this light, as does the individual. But what does this mean in reality?

Ye (2nd person plural) are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

What might Jesus have meant when he described the corporate body as a city that is set on a hill? We can picture the original scene as Jesus was delivering the teaching. From the location that tradition tells us this teaching took place one can still see the present day village of Saphet, ancient Bethulia, on its prominent mountain top position overlooking Lake Galilee. Probably as he was delivering this teaching to his disciples he would have gestured towards it, causing everyone's attention to be drawn to this concrete example of what he was alluding to. This would have been an even more powerful illustration if this had been in the evening and as he encouraged the disciples to avert their gaze, they would have seen how

unmissable the early evening lamp light would have been as it began to cut into the approaching darkness.

Indeed, from day one of creation this has been the God instituted dichotomy at heart of His created order, darkness and light.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:1-4

This is still God's word to the world and his created order.

Let there be light!

Let the revelation of my Son, Jesus Christ, be shed abroad, to invade the darkness and to gather in and prepare a people, made ready for His return!

Therefore, what is Jesus saying to his disciples gathered together in one place in Matthew 5?

As you are gathered together, a gathering of my blessed disciples, the effective outworking of the beatitudes within your hearts will shine into the darkness of this world with a Godly character that Father has developed within each of you and as you

come together this character that you share will make the difference. Just like many lighted lamps being brought together to make the one combined light source. Together you will shine more brightly. Just like the city up there on the hillside. Each individual light is important for the whole to shine to its full effect. But we each, individually, do have our own space to illuminate within the whole, because each individual light is still identifiable.

A single light will light up a home, all the lights shining together will give light to a community, and even to the world – this light is Jesus!

This is such a challenge to the church today, who sadly too often today seem to take the view that the way to impact the world is often through Christianised versions of the world and its systems. Whereas, what the body of Christ is called to be is an alternative to the world, indeed, standing in opposition to it, a place where worldly values are largely turned on their head. It will, therefore, prove to be a helpful exercise if we take each beatitude in turn and to explore how it might find its expression with the gathered body and how it might impact the world in proportion to how it has impacted those gathered.

The light within overcoming the darkness without.

Indeed, let us imagine that each beatitude has its own city window through which it floods out across the valley finding its reflection in the calm waters of Lake Galilee. A

light which will always be the light of Jesus.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The scripture that might even provide for us Jesus' actual scriptural reference for this statement is Isaiah 66, where we read the following:

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Isaiah 66:1-2

Who is this man, the only man on whom the Father will look? The one man who walked this earth in poverty, contrition of spirit and who walked obediently in step with His Father, the man Jesus of Nazareth. He is our example, He always goes before us. And His example is there for us to follow.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 5: 24

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 5: 30

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

John 8:28-29

Nothing has changed, Father is still looking for this man. This same man Jesus in us. Jesus within us His body as well, walking in spiritual emptiness with regards to anything but following the Father with fear and obedience. Learning the lessons that our own threshing floors of Nachon will teach us about ourselves and about our heart. There are lessons that the corporate body needs to learn. A corporate body has a corporate heart that will also need to be refined. This is so true today as selfish ambition, spiritual control and soulish worship are so prevalent. The corporate body needs to know what it is to die to these things so that the Lord can begin to truly shine with the light of His self-less nature, His spiritual freedom and servant hearted leadership² and the quality

of sacrificial worship that we have explored above.

This is the light that needs to flood the world, the light of Jesus. A light which shows the world that the way to true self-actualisation is through self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death...

Philippians 2:5-8b

Where is the blessing in poverty? Where is the blessing of coming to the end of ourselves? Paul can help us here by his own experience of spiritual poverty and the wonderful principle Jesus personally taught him. Paul was powerless to overcome a physical issue in his life; the possibility is that it was a problem with his vision. In 2 Corinthians 12 he describes this issue as a thorn in his flesh and that he seems to have struggled with this for some time, having asked the Lord to remove it on three occasions. Paul finally hears from the Lord on this issue and in verse 9 Paul gives us the Lord's response to his requests.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most

gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

How beautiful is this? Paul, yes Paul, had to learn this wonderful lesson, which was that he had to be protected from himself and his self pride. The grace of the Lord is sufficient, and His strength is made perfect in the weakness of spiritual poverty. We all, and this included Paul, must never move too far from our total dependency on the Lord. What a blessing this is! His grace will always have our backs, when we come to the end of ourselves it is His grace that will be there waiting for us.

The ekklesia needs to shine with the light of his grace and mercy, demonstrating our total dependency on our God of grace.

- Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Ezekiel 22:30

Once again, Father is looking for a man, this time the man is to stand in the gap and to make intercession for

mankind and once again there has only ever been one man to fulfil His purposes in this regard. One man who has carried the weight of mankind and its sin on His shoulders and that is His son, Jesus Christ. In His life He also carried the compassion and sorrow of His Father, an example of which we are shown in Luke 19 when he weeps over the city of Jerusalem.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Luke 19:41

Nothing has changed Father is still looking for this man in His body, to carry the compassion and sorrow for the state of the spiritual Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, for the intercessional gap for the world has being once and for all fully filled by the cross of Christ.

Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem...

Revelation 21:9b-10a

As we saw above there is an intercessional calling on the rebuilt tabernacle of David. In James 4 we are encouraged to respond to parlous state of the Church in the following way.

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

James 4:9

Blessed are they that mourn; the call is for the body to be a light that might penetrate this present darkness in the religious system that is the church!

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:22-23

Perhaps, we are able to apply this teaching to the gathered corporate body of Christ. What is the condition of our spiritual sight, what do we focus upon and are we looking in the right direction? As Jesus challenges the church in Laodicea:

...anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Revelation 3:18b-19

Indeed, there is and only ever be one direction in

which we need to be looking,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith

Hebrews 12:2a

Recently, on a visit to a local nature reserve with some students we climbed onto the observation platform to see if we could spot ospreys and their nest. As we stepped onto the platform there was a group of well kitted-out bird watchers already present and all were looking in the same direction. When asked if they could see the birds or their nest, they confidently pointed as one towards a particular direction where they explained precisely where the nest could be found. They left and I then shared my new found osprey nest wisdom with my group and encouraged them to focus their binoculars in the direction that I had been instructed. For a few minutes we were all comfortable in the knowledge that we were looking at the osprey nest and expectantly waiting for the arrival of the birds at any moment. Then, from the other side of the platform we heard a still small voice say 'the nest is not over there, it is over here'. The voice belonged to the volunteer warden and we could only hear his voice telling us where we really needed to be looking once we had stopped listening to the other voices. Today, who do we need to be listening to, to truly hear the voice of God, where do we need to be looking to truly see the hand of the Father at work?

We need the light of His revelation and that is based in the truth of His word. The key to walking in His light is a humble and contrite heart, and it has always been so.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Isaiah 57:15

Knowing that,

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

Let us therefore be prepared to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep for those who are still walking in blindness even within the church and join the man Jesus as He sits at the Father's right hand side interceding for the saints.

But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:24-25

The ekklesia needs to fill the gap with the cross of Jesus, it is a house of prayer.

- Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

There is only one man to whom those worn out by religion and the world can come to and find rest, and this man is Jesus Christ. And it is only as we, His body, take on his nature of meekness and humility that we can offer the same respite. Indeed, this is His call to those who are overburdened with the weights of life and religion.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Matthew 11:28-29

The religious system that is the church too often offers a false peace that is dependent on a conditional love that in turn is itself dependent upon whether or not we conform to the religious game that is founded on the fear of man and the burden of obligation that this always engenders. In many ways the opposite of meekness is control and within the church this is often expressed as either spiritual control from the leadership or spiritual manipulation from the body. Both are manifestations of the spirit of jezebel or witchcraft within the body. This is the same type of damaging model of leadership that Jesus challenges when He says the following,

And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers...

