

THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH PART I

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 24 October 2021

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The message is the first waypoint of salvation

In our last session, we considered the first 'waypoint' of salvation, which is the word proclaiming that 'God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all'.

Through this message, Christ - who is the embodiment of the word, and also the Messenger of God - reveals the fellowship of Yahweh to a hearer.

The word proceeds from this fellowship, calling the hearer to become a son of God, and a member of the body of Christ.

We understood, from the experience of Moses, that a person's reception of this message depends on the appearance and the initial ministry of a messenger, or *aggelos*.

'And the Angel of the Lord [or *aggelos*] there appeared to him [Moses] in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.'

Remember, the angel is the messenger 'before the face of the Lord', and the angel is actually in the 'fire'.

This is the same principle for us. We have an *aggelos*, and their fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

'So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire [this is 'God is Light'], but the bush was not consumed.

'Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." So when the Lord [Yahweh] saw that he turned aside to look, *Elohim* [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."' Exo 3:2-4.

Second waypoint – the Lord sends messengers

There is a progression here. *The angel of the Lord* first appears to a person.

Then, when Moses turned to see the sight of this messenger speaking from the fellowship, which is

the fire of Yahweh's presence, the Lord saw that he had turned, and He spoke to him.

The speaking from Their oneness is Each of the three Persons of the Godhead calling that person to the sonship that has been predestined for them, and calling them to join Their fellowship.

This is *the work of messengers* whom God sends to prepare the hearts of hearers to receive God's Everlasting Covenant.

God's Everlasting Covenant is *the call to be born of Their life and joined to Their fellowship*. That is the second key understanding of this process of salvation.

Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant

So the messenger goes 'before Christ', and Christ proclaims the Everlasting Covenant. That principle of *two messengers* is the second key waypoint of salvation that we have to understand.

Because of the fall of man, Jesus Christ sends a ministry of restoration before His own face to prepare the hearts of a hearer *so that they can receive Jesus Christ Himself*.

He does this so that they are ready to receive Him and His message when He personally *makes Himself known to them*.

This is important. A person is not born because of the messenger who goes before His face. They are born because they *meet* Jesus Christ Himself.

But a person cannot meet Jesus unless a messenger goes to prepare their heart.

This is borne out in many prophetic Scriptures, but we will look at one instance in the book of Malachi.

'Behold, I send *My messenger*, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even *the Messenger of the Covenant*, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.' Mal 3:1-3.

Here we note that there are two messengers.

Christ comes as a refiner's fire

There is one who has been *sent to prepare* the way before the Lord. And then there is the Lord, *the Messenger of the Covenant*, who is coming to His temple - two messengers.

'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap.' Mal 3:2.

Jesus is the Message, 'God is Light'. He is a refiner's fire. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

We know that Jesus has been raised and seated already. This is the work that He is doing now in His seated ministry in the midst of seven lampstands.

'He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.' Mal 3:3.

Christ comes to us as a refiner's fire. God is Light, and we know from John that the second part of the message is, 'In Him is no darkness at all'.

He is not just saying, 'Here's the light and anyone who cannot measure up to that light is "out".'

Rather, he is saying, 'Here is the light, and I am inviting you to the process through which you can be delivered from the darkness that is in you, which is all of your impurities. As one who is born with the divine nature, which is the treasure, you can dwell in this very light that I have come to reveal.'

The first messenger comes before the face of Christ

Our key point for today is that the messenger is sent by God 'before the face of Christ' to prepare the hearts of the hearers to receive Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and the Messenger of the Covenant.

This is our key point, and today we will focus more on *the first messenger*.

This is the one who 'comes before the face of Christ' to prepare our hearts to receive Jesus.

During Christ's earthly ministry, this initial messenger was John the Baptist, and Jesus quoted Malachi's prophecy when He was speaking about the ministry of John the Baptist.

The passage that we have just read from Malachi Chapter 3 is the very passage that Jesus quoted when He was talking about John.