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

Luke 11:46, 52

Jesus offers His light burden which He offers to all who would come into His body, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Indeed, within His body this light burden is a burden to bear the burdens of others.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

The pervading spirit to be found in the body is meant to be a spirit of meekness, a corporate spirit that the bears within itself the hard-won mark of Christ and His self-less and self-giving love. Indeed, a love that is proven and clearly demonstrated by burden bearing. And as Paul continues the opposite is too often the problem we find in the church today.

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Galatians 6:3

We can never move beyond our fundamental state of nothingness, all we have and all that we are comes from

Him. Yet so often today we hear from the pulpit how we need to love ourselves before we can know the love of God; in the words of Paul in this deceit we are deceiving ourselves.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

2 Timothy 2:24-25

- The ekklesia needs to be securely rooted and grounded in Jesus, ready for all storms.

iv) Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

There has only been one man who has walked in sinless righteousness on this earth, this is the man Jesus of Nazareth.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 6:33

He is looking for those who have had their appetites transformed from soul to spirit, and who now hunger and thirst after Him and His righteousness, and, therefore, who hunger and thirst to be filled with the fruit of His righteousness.

The call is to become spiritual fruitarians.

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:10-11

And He is looking for a body which is hungry to finish the work Father has set for it.

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 4:34

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

John 6:27

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Romans 14:17

Though, sadly, what Jesus says next is all too true for the majority in the church.

But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

John 4:32

What can we say about the current appetites within the religious system that is the church? The evangelical/charismatic church over the last hundred years or so has had an appetite for a demonstration of the power of God in the midst of its gatherings. The hunger has been for this power to be increasingly evident within meetings and within the lives of individual believers. This was driven by two factors which worked together. The first was the discovery of a state of grace which was labelled as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience that believers were seen to be having at a later date than their initial salvation. An experience that was usually characterised by the reception of the gift of tongues as a personal spiritual prayer language. The second concomitant factor was also a rediscovery of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as found listed in 1 Corinthians 12 within the practice of the church. We would want to say strongly at this point that we adhere totally to both the importance of the baptism in the Spirit and the need to see the effective working of the spiritual gifts within the church, however, the issue for us is to do with that which has been lost in this process. As we will be exploring later the fruitful and effective exercise of the spiritual gifts in the church is an important aspect of the

preparatory process for the bride. As we shall see, to be fully understood, the Holy Spirit and His gifting do need to be recognized within this betrothal context. Here lies the problem.

Today the church is falling for the Satan's third temptation – Glory without the pain

Jesus was able to see through this, sadly, the church is not doing quite so well. It all seems to be about the anointing; this is where the hunger lies. However, as we saw with poor Uzzah and the stumbling ox cart, the Lord God will not anoint the flesh. The flesh has to die in order that we are made a vessel fit for the master's use and therefore fit for the true anointing.

Glory comes through the pain.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

- The ekklesia needs to be an orchard of righteousness, with everyone bearing fruit.

v) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

As we turn our attention to the fifth beatitude we arrive at the bright light of mercy that has shone out of the heart

of God from the beginning. Indeed, as we see below in Moses' firsthand experience of the actual presence of the divine and then, the definition of the nature of God that is expressed within this powerful interaction.

Mercy is at the heart of the name of God and therefore by definition His nature, glory and His essential disposition towards mankind.

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.
And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Exodus 33:18-19

Within the old covenant, mercy was to be found in a specific place of communing between man and God which was within His tabernacle and above the Ark, the mercy seat. Therefore, we can immediately recognise that this speaks directly to us concerning the Ark within the Tabernacle of David in 2 Samuel 6. Particularly as we remember that for us this is a picture of our own hearts, the essential spiritual part of us that carries the very presence of the Lord.

When we meet the Lord God He will deposit mercy in our hearts.

And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony

that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 25:22-23

This is where we commune with Him and this where we experience the mercy for ourselves and this, therefore, enables us to impact others from hearts dripping with His mercy.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Titus 3:5

This is because for us mercy is not found in a place but in a person, the one person who was a living, breathing expression of the nature of God, Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore, His essential quality of mercy.

And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

Matthew 20:30

Therefore, mercy now has a name and His name is Jesus.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be

touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:15-16

For his ministry of mercy must carry on through us and be carried by us,

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

1 Timothy 1:15-16

Therefore, how much more should mercy flow from those who have received such mercy?

...freely ye have received, freely give.

Mark 10: 8

Sadly, once again, it is too often a struggle to find mercy within the religious system that is the church. Judgement, however, is not at all difficult to find particularly over the tea and coffee. After all the word was a bit long today wasn't it? And did you see what she was wearing? We all knew that wouldn't last! And... it goes on... and on.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-6

- The ekklesia is a house of mercy, His mercy, that shines out of the heart of the rebuilt Tabernacle of David!

vi) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The light that shines here is the light of holiness of life. Again, the brightness of the corporate light is dependent largely on the light shining out of the hearts of those individuals gathered together. This is the quality of the life that Paul describes in Philippians 2, where we read:

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:15

What does it mean to shine as lights in the world? The body corporate, the Tabernacle of David, rebuilt for our own day will shine as it is a living breathing reality of the character and nature of Jesus, to shine with the light of

the world and to impact the world with salty saltiness as the salt of the earth. This said the world is the world and it is the realm handed over to Satan at the fall. Indeed, it is difficult to maintain from scripture any responsibility for the church to be actually agents for political or cultural change in this world. We were always meant to offer an alternative to the world and its values and not try and slavishly offer a christianised version of its values. The following statements from Jesus might help us to understand this reality, His reality.

And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

John 8:23

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

John 18:36

Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Matthew 22:21b

And when challenging a covetous Judas Iscariot,

For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye

have not always.

Matthew 26:11

Jesus' focus and, therefore, our focus should always be the kingdom within and, therefore, the preparation for the kingdom that is to come. King David's heartfelt and humble writing in Psalm 51 is a wonderful evocation of the heart of a weak and broken true disciple looking for restoration having fallen into significant sin. What we read here needs to be in the heart and on the tongue of all those who desire to carry the character and nature of Jesus within the realities of life.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Psalm 51:5-6

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10

Our light is only ever going to be able to shine when the holiness or the purity of heart that we have is a truth that is rooted and grounded in our most inward part. And this light will only ever be a reflection of His light, the light of the true character and nature of the only truly holy man that ever walked on this earth, Jesus Christ.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the

light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:12

And:

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

John 9:5

Perhaps this light shining out from the heart of the true body might bring some illumination and then revelation of the darkness that pervades much of the evangelical church today through its embracing of the world?

- The beam of the light shining forth out of the ekklesia must be free of imperfections.
- Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Although we have already considered this, the culmination of the beatitudes, in significant detail in the previous chapter, what have we learnt? At the end of John's Gospel Jesus speaks peace into the hearts of His disciples, and then sends them into the world with this message of peace.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

John 20:21

As we saw in the previous chapter, we individually need to recognise and take responsibility for the reality that each of us, indeed, has been sent into the world to carry this peace. Each of us has a calling to be peacemakers. We are sent out into the world carrying His peace that he has worked in our hearts and lives and through this we are also fully prepared for life in the body of Christ. This is the outworking of our discipleship journey when we reflect upon Jesus' foundational teaching in the beatitudes.

The beatitudes do need to be properly understood. For through them the Lord is mapping out with clarity the stages of the development of the Godly character that every true believer will have work through in the closet with their heavenly Father. These are the rewards wrought in the secret place through the active exercise of the three secret disciplines, prayer, fasting and alms doing.³ This final beatitude is the last stage, this is the culmination of the disciple's transformation, and the two aspects of it are that they will be a peacemaker and then, as a consequence of this they will function as a child of God, i.e. carrying the family likeness or character.

Having made the journey through an understanding of our spiritual poverty, mourning about our true spiritual condition, dealing with issues of pride and worldly appetites, allowing the Lord to soften our hard-judgemental hearts and, then, in the process cleaning our hearts as well, we come to a place where we are safe to be

let loose on the world and on each other. And when we are ready the Lord desires to use us as a peace offering to the world for whom He came and which His Father still loves so much. Indeed, as we explored above, our journey can also be described as one that takes us into true mature sonship.

Peace making can also be understood within the metaphor of the Tabernacle of David. The Tabernacle of David is both something of which we are corporately a part, and it is also who we are, each one of us, individually a living walking expression of this reality. This is captured by Paul's Temple teaching in 1 Corinthians. The Temple is merely the stone built version of the original tabernacle, both are characterised by being the place for the presence of God to reside on earth. In 1 Corinthians 3: 16 the church corporate is described as the Temple, and in 6:19 the body of the individual believer is described in the same way. Scripturally speaking, as we have seen, the concept of peace takes us to the Hebrew word, Shalom, which is more than the absence of war, it is instead the idea of completeness or a finished work. We can only find true peace through finding our completion in God through His Son. Therefore, as peacemakers we are called to be actively involved as conduits through which man might be completed by being restored to God. And just as the Temple functioned as a meeting place between man and God, we are now a living, breathing, walking, and talking reality of this where ever we go.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of

God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world

Philippians 2:15

As we live our lives before others we do need to understand that the fact that we are indwelt by the living God through His Spirit will have an effect, whether we realise it or not.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.

2 Corinthians 2:14-15a

When people encounter us they will encounter something of the Lord that is in us, and like the smell of the wood smoke it will be undeniable. Just as the tabernacle and the temple were places for people to make peace with their God, this remarkable, miraculous exchange, potentially, can be carried by each one of us individually but more significantly by us being drawn together into a glorious peace filled unity of love and singleness of mind. If only we would be aware of our potential in Christ and to be truly available to Him and His purposes on a daily basis. Indeed, this is the same

challenge that Paul lays before us in 2 Corinthians 5 where we read:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ
2 Corinthians 5:17-20a

This daily potential is also expressed in another verse in Paul's writing.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10

To bring both strands of the peace offering together, what does Jesus describe as his spiritual sustenance? In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye,

There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?
behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on
the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Janes 4:31-35

The ekklesia is the vessel in which Jesus and His
gospel of peace is to be carried to the world.

In our daily lives as disciples of the Lord it is time take
our minds off the physical and to see the spiritual. To lift
our eyes to see that perhaps there is time for a harvest
in our own day, or perhaps the fields are ready for the
harvest of judgement, either way there is still time to
do what we can for those who are dying in their sin all
around us. How hungry are we?

To conclude this chapter, therefore, how have we
understood the king's blessing within the context of the
gathered body that is the rebuilt tabernacle of David?
The blessing of our king, Jesus, will be recognisable
in the impact his character and nature have on the
character and nature of the gathering and by the impact
this in turn has on the world around us. The key can be
expressed by a simple question: can the world see the
man Jesus in us? A reality succinctly summed up by the
last commandment the Lord left with His first disciples
on the night before He was crucified.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love
one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love
one another. By this shall all men know that ye are
my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

Notes

1. See also Revelation 20.
2. A detailed scriptural study of a servant hearted leadership model can be found in 'Taking the Form of a Servant; The Scriptural Principles of Leadership in the Rebuilt 'Tabernacle of David' A Leadership Model for Our Time and Any Time Within the Body of Christ' by the same author.
3. See chapters 7, 8, and 9.

Chapter 5.

A Place for the King's Gifts

And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house.

2 Samuel 6:19

Before the people left the tabernacle of David, the King made sure they all had something to take home with them. He had a gift for everyone. The same is true today. Jesus has left us with a wonderful gift and gift giver; the Holy Spirit. Here we are joining the Lord as He is talking to His disciples, preparing them for is about to blow through their lives. Jesus' imminent arrest and crucifixion. Indeed, preparing them for life without Him in a physical sense. However, He was going to leave them with a very special gift, a gift that the Lord described as

the Comforter, or as the same Spirit as Himself. Indeed, a gift who would become the indwelling reality of their adoption into family of God and then provide them with everything they will need going forwards. He says they would even be in a much better place after He had left them, because of this gift. For us viewing this from a distance of both time and culture we need to understand that much of what Jesus share here comes within a particular cultural reference from this time. For the Lord's language and the cultural motif that His words and imagery echo here are those of the first century Jewish marital betrothal. Specifically, the gift He is describing is what was known as the 'mattan' within Jewish culture of the time.

Let us remind ourselves of Jesus' words as he was speaking to His disciples on the night that He was betrayed.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:2-3

These words need to be understood as they were intended; the final words of a departing bridegroom who has just pledged his troth and who will now be leaving His bride to prepare their marital living space in the home of His Father. This was the custom at this time.

In the previous chapter, Jesus has shared a final meal together before given these disciples, who represent all who were to follow, which can be understood as His marital covenant.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

And He then goes on to tell them about His betrothal gift or 'mattan'. Indeed, a gift that would only be given once He had left them.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

John 16:7

This was to be an expedient gift. The disciples would be in a better spiritual situation through the giving of this gift.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and

shall be in you.

John 14:16-17

Why would they be in a better spiritual situation? The reason being that they will now have the Spirit of Christ actually actively alive within them and within all who would follow until His return as the bridegroom.

This gift is a gift from the Father given in response to a request from His son, Jesus.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

John 16:13-14

The purpose of the gift is to glorify Jesus which, for the true disciple, will mean that the nature and character of Jesus, His glory, will be seen in them as they learn to carry His presence, His Spirit, within them. The purpose of the gift is beautifully described by Paul when he demonstrates something of the heart of the Father for the true bride, the gathered body of His dear Son, the waiting bridegroom.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2

The purpose of the gift is to prepare us to be presented as a chaste virgin by our returning bridegroom to his Father and for the wedding feast to begin.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
Revelation 19:7-9

The Holy Spirit is the gift that just keeps on giving

Therefore, whenever we do gather as His body in whatever form this might be, His Spirit, who is the gift, is also the means through which the King's gifts are delivered to the gathering. The gift is a giver of gifts. For we do need to understand that whenever we do gather it is a time for the bride to be prepared and the bridegroom is looking to provide through Spirit whatever is required to enable to individuals within the gathering to grow in Christ, to be prepared and made ready for Him and His return. This is what the gathering that we call the church should always be, a bridal closet.

...let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

Joel 2:17

Moreover, this bridal preparation was, is and always will be the essential reason for the gathering that Jesus builds, if He is allowed to.

Go ye therefore, and teach (literally in the Greek 'to make disciples of') all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:19-20

The Lord wants access not just to our heart but to the very heart of His gathered people. He wants to be in control, so that it is His will that is done.

Jesus is a head who is looking for a body!

Let us remind ourselves of the phrase we explored in 2 Samuel 6: 17...and set it in his place. When we gather together there is a place for the presence of the Lord, it is His place and He has only one place and that is as Lord of all that happens. It is His body of which He is the head.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross...