'But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and *more than a prophet*.' Mat 11:9.

So, John had a prophetic ministry, but he was now being elevated, because all of the prophets were *pointing towards* Jesus, but He had not yet come. When John prophesied about Jesus, Jesus was *actually there*.

The real highpoint of John's prophecy, or prophetic work, was when Jesus walked past and John said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' Joh 1:29.

All of the prophets were saying that, but John was there, saying, 'There He is in the flesh!'

'For this is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You".' Mat 11:10.

That is the direct quote from Malachi.

The work of every prophet was to prepare the hearts of the people

Jesus then said that, until John, all of the prophets in the Law had prophesied in this same manner.

This means that John's work was to *reveal* or to *prepare* the hearts of the people to receive the Spirit of Christ; or to receive Christ in the flesh, in the first instance. That was the primary prophetic work of all the prophets, from Abel right through to John.

Through the proclamation of God's word, all of the prophets in the Law, beginning with Abel, went before the face of the Lord to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the Lord and His word.

They were proclaiming, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all.'

How did the prophets of the Lord do this? They obviously did not get up every day and say, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all', did they? So how did they proclaim this message?

The prophets of the Lord did this by *calling the people to turn from their idolatry*.

Think about idolatry as something that a person is worshipping that is 'other than God'. It is sourced from something in us; a desire within us.

They said that idolatry is darkness, and called them to turn from their idolatry to receive deliverance from the oppression of unclean spirits, or familiar spirits, and to be *restored to relationship with the Lord*, through offering.

'God is Light' explains or reveals a fellowship or relationship to which we have been predestined.

John ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah

Having established this point about the work of John the Baptist, and then all of the prophets and the Law who came before John, Jesus then said this about John the Baptist.

'And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!' Mat 11:14-15.

Jesus was not saying in this passage that Elijah had returned to the earth from heaven in the form of John. John was not a reincarnation of Elijah.

Rather, John ministered 'in the spirit and power of Elijah'. This was the same spirit in which the prophets before John had ministered.

So, it was not a spirit that was unique only to John and to Elijah. The spirit and power of Elijah is a form of ministry, or a work, that goes before the Lord to call people to be restored to relationship with Him.

The angel of the Lord, who prophesied of John's birth, made it very clear that John was not Elijah who had come back down or that he was a reincarnation of Elijah.

'And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God [so there's a turning here]. He will also go before Him [that's 'go before the Lord'] in the spirit and power of 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.' Luk 1:16-17.

By hearing John's message, the hearts of fathers would be turned to their children, and the disobedient would be turned to the wisdom of the just.

The first effect of the word is repentance

We tend to focus on 'the fathers to children, children to fathers, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just', but the focus is first on 'turning'.

The first effect of the word that is proclaimed through the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah is the capacity for repentance. And the outcome of that repentance is fathers turning to sons, sons turning to fathers, the disobedient turning to wisdom.

It is the ministry of repentance that is the effect of the word of the spirit and power of Elijah, so that the hearts of those who have ears to hear will be *prepared to receive Jesus*.

He is the Messenger through whom they will receive the adoption, and can then be born as a son of God.

The spirit and power of Elijah is the ministry of grace and supplication

Now, the spirit and power of Elijah is the ministry of grace and supplication that causes a person to look on Jesus, who is lifted up on the cross. This is an amazing point, and this is fresh to us all.

The spirit and power of Elijah is the ministry of the spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from Jesus' side after His offering was finished, and a spear was thrust into His side.

How do we know that? It is because Zechariah told us that the Lord would pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, and would cause us to look on Jesus whom we pierced. Zec 12:10.

The work of those who minister in the spirit and power of Elijah is to cause a person to look on that very thing. They go before the face of the messenger to call them to turn and look at Him.

That is what happened with Moses, and that was also the work of John the Baptist. That is the work of everyone who is joined to that *fellowship*, or that *messenger administration*.