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight.
Colossians 1:18-20a, 22

This scripture again shows us that this gathering, his body, is essentially a gathering together of a redeemed humanity that provides Father with the vessel within which the true disciple can be prepared and made ready for the return of the bridegroom and to be presented back to Him. The ekklesia is our proving ground, so that we will be unreprouvable. To this end, and before moving on to explore the King's gifts, it will be helpful to spend some time unpicking a short phrase from 2 Corinthians 6, where we read:

And what concord hath Christ with Belial?
2 Corinthians 6:15

Our focus here is on the Greek word which is translated here as 'concord', the word is *symphónésis*. We can immediately recognise which word in English is derived from this, the musical term *symphony*. And in Greek this word carries the meaning to agree together or of something being harmonious. The picture it provides for us is one of an orchestra grappling with the task of delivering a particularly complicated musical composition, and the key person in the success of this task is the conductor. He stands apart from the gathered ranks of the ninety or so musicians. He stands on a dais above them. He stands facing them so that only he can see the

full picture. He has in front of him the full musical score, whereas the musicians only have their particular part. And with his baton he is in control of the timings within the piece. How often do we truly allow the conductor to be control of our gatherings? How often do we ever fully hear the symphony that the Lord has written for us? Each time we gather it would be wonderfully different if only we could truly let go and let God have his way with us. Jesus is the conductor and He is able to conduct the whole through the presence of His Spirit in each member of the orchestra. There never was such an orchestra and what a beautiful sound this orchestra can make together.

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27

An important aspect of this work of the Spirit is alluded to in Ephesians 4, where we read the following:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:16

It is not just what we do when gathered together that the Spirit of Christ desires to have control of, but more

importantly, He wants to determine which part of the bride we are to function as. To help us understand this more clearly it will be useful if we unpick each element of the verse above.

- From whom the whole body fitly joined together

This is a precious process that is undertaken by the whole Godhead ¹, as they are forming their corporate image on earth. They are looking to not just form the image of Christ in you and me, they are also forming, if we let them, their image of self-less love and unity within these redeemed 'pods' of humanity, a corporate image. For in Genesis we are given remarkable access to a conversation in heaven, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" ². And this is what is being described here in this verse, the whole body of the bride is being created as a beautiful work of God. Significantly, the most important and aspect of this work, as we have seen, is that of heart transformation and the Spirit is well placed to be the active ingredient here. For this is where the most important conducting takes place as king David knew very well for himself.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Psalm 51:6

- Compacted by that which every joint supplieth

Significantly, having described that the building of the bride is a creative work of the Spirit of Christ who is at work within the hearts of the redeemed, the remaining parts of the verse develop the active role of those involved. The important point made here by this phrase is that the emerging body is compacted or knit together, which is what the word literally means here, by the active participation or engagement of those involved. Moreover, it is important that we do understand what of what sort this involvement is actually comprised. What do the joints supply? Something of ourselves or something of Him; His Spirit within us? We are vessel for his use, not the other way around. It is His presence within us that makes the difference, we supply Him through us. As Paul describes this elsewhere, it is all about '...the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.'³ Every part of the body, as in the natural, is nourished from the head, likewise we, as parts of his body, are nourished and thereby knit together⁴ by Jesus through his Spirit.

- According to the effectual working in the measure of every part

Here we are back in the closet and the promised open rewards from Father. As we have seen the engine room for heart transformation is the time we spend in the secret place alone with Father. It is here that we lay bare our lives to him and part of this will be our active

engagement in the body. Asking Him to set us in the place He has for us, asking him for the gifting, grace and faith to fulfil whatever this calling might be. This is what is being described here. This is the effective working and this is the measure. It is the effective working because the term 'working' reminds us of the function the Father has with regards to the gifting within the body.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

The whole Godhead is involved but notice the phrase that describes the involvement of the Father, the same God which worketh all in all. It is the same Greek word that is used here, it is the Father who is at work both here and in the verse in Ephesians.

In the same way, this is the measure that also comes to the individual from the Father.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Romans 12:3

The measure being the measure of faith. So again, it is the Spirit of Christ is working with the Father to achieve His purposes in us, with us and through us in the body.

- Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Finally, as Paul also says elsewhere ⁵, the increase is all about the Father achieving His purposes in and through us by His Spirit and in His love. Indeed, the word translated here and in Colossians 2: 19 as 'increase' is used more generally to mean the processes of natural growth such as we see it used here by Jesus.

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
Matthew 6:28-30

How much shall he clothe us? Now, there is a question we each need to answer.

Why?

The reason being that the increase, the growth and the clothing is spelled BRIDE.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Isaiah 61:10

The Spirit as the Gift Giver

Moving on to an essential element of the conducting function of the Lord, which is exercised through his Spirit within His gathered body. This is to be found in this next section of the Tabernacle of David narrative that we find in 2 Samuel 6:19. Here, we now have the context for what we are going to explore next: the Holy Spirit as the gift giver within the corporate life of the ekklesia.

And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house.

2 Samuel 6:19

The king giving certain gifts to everyone, both male and female we are specifically told, in the nation. Indeed, these gifts handed out freely on this day do seem to provide a spiritual metaphor for the gifts that we believe our own

king, King Jesus, desires to provide for each one gathered within the rebuilt Tabernacle for our own time. Each gift is distinctive, and each is significant in terms of its purpose and provision, application and mode of operation within the body and even beyond. As they are given to produce fruit in the lives of those to whom they have been given and to then produce fruit in those they impact through this in the wider world. However, as we have seen the foundational purpose is to build the bride within the individual and then consequently in the body. The context here as we have seen is one of a betrothal. Here we have likened the role of the Holy Spirit to what was called in the Jewish culture of the time the 'mattan' or the gift which was given to prepare, bless, and beautify the bride for the time of the wedding. He is our very special gift, given for the very special purposes of getting us ready and prepared to be taken home to Father. He is also the bridegroom's best friend as John describes in his third letter.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

John 3:29,33

There are three different types of gift given by king David to his people that are described in 2 Samuel 6 and

we will be following the description of these gifts that is given in the King James Bible. Along the way we will be identifying their metaphorical spiritual and practical significance and importance for us today within the gathered Body of Christ.

1. Receiving a gift from one another

...to everyone a cake of bread

This gift of bread is to be likened to an aspect of body life which we desperately need to return to, that of body ministry. A means by which the bride building purposes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are fulfilled through the faith filled obedient love, which is then expressed within the body in the Spirit between brothers and sisters. This is where the idea that we actively bring His presence in us into the midst of the tabernacle or gathering and to share our lives, hearts, love and what ever we carry of Jesus for those gathered with us comes to its fruition.

The first mention of bread in scripture is important for us as it provides us with our context here:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:19

Bread is described here as the food of common

humanity and, therefore, a food that is common to all humanity. Indeed, all cultures where there is some form of grain have developed their own types of bread. The metaphor, therefore, is that the bread offered here in the Tabernacle of David as a gift from the king, and that which is received within a gathered body, is a gift that we receive from one another. It is the shared gift one to another from person to person within the gathering. The source of the gift is the Lord, indeed, by His Spirit He is the gift, however, His mode of distribution is His presence within the spirit of an individual chosen for the task.

Therefore, within a gathering we will have opportunities to either receive this gift from someone or we will be the gift giver, moved by the Holy Spirit, to give to another. The key, as we have seen, is that we bring the presence which we have actively carried into the meeting and we bring it in to the midst of the gathering, so that we can either be ministered to by the body or we can be part of the body that ministers to the needs of others, or we can even be both. Therefore, the gift that is given will carry within it the life of Christ, it is His life that is to be ministered and it is His purposes that are fulfilled by the giving of this gift.

...the body is of Christ,...the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Colossians 2:17b,19

We are, therefore, conduits through whom this life, His life, is ministered into the heart or hearts of others. So that each time the gathering gathers the bride becomes a little more prepared and made that little more ready than she was before. And by this the will of the Father has been activated through the Son by the Spirit and hearts have been touched and changed.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Perhaps within the narrative of the feeding of the two large crowds during the ministry of Jesus we might be able to recognise a similar process at work. Indeed, within this event who actually performs the miracle?

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Matthew 14:19

It is very instructive to notice the elements of this miracle. Firstly Jesus receives all that the disciples had the two fish and five loaves.

But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye

them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Matthew 14:16, 17

In the same way as we give all that we have He will be able to put this to use.

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle...

2 Samuel 6:17a

If we actively bring ourselves and thereby make his presence within us available then He will do the rest for...

The miracle came from what the disciples brought to Jesus

...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9b

The next element of the narrative for us to notice is what Jesus does immediately prior to performing the miracle.

...and looking up to heaven

Matthew 14:19c

Why does He do this? Everything He did and does is for Father and comes from Father.

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to

finish his work.

John 4:34b

As He looks up to heaven He is looking to see what his Father is going to do, because the whole Godhead is always involved. At all times the Father's will and purposes find their outworking through the Son and their activation by the Spirit. Do we not have the same idea described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 where we read the following?

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

A way to understand what Paul is saying here is that within each gift that is given the whole Godhead is involved. To understand this we need to unpick the verses in 1 Corinthians in reverse order and for each to explore the three different terms used; 'operations', 'administrations' and 'gifts'.

Paul describes the Father's involvement in the gift giving process as the operations aspect of the process and as such He is the key element of the process by which all things are being worked out for everyone else.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Just like with Jesus' ministry the gifts that flow are an outworking of the Father's love and nature. Everything emanates out of this heart. Indeed, everything that occurs here in the corporate body will be connected with the conversations that have occurred between Father and His children in the secret place. The gifts within the body are the rewards for those who diligently seek Him both for the giver and for the individuals that receive from His hand ⁶.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Luke 11:9-11a,13

The word used for the Father's involvement in the giving of the spiritual gifts here is 'operations' and this a translation of a Greek word which carries the meaning of the active energy or purpose behind a given thing. ⁷ This is helpful in providing for us a clear connection with

Jesus' words when he says:

The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 5:19b

Likewise, with the spiritual gifting in the body the Son follows the Father, it is the Father's will at work through Jesus' gifts of the Spirit. The work of the Son in the process is described as its administration and the Greek word used here, *diakonia*, carries the meaning of a service conduit through which the commands of others are executed. Within the gathered corporate body Jesus continues to serve his Father as the conduit through which His gifts are given.

And finally, it is the Holy Spirit as the living presence within the disciple who delivers the gift to the body through the obedience, faith and voice or action of a disciple and the Holy Spirit also enables its reception by another disciple whose heart is receptive to the gift through faith and hope. The key to understand this is carried by the Greek word translated as 'gifts', the word is *charisma* which literally means a gift of divine grace. It is the grace of the whole Godhead that is at work here.

And, wonderfully, He desires to include us in the process. Jesus in the passage in Matthew having looked up to heaven goes on to bless, break and give the bread to the disciples so that they in turn can bless, break and give it to the multitude. This is why body ministry is so important, without it we are

limiting the giver of the gifts in His purposes, both for us and for his body.⁸ The Lord wants us, each of us, to be the conduit through which we can be a blessing to each other. He desires to meet the needs within the body, such as through a touch of healing or a word of prophetic encouragement and He desires to use us to deliver it.

What is the quality of the bread given as a gift here?

It is important that the bread is unleaven, as it is with the bread used in the communion sacrament. This is because only unleaven bread is free from self. Unleaven bread is bread that does not contain yeast and it is the yeast within bread that causes it to rise and become puffed up with pride. This why Jesus warns us against the leaven of the Pharisees, a metaphor for religious pride.

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 12:1c

This process is also determined by how much kneading of the dough has taken place, in other words how much effort and work has been done. All bread making does take some effort to produce as the kneading releases and stretches the gluten which gives the bread both its strength and its elasticity, however, in the presence of yeast the dough mixture doubles or triples in size. This is great if you want a nice sliced white but not in spiritual terms where for Paul he sees it as sin which requires purging.⁹

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little

leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.

1 Corinthians 5: 6,7a

The bread that we need to be sharing as a gift one to another is the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, the living word of God.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

For the process that we are partakers in, as we gather together as the body of Christ, is to bear one another's burden, as well as our own and to fulfil the law of Christ by supporting each one to be conformed to the image of Christ. Expressed purely and simply this our calling and this is our destiny. The gift of bread here metaphorically is the food to help us along the way. Therefore, what are the gifts that we share one to another? These will include those gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

Indeed, as the body gathers together there is a dynamic in the Spirit that we have the potential to move in as we actively bring the presence with us into the midst. The demonstration of this will be spiritual gifts that will further the purposes of Father in the life of an individual and in turn will then be an edifying encouragement to the body as a whole.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

1 Corinthians 12:7

This gift or manifestation of the Spirit is a gift to the individual concerned and it will also profit the whole. Significantly we are back in the upper room with the Lord encouraging His disciples here, because the word that is translated to profit withal is actually the same word that we find translated as expedient in John 16.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

John 16:7

This is the blessing of the betrothal gift at work; the gift giver who was Jesus' parting gift to His bride. Indeed, the profit that is gained here is the nature and character Christ impacting the individuals as well as the gathered body as a

whole, as lives and hearts are transformed into His likeness. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.
1 Corinthians 12:11

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.
2 Corinthians 3:17

The expectation of Paul expressed here is that everyone has the potential to be changed into the image or glory of Christ and that this is the gift of the gift giver; the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Paul goes on to teach in 1 Corinthians 12 that this process is the outworking of the Father.

...but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
1 Corinthians 12:6b

Each and every gift is given to do a work and as we have already recognised the work or the effective purpose behind each and every gift comes from the Father.

For as we saw in Jesus' teaching in the upper room, the Holy Spirit comes from the Father at the request of the Son, as do the gifts. For the Father is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him and as we have seen the one and only place to seek the Father is within the 'sukkah' closet and here, through the gifts, we can

identify Him rewarding openly those who have been spending time with Him in this secret place.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2:13,15

2. Receiving from the gift of the Word

...to everyone...a good piece of flesh

The spiritual picture for us here brings to mind a verse in Hebrews 5 which makes a metaphorical connection between strong teaching and a good piece of meat.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Hebrews 5:14

Therefore, what we can say with regards to this second gift from the king is that it comes to us wrapped as a gift within the fount of all truth which is the word of God. This will be something that comes out of the heart of God. A word that is delivered by the Spirit of God through someone who is carrying the truth. Indeed, a truth that has been tried and tested in their life and which it is now the right time and occasion for it to be shared to others.

This is so that it will speak from spirit to spirit because it is in the Spirit. This is not about sermonising. This is not about one person, and it is usually the same person, standing up and talking to the gathered pews fillers for half an hour every Sunday. The context for this will vary as the Holy Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wills. It may be within the context of the gathered body a word that comes from out of the body as individuals are stirred by the Spirit to communicate out of their spirit to the gathering, a word spoken between two individuals; in whatever way the Lord wants to do it- He is Lord and He is building His church. However, it has to be a teaching that comes out of the heart of Father, carried by the Son and delivered to the gathering by the Spirit in whatever mode of communication the Father wills it, as we must not be too prescriptive here. This is the reality that Paul is describing when writing to the gathering in first century Corinth.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.

Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:28

The edifying protein of the word of the Lord is carried within the mix of those who are gathered together. This is a wonderful and at the same time scary adventure that carries the living dynamic of the Spirit of God at work in the midst of His people. The important bottom line here

is that the word is given for a reason. It is crucial that the word is given, that is heard by spiritual ears and then is actively responded to by those for whom it was sent.

This is not about tickling people's ears with knowledge about the written word, but it is all about touching people's hearts with the transformational challenge of the living Word.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah 55:11

Jesus remains the living Word and He is actively building His ekklesia and that means He is actively looking to build you and me as part of this, His, building. We are His lively stones and this is His spiritual house and He is using us as His building material ¹⁰. He desires to be our foundation in all things, but He wants this foundation built upon.