A person who is ministering in the spirit and power of Elijah is actually in that fellowship. They are in 'the fire' of that fellowship.

That is how Christ has been 'publicly portrayed as crucified' through their ministry and, as they speak, the spirit of grace and supplication causes a hearer to look on Jesus whom they pierced.

Meeting Christ heart to heart

The spirit and power of Elijah is the ministry of grace and supplication that causes a person to look on Jesus, who is lifted up on the cross.

As they receive this word that causes them to look on Jesus, their heart is breached. Their heart is broken.

Their heart is broken by the word of those who minister in the spirit and power of Elijah. It causes a breach on their heart, because that effect of their word causes the hearer to look on Jesus whom they have pierced.

When they see that piercing, their heart is breached. As a person's heart is breached, it is laid 'before the eyes of Him to whom they must give an account'. Heb 4:13.

Now, this is an important step. They do not give an account to the messenger.

They now give an account to Christ, whose eyes are searching their heart; but His eyes are searching their heart *through the word* that has been proclaimed to them.

Now they are meeting Christ eye to eye and heart to heart.

This work of the spirit and power of Elijah, as the ministry of grace and supplication, causing a person to look on Him whom they pierced, was also described by Malachi in his prophetic book.

This is the very passage that Jesus quoted in Matthew Chapter 11 verse 14.

This highlights Jesus' explanation of how John's ministry would work, and how this ministry of Elijah operates.

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet [and if you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come] before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' Mal 4:5.

The great and dreadful day of the Lord

We might have thought previously that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is the day of His final judgement of the whole world at the end of the age. And it is; but not in the first instance.

'The great and dreadful day of the Lord' is *the day of Christ's crucifixion*, because when Jesus' offering was finished, everything was finished.

The whole of the old creation was judged and destroyed. The whole of the new creation was brought forth.

And there was nothing left as an outcome of that offering, except *God and His life*. God is Light, and everyone who is joined to that light is part of that new creation.

The great and dreadful day of the Lord that the spirit and power of Elijah is ministering, to go before and to draw people to, is not the final judgement.

Well, it is the final judgement, because the final judgement was *on the cross*. What happens at the end is what has already been *finished*, and fully resolved.

So the great and dreadful day of the Lord is Christ, and Him crucified.

That is what John the Baptist proclaimed. He came before that, pointing towards the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

That is what it means in the first instance.

The spirit and power of Elijah continues to minister to all men

That spirit and power of Elijah continues now as *part of the messenger administration*.

So it is also the reality that the spirit and power of Elijah ministers the word of the cross, so that their hearers are drawn to that offering.

Every person is being drawn to the cross - from the beginning of humanity, right through to its conclusion. Everyone is drawn to meet Christ. This is the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

He has completed all the works of our sonship

When we come to the cross through the ministry of the word of the cross, we are all given the opportunity to obtain all that Jesus has *finished* for us.

When He finished His offering on the cross, He finished it all. He completed the judgement that belongs to every one of us. He also finished all of the works of sonship, and multiplied the life that belongs to each person's individual sonship.

All of it was finished in Him on the cross. And we are all joined to the cross to make a *choice* as to

whether we will obtain what He has finished for us - in judgement or in blessing.

The word proclaims both blessing and curse

Malachi continued, 'And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:6.

There are two things at work here.

'The turning of the hearts of the fathers to children, and the children to the fathers' is the fruit of the word of the cross, bringing 'the blessing of Abraham', which is *the promise of the Spirit*.

The promise of the Spirit is to be born of the Spirit and joined to the fellowship of one Spirit with Yahweh. That promise belongs to all the families of the earth.

So the ministry of the Elijah comes proclaiming the word of the cross through which *judgement and blessing is all finished*.

It proclaims that, so that those who receive this word either receive that *blessing* which is promised to all the families of the earth in Abraham; or they are struck, as part of the earth, with a *curse*.

That curse is the curse of being cut off forever from the fellowship. That is 'outer darkness'.