Now therefore ye are...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19a, 20-22

We might also reflect here upon another scripture.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- All scripture ¹¹ is given by inspiration of God

God, through His word, has presented to humanity such a wonderful gift, His very own inspired word. A unique book, or a series of books, each one supporting every other one, producing a story that takes us from the first day of the original creation to the establishment of a new heaven and new earth and the story of the God who loved the world so much in between and throughout has been looking for a dwelling place with man and through whom He will produce a bride for his Son.

Therefore, for anyone to bring teaching from the word of God they must be anointed to do so, so that the majority of what they teach will also carry a God given inspiration that will carry at its heart scriptural truth. They must be in the moment and allowing the word that has been placed in them to come forth and to produce its fruit in the lives of those for whom it has been sent. Indeed, the word given, in whatever form, will only ever echo that which has already been given in the written word. For to not do so is to lay one open to unspeakable danger.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Revelation 22:18-19

To teach in truth you need to be living in the truth, and allowing the truth of God's word to speak to you and change you.

- ...and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

The teaching of the word in whatever form it comes within the Tabernacle of David will be supportive of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those gathered, it will therefore have an inspired prophetic element such that everyone will have something spiritually nourishing to take home with them. This might be at times reproof and correction, sadly too often teaching lacks the cutting edge we read about in Hebrews 4.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of

the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

We need individuals of spiritual calibre, who will help us all to come to a place of honesty before the Lord and before each other and to allow the Lord to sort out issues of the heart and to challenge us to continue dying to self, thereby allowing our spirit to rule our soul.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:13

Are we prepared to come to such a place of naked transparency before Him and before each other? Why, so that the Lord through His grace and mercy might mould us and make us increasingly into His perfection, as we all endeavour to gain maturity and to be prepared for every good work on Monday morning.

- That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

We also need those who can exhort and inspire us to understand the wonderful purposes that God has for us, His people, so that the church is no longer on the back foot but can stand strong in the knowledge that we are

in Christ and, therefore, more than conquerors in Him. Like a fearful Gideon, at times, we would all benefit from hearing words such as these':

The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour
Judges 6:12

Paul also encourages a variety of vocal contributions from the body when gathered from which the word can also come forth.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.
1 Corinthians 14:26

We should all come prepared to be carriers and, therefore, communicators of the word whenever we gather; this is an important aspect of bringing His presence in us into the midst, so that the whole is edified and blessed. We should all come bearing the gifts that the Lord has provided for us to bring, and not just rely on the perceived up front functionaries.

We are all called to be more than pew fillers

We do need to break free from this false passive audience mentality, we do need to renew our minds in this area. The list above is not exhaustive but does show us that there is variety within body ministry, indeed,

something for everyone to bring; a song, a truth, or a new piece of revelation and let the Lord by His Spirit communicate His word through these to the whole body. To the extent that the quick, powerful and sharp word of God, a wonderful dynamic gift from the King, would flow within the tabernacle of David. Moreover, for everyone to take home with them spiritual protein to keep them nourished, to continue to be built up in Christ and to be changed from one degree of glory to the next.

3. Receiving of the gift of the Spirit Himself.

...to everyone...a flagon of wine. ¹²

The spiritual picture here has some complexity, however, essentially the metaphor of King David's gift of the flagon of wine is that we are a container for the presence of God, for which we are already very familiar. We do need to understand that both the flagon and the wine that is contained within it are important for us symbolically. Therefore, to help us understand this metaphor it will be useful for us to turn to one of Paul's metaphorical pictures of the disciple in 2 Corinthians where we read the following:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

As we have already understood from our study in the 2 Samuel 6, as true disciples we do each represent a very special vessel in the hands of the Lord, as we individually carry within us His precious presence, the Holy Spirit. We are a living breathing temple and at our heart, which is symbolically represented by the Ark of the Covenant, is His presence. We carry God by His Spirit into every day, event and conversation. Paul is here reminding us that the basic raw materials of each of our physical bodies is the very stuff of the earth, which is clay, and within which we find all the essential chemical building blocks of His creation.

This is quite literally true because we were originally created, as Genesis 2, tells us out of clay.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

It is also interesting to note that the first man was called Adam and the word for clay in Hebrew is adama. Scientifically it can also be shown that the basic chemical constituent parts that make up you and me, are the same that produce clay. So we are literally living, breathing clay pots

Therefore, with reference to the narrative in 2 Samuel 6 we do need to understand that we are all just a clay pot or a flagon, such as is used to be filled with wine or whatever else. However, what transforms us from the ordinary is the quality of that with which we are filled, which is a

God given treasure, the most important thing He has, His presence. Just as with the flagon, the importance is in the quality of the wine that it contains and not in the clay jug itself.

To develop this point further, in His teaching within the synoptic Gospels, Jesus helps us to understand that the Holy Spirit can be likened to wine. In Matthew 9, Mark 2 and Luke 5 we find Jesus' parable concerning the new cloth and the new wine.

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

Luke 5:37

The interpretation here is clearly related to the indwelling presence of God by His Spirit in the believer or in the church.

As we have seen in the Olivet discourse in John's gospel there is a very strong focus on what would happen to the disciples once Jesus had left them, and the key element is the sending of a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and the impact this would make on the disciples for the ongoing work of the Lord. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit who is betrothal or 'mattan' gift.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and

shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

John 14:16-18

Indeed, a gift who will be actually actively an indwelling presence for each disciple.

In Ephesians 1:13c we are also described as being sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, i.e. a seal, traditionally made from wax, such as you would have had on an official document, and the Holy Spirit Himself is then described as:

The earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession

Ephesians 1:14a

What does this mean? Paul is explaining that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we have seen prophesied by Jesus in John is an earnest. This is an old fashioned word meaning a guarantee or a down payment that is made prior to the arrival of whatever the down payment was for. Therefore, for us here, considering the earnest or down payment of the Holy Spirit we have received through Christ, we can clearly look forward to a greater reality of the same Holy Spirit in the future. This is merely a taster for what is to come during the Millennium and beyond. This is a betrothal gift which encourages us to expect more of the same once the Bridegroom has returned and taken us home with Him to His Father.

The picture, therefore, is clear to us. As a believer we each now are indwelt by the very presence of God

through his Spirit. We are the clay vessel or flagon and he is the wine contained within this vessel. However, as Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5 the contents of our vessel do need to be regularly topped up.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

The metaphor which comes to mind is that of a bank account. The money we keep in the bank can be kept in different ways; we will have a current account for the daily use of our money and to deal with the direct debits and we will also have savings accounts or investments and this will be money that is invested for the future. Perhaps, we can recognise that it is the same with the indwelling of the Spirit in our lives, if I am not being too irreverent here? The down payment of the Spirit is our savings account, a measure of the Spirit stored for a future time when the Lord returns and we also have a current account of the Spirit that has a daily flow in and out of our account as we interact spiritually with the world, the body and the Lord.

In Jeremiah 32, we find a description of a particular land purchase that the prophet was making as a prophetic act. What is of interest for us is the spiritual picture that this one verse does provide for us in terms of our understanding of the two important aspects of the role of the Holy Spirit as an indwelt presence for

the disciple that we are exploring here. Particularly, as we can see within this verse some of the same terminology that we have already encountered in Ephesians. Indeed, helpfully the prophet does seem to be bringing things together as we try to understand something of what this last gift of the king might mean for us. For in this verse we read the following:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

Jeremiah 32:14

What we have here is the legal process by which a piece of land has been bought and as part of this process certain evidences or in our terms earnest's have been issued to the purchaser, who is Jeremiah. These receipts or proofs of purchase are described here to be of two kinds one is sealed and one is open and both of which are then described as being placed within an earthen vessel.

It is possible that Paul might have been referring to this very legal process or even this scripture when writing about another purchase, a spiritual one, that is also kept in an earthen vessel when writing his letter to the believers in Asia Minor.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our

inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

For the believer, the Holy Spirit is the evidence that we have been purchased, and purchased for a very high price indeed, the shed blood of the lamb. And for us the evidence that we have been purchased is that which we have God himself indwelling our earthen vessel, clay pot or flagon, by His Holy Spirit.