The one word proclaims both of these outcomes.

The action of the sword is progressive

This turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers is achieved through the effect of the word of the cross, which is 'a sword'. It is the same sword that was in the hands of the cherubim who guarded the way into the garden of Eden; to the tree of life.

It is a 'two-edged' sword; and the effect of that sword either brings blessing to a person or cuts a person out of that fellowship, and condemns them, under the curse, to eternal separation.

It is the same word, the same sword - but there are two implications.

Remember, 'I will cause the hearts of the fathers to *turn* to their children and the children to *turn* to their fathers'.

The sword either causes a person to turn to live and to progressively walk in the way of life; or it

causes the curse of the Lord to be progressively applied to the life and house of a person.

The point is that the action of the sword is not immediate and final.

The effect of the sword is reflective of the principle of the seed. Whatever is *sown* will *progressively come to pass*.

The word makes a breach on hearts and 'houses'

Speaking of this effect of the sword, Jesus said, 'Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' Mat 10:34-36.

This appears to be a contradiction. On the one hand, it is supposed to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, But, on the other hand, Jesus said, 'I have come to set them over and against each other.'

How do we understand the resolution of this? 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me [He is coming to make a breach on what we value most]. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

'And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who *loses his life for My sake will find it*.' Mat 10:37-39.

The outcome of this ministry is that the word of the cross, which is a sword, makes a breach on the hearts and 'houses' of those who hear it.

It can cause the curse to enter the life and house of a person because of their resistance to the word, and their unwillingness to forsake everything to obtain that ground and treasure, which is Christ. Those who reject this message are being progressively destroyed.

Every person has to mourn alone

In the church, it is evident in those who are becoming weak and sick, and are dying spiritually under the judgement of God.

So we see the importance of our 'discerning the body of Christ'.

The way that we are able to see the body, which is Christ, is by receiving the word of the cross, which is a sword, coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, delivering us from our own fallen capacity for love, and causing us to turn and to discern the body.

Remember, the ministry in the spirit and power of Elijah goes before His face, causing us to *look on Him*.

This is where the sword has the effect of delivering us from our darkened way of understanding ourselves and others, and enables us to receive the light by which we are then able to obtain the blessing that is promised in Jesus.

That is the capacity for *reconciliation and restoration*.

The curse of the Law entering the life and house that belongs to those who reject the word is bad, and that is not what the Lord wants for us.

We are those who are hearing His word and wanting to enter in to His life. For those who draw near as the word is coming, every person has to mourn alone.

That is the impact of the sword as it comes into our lives and our families. That is what Jesus was saying.

He was making a division. And every individual has to meet this word alone so that they can then meet others; not from the basis of their own self-centredness, but from the same basis of *agape* love in which Yahweh lives in His fellowship.

We actually receive that *agape* fellowship in our heart.

Those who draw near and mourn alone begin to be washed by the word, and to be delivered from the iniquity in their heart and from the familiar spirits that oppress them.

Progressively taken out or made alive

What was achieved by Christ, through His 'once for all' offering, is being progressively realised in the hearer's life, depending on how they receive the Lord's messengers.

There are two key points.

One is that what has been *finished* will be *progressively revealed or realised in a person's life*.

Then, they will either be progressively taken out, or will progressively walk in Christ and be made alive from glory to glory, into His image.

It is progressive, but it has to do with *how we respond to the word*.

The treasure becomes our possession

We have spoken about John the Baptist and this ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah.

Jesus described John the Baptist as 'the greatest man who had been born of a woman', because he had been sent to prepare the way before Christ, who 'became flesh and dwelt among them'.

That is an amazing statement to say about anyone, isn't it? When Jesus said, 'John the Baptist was the greatest born of a woman,' we may think about some of the people who were born before John.

There was Moses, David, Daniel; all the ones whom we can list - and yet John was the greatest of them all.

All those heroes of faith, all those men and women of faith, were pointing toward and desiring for Jesus to come. However, *John's* prophetic word was to say, 'That's Him! There! Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' So John was the greatest who has ever been born of a woman.

And then Jesus said a most amazing thing. 'But he who is *least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*.' Mat 11:11.

He was stating that John had *the promise* of the divine nature, *the promise* of sonship as an adoption. And all of those in faith had that as well.

But, for a person who has *entered the kingdom*, that promise has become *their possession*.

Everyone who is born of God is a *new creation*. The treasure that everyone previously was looking for, and pointing towards, has already become our possession.

That is true for our littlest ones, right through to those whom the Lord has established to proclaim the word in a particular way - the ascension gift grace ministries.

From the least to the greatest, all of them are greater than John the Baptist, because the

treasure, or the promise, has become their possession.

A hearer of the word becomes part of the messenger administration

Jesus said this because those who have entered the kingdom of heaven are *born of God* and are *joined to the fellowship of His body*. They are able to bear witness to Christ as those who themselves have received the promised blessing that the Old Testament prophets had directed their hearers to believe for.

In this regard, the apostle Peter recorded, 'Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

'To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you [those who are ministering the least, which is greater than John the Baptist] by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, things which angels desire to look into.' 1Pe 1:10-12.

This messenger administration, the least of which is greater than John the Baptist, is first described as 'a star in the right hand of Christ'. These are the presbyteries of lampstand churches.

The messenger administration that was established by Christ, which continues in the spirit and power of Elijah, is a star that is in the right hand of Christ.

It then applies to every person, from the least to the greatest, who receives their message and is joined to their fellowship, because their fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

It starts with the star, which is a presbytery. They proclaim the word, and everyone who receives that word is joined to their fellowship, and also becomes *part of that messenger administration, bearing witness to Jesus*.

Jesus established His messenger administration on the day of His resurrection

We will discuss the broader 'house to house' dimension of the messenger in our next session. Today, we will focus on the messenger administration that Jesus established as a star in His hand.

Jesus established His messenger administration *on the day of His resurrection*. On that evening, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the upper room.

'Then, the same day at evening [the day of His resurrection], being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.'

The disciples, before they could be born of God, had to interface again with Him whom they had pierced, but they did not recoil.

'Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord [They delighted; they did not recoil. They saw Jesus, even though He had come and revealed the injuries which they, in part, had caused.]

'So Jesus said to them again [He revealed Himself as the One who was injured. They saw Him and rejoiced.], "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

'And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained".' Joh 20:19-23.

Born from above and regenerated by the Holy Spirit

When Jesus said to His disciples, 'As the Father has sent Me, I also send you', they were being called to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings as messengers.

He had been sent as the Messenger of the Covenant, and He had come to the temple, and He said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. I am talking about My body.'

That was what John said of Jesus.

They were being sent in the same way 'as the Father has sent Me'. They would now proclaim

this message as those who were joined to the same fellowship of offering.

As they received this call, *they received Him*. And *He breathed on them*, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Joh 20:22.

By this means, they were *regenerated* in the inner man, and they were *born of God* from above.

They were now established as part of a *messenger administration or fellowship*, through which the word of the Son would be ministered from heaven. Heb 12:25.

A witness has the spirit and power of Elijah

Later, before Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, He said to the disciples that they would receive power to minister as His messengers when they were baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Remember that Peter stated that the proclamation of the gospel was by the Holy Spirit who was sent down from heaven.

In this regard, Jesus promised, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' Act 1:8.

A 'witness' is someone who proclaims the word, causing a person to look and see Jesus. They are being established in the same ministry as the spirit and power of Elijah. That is what it means to be a witness.

Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the twelve disciples were established as the twelve *foundations* of the bride city.

As we noted earlier, the effect of the ministry of Elijah is that the word of the cross, which we have already established is a sword, is applied to the hearts of those who hear the message.

In this regard, what Jesus has finished for a person, in either judgement or blessing, is available to them depending on how they receive the Elijah ministry.