In this scripture in Jeremiah there are two aspects or out workings of this evidence of our purchase, one is sealed and one is open. It is the sealed evidence that is described in Ephesians.

...in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 1:13b

It is sealed, therefore, untouchable, safe and secure within the bank vault of our heart. The kind of inner sealed evidence we find described in Romans 8, as described here as the Spirit of adoption.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:15-17a

From a profoundly deep place we now know that we belong to a new spiritual family, we have a secure eternity and we have an unshakeable foundation in life who is Jesus. This our sealed reality, our guarantee, but as Paul goes on to describe it can only get better.

...if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:17b-19

There will be a new day, when the Lord returns where we will come into a fullness of this glorious reality. This is our inner, sealed reality of the Spirit, our identity in Him and of which we have only the down payment of what is to come. Wonderful, unfathomable realities such as are expressed by Jesus, in Revelation 3, will be ours one day.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3: 21

Therefore, there is this sealed reality of our indwelt reality of the Spirit, however, as in the verse in Jeremiah 32 there is a second aspect or out working of the evidence of our purchase is an open one. This is related to our ongoing

dynamic relationship with the Father through the Spirit. There is a need to maintain our earthen vessel, clay pot or flagon and keep it topped up. And it is this aspect that is described in Ephesians 5 where we read these words of Paul written within an exhortation about public worship.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.
Ephesians 5:18

Here being drunk or full of wine is directly juxtaposed with an exhortation to be filled with the Spirit. Paul is challenging the issue that was also a problem in the church at Corinth, where people were using the agape meal as an opportunity to get drunk, rather than using the coming together for its primary purpose, as an opportunity to be filled by God and prepared for His purposes. For as Jesus says in John 7.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.
John 7:38-39

Father desires that we have an overflow of Himself such that we can bring refreshment, conviction and challenge to those around us, and this merely by His

presence in us by His Spirit being full to overflowing. This is because by the ongoing work of the Father on our hearts and lives our presence will increasingly be an expression of His presence, His nature and His character. Let us be reminded at this point that in Him we are a living, breathing expression of His tabernacle and as such we are a meeting place between man and God.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Corinthians 2:14-16

He dwells with us and in us so that He can reach out through us and be connected to the world which He still loves so much by His Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, which is Him in us. Therefore, the more there is of Him the less there is of us. Therefore, be filled with the Spirit!

For what is the overflow of the Spirit in our lives? And such an overflow that others around might be touched by it? What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? What does it mean for this to be understood as the 'open' aspect of the evidence of our saved spiritual reality? It will helpful to return to the verse in Jeremiah 32 and to explore the depth of meaning in the Hebrew word that is translated 'open' to answer these questions. Take these evidences,

this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel...

The word translated as 'open' here is the Hebrew word galah and in its literal sense it means to be naked, or to be fully uncovered. Therefore, the spiritual picture that is being painted before us in Jeremiah 32:14 is that the evidence that we have been purchased with a price by Jesus is that there is a spiritual dynamic at work in our lives which uncovers the reality of who we truly are, making us spiritually naked or poor before Father, ourselves and sometimes before each other.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3

This is a crucial place for us because it is from here and only from here that we can be built up in God a new man. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:13

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

The transformation that is involved here is one

that involves the death of self, such that the self-less new man, Christ and His nature and character, can increasingly become who we are in the realities of life. A transformational process which is dependent on the finished work of Christ and is experienced in and through His Spirit with whom we are indwelt. This is the process described by Paul in Romans when he writes:

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...

Romans 8:13-17a

The other aspect of being 'open' is that we live lives before the world and each other such that it is obvious who we are and who is living within us, for we carry a presence, His presence, and we are called to shine with His light in the midst of this perverse and crooked generation.

Indeed, what we have described here are the two evidences of our purchase in Christ. The open evidence is mortification of our flesh life in the Spirit and the sealed evidence is our Spirit of adoption in Christ. And as the verse in Jeremiah concludes it is then when our

individual earthen vessel contains the evidences both sealed and open . . . that we may continue many days. We will have and be lasting fruit, indeed, a fruitfulness that takes into His millennium as His bride.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.
John 15:16

Therefore, are we not travelling full circle in our journey into true discipleship with this verse? Surely, it expresses nothing other than the living reality of the fruit of the Spirit being expressed within us and through us. One aspect of which is sealed for eternity and the other is the relational dynamic that is at work in the life and heart of a disciple. And isn't this the dynamic that is at work working within us to create the nature and character of the Son of God shining as a light in and through us?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained

that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

Within the context of life within the gathered body of Christ this is a wonderful reality that Paul and others explore in great depth, because we do need each other. We do need true body life. We do need a true and full experience of body life in and through which this nature and character of Jesus can be helped to form.

However, too often now we only have the harsh and unhelpful religious system of the church instead of this intended reality. Indeed, a reality in which the following might be true.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2

Or in the words of the Lord.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John 13:34-35

This, then, is the last gift that the Lord God desires that we take away with us when we leave the tabernacle of

David. The gift of an enhanced sense of our identity as his children and having received a refill, so that we might overflow with Him and touch those around us with His presence and His character in us. To know more clearly who we are in Christ and what is our calling to be Him where ever we are in the issues of life and to be full and overflowing of Him by His Spirit.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and
hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice
to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Ephesians 5:1

And he dealt among all the people, even among
the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women
as men, to everyone a cake of bread, and a good
piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people
departed everyone to his house.

2 Samuel 6:19

In the final section, we will bring this all together as we explore and study passages in the New Testament that support and develop these ideas further. So that we can be confident that we have been dividing the word of truth rightly. ¹³

Notes

1. 1 Corinthians 12: 18
2. Genesis 1: 26a
3. Colossians 2:19
4. This is the same Greek word as used in Ephesians 4: 16
5. 1 Corinthians 3: 6
6. Hebrews 11: 6
7. The word is energéma, the root of which provides us with the word energy.
8. See Book 4, chapter 3
9. 1 Corinthians 5: 6,7
10. 1Peter 2: 5
11. Paul is referring to the OT here, however, we now have the God inspired NT as well
12. There is some discussion concerning the exact meaning of this Hebrew term, the AV is consistent in its handling of this term and we are content to go with the AV translation here, see also Hosea 3:1
13. 2 Timothy 2: 15

Appendix

The Intercession of Nehemiah: a methodology for our time.

I believe it is possible to identify within this one key verse, a dynamic intercessory process through which we can journey when we meet together; giving this important time spent together, vision, purpose and focus. And through which the power and the spirit of Elijah might be evidenced in our midst and in the lives of those for whom we are interceding. A labour fit for such a time as this.¹The process is:

A time to gather together for a purpose

A labour of agape love

A purpose beyond ourselves

A purpose that comes fresh out of the heart of God

The context for the book of Nehemiah is that Nehemiah was the cup bearer for the Artaxerxes the king of Persia, and he has been visited by his brother, Hanani, who has

come from Jerusalem. The year is about 445 BC and it has been nearly a hundred years since the Jewish people had begun to return to their homeland under Zerubbabel in 536 BC. However, Hanani reports that the city is still in ruins and that task of rebuilding is in need of completion. The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

How strongly this speaks metaphorically to us today concerning the state of the church. In terms of scriptural symbolism we understand that the church can be identified as the bride of Christ, passages of scripture such as Ephesians 5 illustrates this point clearly.

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5: 22

We can also then make a clear connection between the preparatory work that is required to be done here on earth with the ultimate presentation of the bride on the new earth.

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

Revelation 21:2

This is a mystery, but there is an undeniable identification between the bride that is prepared in the

here and now with the bride that is to come down which is the New Jerusalem. Therefore, in returning to Nehemiah we can, ourselves, perhaps identify with this situation in our own day? When we read about Jerusalem do we not recognise the bride and when we identify the bride do we not see the church? And when we see and hear all that is happening within that which would call itself the church of Jesus Christ should our response not be the same as Nehemiah. The wonderful restoration of the dwelling place of God on earth within which a people are called home and are called to be part of the building purposes of the Lord God. However, two thousand years on and look at it today. What is the response of those with eyes to see the reality of where the church is and all that is happening under the name of Jesus Christ?

This also helps to understand something of the prophetic importance of the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David here. Indeed, a prophetic picture that is the scriptural basis for all that we have been exploring in this book.

We must wake up from looking gloatingly at the latest You Tube travesty, step down from our ivory towers with our harsh attitude of self-righteousness, our proclivity for gossip and slander and to simply ask Father to break our hearts with things that break His, and to respond as Nehemiah does. There is work to be done. We are called to be a John the Baptist generation and in the spirit of Elijah to stand in the gap for the state of 'Jerusalem' the bride of Christ. A bride who is increasingly playing the harlot with the world, and, like John the Baptist, to carry this intercessional calling.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1:17

Therefore, we do need to gather and to allow the Lord by His spirit to guide us as to what we need to pray for, however, we also need to capture something of the heart of Nehemiah and perhaps we can use his response to what he heard from his brother as an effective scaffolding for our own ministry of intercession as we gather in the Lord to make a difference.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

a) To hear

Shema is the Hebrew word that carries the meaning to hear and this will be an opportunity to listen and to tell the stories. A time to share what has been happening and to share the needs and challenges that we bring with us. A time reach out to each other and the Lord. A time to realise that we have come to the throne of grace, so let us come boldly and to speak freely, to trust and to not fear. This is a time to obtain mercy for others and for ourselves as we come before the merciful Father. This is a time to find grace to help in the

time of need, to ask father to bind up the sinking boats with his cords that can never be broken.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Hebrews 4:15a

b) To sit

1) This will require us to actively dwell and abide with one another in the moment, in the challenges and in the pain. A time sit together in the Lord's presence and to share the weight of the burdens.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

c) To weep

I believe, as we sit and as we listen together there will be opportunities to express our connection emotionally in the spirit.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

To weep is to express a heart of compassion and connect with the Lord's heart of compassion and there many examples in scripture of this type of weeping, starting with Jesus himself.

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled ...
Jesus wept.

John 11:33,35

For what or for whom do we weep?

i. For the restoration of our brethren

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Genesis 33:4

And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

Genesis 43:30

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Genesis 45:14-15

ii. For the bride

...that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

Genesis 29:10b,11

iii. For the prodigals, to partake of the Father's pain for lost sons

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Genesis 37:35

iv. For restoration of the children to the fathers

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

Genesis 50:1

v. For spiritual progeny

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto

the Lord, and wept sore.

1 Samuel: 1:10

d) To mourn

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

The Greek word translated 'comforted' is *parakaleo* and it carries the meaning 'to be called alongside' and this is again an aspect of people coming together and burden sharing.

However, we can see here also that at this level the *paraclete*, the Holy Spirit, comes along side. I believe this is what Paul captures in Romans 8.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Therefore to mourn in the spirit there is a connection with the heart of God and we can look forward to intercessory intimacy with God and with each other. There is an interesting verse in Isaiah.

The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all

the merryhearted do sigh.

Isaiah 24:7

The Hebrew word translated 'languiseth' carries the meaning of 'to droop', 'to be weak', 'to be exhausted', 'to grow feeble', which is similar to the description of the impotent folk by the pool of Bethsaida. However, here the context is the vine. So perhaps this level of intercession is for the church. The Hebrew word translated 'merryhearted' carries the meaning of 'joyful' and as we are told in Nehemiah.

The joy of the Lord is your strength

Nehemiah 8:10

Our experience of intercession would suggest that it is possible to have the joy of the Lord, yet at the same time be able to weep and to mourn in the spirit. When we are strong we can be weak and travail for others.

The Hebrew word translated 'sigh' can also carry the meaning to groan (in pain or grief), and to gasp, so we do seem to be in Romans 8 territory here.

e) To fast

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

2 Samuel 12:22

To fast while there is still time! This is a powerfully raw scripture from the tragic unravelling of King

David's life through his adultery with Bathsheba. From the story of Esther it seems as though the three day fast that she, Mordecai and the Jewish people, made proved decisive in their survival and in the thwarting Haman's wicked plans (Esther 4:16). And what about the fast of Nineveh where even the livestock fasted.

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

Jonah 3:5

Indeed, here we are told that the Lord God repented of His judgement directly because of the response if the people. Isaiah 58 provides us with a clear description of the areas in which fasting is effective in moving the Lord. Why fast? The answer is in Isaiah 58:4d: 'To make your voice to be heard on high'. What to fast for? According to: Isaiah 58.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen?

i. to loose the bands of wickedness.

ii. to undo the heavy burdens.

iii. to let the oppressed go free.

iv. and that ye break every yoke.

Isaiah 58:6

These terms need to be spiritually applied.

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:18

f) To pray

This whole process can be understood as prayer since '...Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.' However, the Hebrew word translated 'prayer' here in Nehemiah is 'palal' a word which carries a meaning of intervention, interposing, interceding, or to judge in prayer. It seems to be a word that is used for a particular type of prayer prayed by the significant intercessors of the Old Testament who be found standing in the gap for:

i. Healing

So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

Genesis 20:17

ii. Forgiveness

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Job 42:10

iii. Mercy

And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

Numbers 11:2

iv. Burdens of the heart, such as physical or spiritual children

And she (Hannah) was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

1 Samuel 1:10

v. Revival

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

2 Chronicles 7:1

vi. Repentance and restoration:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

vii. Restitution

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people

wept very sore.

Ezra 10:1

viii. To honour and remember his word

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.

Daniel 9:4

g)...before the God of heaven:

Positionally, we need to know where we are with our God as we intercede.

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:5-6

It is so important that we understand that we are joining the Lord Himself in this ministry seeing he ever liveth to

make intercession for them. We are joining Jesus in his priestly intercessional ministry as he sits at the right hand of the Father.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

We find Nehemiah himself standing in a place of intercessional intimacy before his God. The Hebrew word translated before literally means 'in the face of' and this particular place of prayer is shared again throughout the Old Testament.

i. In Genesis 3, we see that this was the original relational position enjoyed by the primal pair, a position they sadly lost.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8

ii. In Genesis 7, we see that Noah's quality of life is described as being before the face of God:

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all

thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Genesis 7:1

And the Lord responds to the quality of the walk, providing a place of refuge, rescue and escape.

iii. In Genesis 19, we see that this is Abraham's place of prayer.

And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD.

Genesis 19:27

iv. Likewise we see the same with Moses in Exodus 33.

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

Exodus 33:11

The place where Moses stood.

v. In 1 Samuel 1, we see that this is the place where Hannah prayed.

And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD.

Samuel 1:12

vi. As we can see in Nehemiah 1:4, it is the place where met with the Lord.

vii. And likewise for Daniel in Daniel 9.

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

Daniel 9:3

This is the place where Daniel prayed, and notice that it is a place he sought for. It is so important that we realise that the ministry of intercession will require determination and there will be a significant cost to our self-life if we want to enter into it fully. Daniel set his face to engage the face of his God, and he did this through the quality of his prayer and through fasting and wearing sack cloth and ashes. However, look at the response from God:

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel ...

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

Daniel 9:21a,22

As we have seen, therefore, Nehemiah 1, does potentially provide us with an effective blueprint for standing in the gap:

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

However, is this the sacrifice you are willing to make?
This question rests with each one of us.