It is not the role of a messenger to forgive or not forgive

In this regard, it is not the messengers who tell people that they are forgiven or not forgiven. Nor do they 'lock up' people on earth and in heaven with the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

We are not saying that the presbytery, which is a messenger administration in the hand of Christ, does not have the keys of heaven. Rather, it is important that we understand what those keys are and how they work.

It is not the role of a messenger to say to a person 'You have been forgiven', or 'You have not been forgiven', depending on whether we make some judgement on how penitent the person has been.

The work of the messenger is to proclaim the word of the cross, and that word affects the finished work of Christ in their life, depending on how they receive it.

This is a huge mindset shift.

So what did Jesus mean when He said to the messengers in His hand, 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained?'

Now, Jesus *did* say that, and we need to understand what Jesus meant. Joh 20:23.

And we need to understand what He meant when He said, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Mat 16:19.

The important thing to understand is how those keys work. What are the keys and how do they operate?

The first key of the kingdom is the word of the cross

The first point to note is that there are *multiple keys*. He said, 'I will give you the keys [plural] of the kingdom.'

We will look at the first key today. The first key of the kingdom is *the word of the cross*, and that key is like a sword.

This word of the cross is a sword revealing that *God is light and in Him is no darkness*.

By rejecting the word of the cross, people are progressively locking themselves up under the curse of the Law.

The word being proclaimed is a sword that reveals the finished work - what was completely finished in judgement and in sonship - through the offering of Christ.

That word has been proclaimed, and every person is being drawn to respond to that word. How they respond to the word will determine the effect of that key in their life.

It will either 'lock' them up, because He has already *finished the curse*, which is exclusion to outer darkness; or it will 'unlock' them, releasing them to join Him in the fellowship of His offering, by which they are progressively becoming light in the Lord.

However, it is not the case of someone saying to a person that they are 'light' or that they are 'dark'. Neither is it God saying to a messenger, 'Go and speak to that one and say that they are damned; and go and speak to that one and say they are blessed.'

It is saying, 'Go and proclaim the word of the cross' - and how a person interfaces with the word of the cross will result in an outcome.

The word is a key that locks or unlocks, depending on our response

By rejecting the word of the cross, people are progressively locking themselves up under the curse of the Law.

Equally and wonderfully true, those who *do not draw back from the word of the cross* - because it can be confronting - but, rather, who obtain faith for obedience, are being released from their bondage to sin.

One is locking something up; the other thing is unlocking it.

They are being released from their bondage to sin and are being established on a pathway of sanctification, through which they are progressively obtaining the sonship that Jesus has already perfected for them.

That is, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified because they continue to walk in the light of that fiery sword. Heb 10:24.

Significantly, the word is living and powerful and requires *a response*. No-one escapes the expectation of a response to the word of the cross.

Jesus said, 'If I am lifted up, I will draw *all men* to Myself.' *Everyone* has to interface with this finished work.

And it is important to note that a person's ambivalence, which just means 'shrugging their

shoulders', and saying, 'I can take it or leave it', in response to the word of the cross, is a response. It is a response.

The obvious responses are complete rejection or complete acceptance. But ambivalence toward it is a response, and Jesus said, 'That lukewarm response I hated more than even the cold response.' Rev 3:16. Ambivalence, or 'I can just take or leave this', has no more merit than outright rejection.

In relation to that response, the word progressively achieves what it was sent for. It is a *two-edged* sword, and it achieves what it is sent for; and it is sent for *judgement*, and it is sent for *blessing*.

That is an amazing principle.

The key is in the ministry of the word

In the end, we have the choice as to whether we will reject that word, in which case it actions a progressive removal; or whether we progressively receive that word and are being sanctified to what has been *finished* for us.

The point is that the 'keys' are *in the ministry of the word*. People either imprison themselves or find deliverance through their *response* to the word.

This is why John the Baptist said, concerning the ministry of Elijah, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'

That was the very same thing that Jesus said in His letters to the seven churches for the whole of the church age. 'He who has ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, let them hear, so that they can obtain the salvation that is coming in that word.'

The most acute and powerful form of imprisonment is where we believe that *our darkened perspective*, which is affirmed by our detached, judgmental or even ambivalent engagement with the word, is light.

A darkened perspective is where we reserve the right to make a judgement about the word.

On what basis do we make that judgement? Is it on the basis of the Law of love?

No; it is by *another law*. And as we continue to do that and to interface with the word on that basis, our perspective becomes increasingly darkened.

This is an amazing thing; that the more we do this, the more the word is being proclaimed to us, and the more we interface in that way, the more we are being locked up, imprisoned, to our darkened perspective.

Jesus said that, 'If the light that is in you [the light is our own understanding of the gospel] is actually darkness, how great is that darkness?' Mat 6:23.

It is a complete prison. The word cannot actually enter.

There comes a day when a person's response is manifest

The point is that the word keeps being proclaimed as keys, and how we respond to it will either cause us to harden against the word and become locked up; or it will cause us to be progressively *delivered from our own understanding* to walk in the light of the word.

Even as we deviate in our walk, the Lord can break in and cause us to turn again. That is a great mercy!

The point is, though, that there comes a day where the reality of a person's walk is manifest.

The messengers do not make any judgement about any person. Their work is to *be obedient to what the Spirit is saying, proclaiming from a fellowship*. And the word *is* being proclaimed.

However, on a day when something is manifest, and it is evident that it is darkness in our life, the messenger has no more obligation to speak to that or to engage it.

It is what it is, and we just leave that. And we continue to proclaim to those who have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying.

What is the answer to this? We can see it in judgement, but we are not of 'those who draw back in unbelief'. Heb 10:39.

That is a beautiful statement from Paul. And I trust that the fact that all of us are here proclaiming the word and fellowshiping in it, demonstrates that we do love His word.

Having faith as a little child

The answer, of course, to the key being the word of the cross and unlocking us to sonship, is for us to *humble ourselves* and to *receive the word with the faith and trust of a little child*.

Jesus said, 'Unless you have faith as a little child, you will by no means inherit.' Mar 10:15.

James addressed this, and said that the one who has faith like a little child is one who humbles themselves.

'But He gives more grace [the prevenient grace of God that comes in the word that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah]. Therefore [because that is true] He says, "God resists the proud".'

'Resisting of the proud' occurs where the word comes, and the proud *judge* that word and their heart hardens. It is being locked up. That is the resistance of God.

'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' *Grace* brings the ability for all that would get in the way of our response to be removed so that we can choose life and not death.

'Therefore [because that's true] submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.' Jas 4:6-8.

Having clean hands and a pure heart; not swearing deceitfully

This passage about cleansing your hands is actually from Psalm 24 verses 3 to 6.

'Who may ascend into *the hill of the Lord*?' Psa 24:3. That is where *He is*; that is where *His fellowship is*. He is asking, 'Who is going to come and join that fellowship?' That is all of us who are hearing this word, isn't it?

'Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.' Psa 24:3-4.

It is those who are having *their hands washed in the water of the word* so that they can be put to work according to the will of God, in Christ.

'A pure heart' belongs to those who have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, because they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

'Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.'

A person who 'swears deceitfully' is not merely necessarily trying to trick others. Rather, they

confess that they are a follower of Christ, but the light within them is darkness.

They do so from *the basis of their own perspective*. They are *deceived*. And the more that they walk in their deception, the more they deceive others.

In the end, they are worshipping an idol; something that is not real. It is merely their imagination.

‘He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.’ Psa 24:5.

This means that he will obtain the sonship that Christ has perfected for him through His offering on the cross.

‘This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.’ Psa 24:6.

This prophetic psalm is according to the spirit and power of Elijah. It is calling us to the process through which we can have cleansed hands and a purified heart, so that we can see His face and can enter His fellowship.