



Heroic

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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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PART 1¹

Introduction

4¹ “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the Lord of armies, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branches. ² But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and frolic like calves from the stall. ³ And you will crush the wicked underfoot, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I am preparing,” says the Lord of armies. ⁴ “Remember the Law of Moses My servant, the statutes, and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. ⁵ “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of

¹ PART 1 discusses interpretation of prophetic scriptures, and specifically interpretations of “The Period of Restoration”. This discussion is “doctrinal”. If one is just willing to “blindly” accept and abide my perspective (which I don’t recommend), you can skip over PART 1. PART 2 discusses spiritual “children” and “fathers” throughout biblical history and the present generation. PART 3 contains “the burden of the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:36) which has inspired the writing of the whole article.

the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with complete destruction."² Malachi 4:1-6³

This is the Lord's closing statement in the Old Testament. What followed is the *"Intertestamental Period"*, also known as *"The 400 Years of Silence"*, in which the Spirit of the Lord continued working, but ceased giving prophetic word. It was a period of judgment in which the Lord sent *"a famine for hearing the words of the Lord"*.⁴

The Lord's "parting words" to Israel, so to speak, were: *"Between now and 'the day of the Lord',⁵ remember My Law, and look for the coming of Elijah, who will bring a restoration⁶."* What intrigues me is how the Holy Spirit chose to communicate the nature of this restoration to Malachi: *"He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."* When Luke references John the Baptist as the one who is fulfilling

² *"The Masorites, who have given us most of the copies of the Hebrew Old Testament we have, were so bothered by this that they repeated the next-to-the-last verse of Malachi after the last verse. Similarly, the Septuagint reverses the last two verses so the Old Testament ends, not with a curse, but with a blessing."* (James Boice)

³ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*. All word studies involving Old Testament words in Greek are based in *The Apostolic Bible Polyglot* translation, which is keyed with the *Strong's Hebrew / Greek Lexicons*.

⁴ Cf. Amos 8

⁵ When Messiah will come, defeat all enemies, and establish His Kingdom.

⁶ Jeremiah 16:15, 30:3,18, 33:7-9, 48:6; Ezekiel 16:53-63; Amos 9:14-15; Joel 3:1-2; Zephaniah 3:20

Malachi's prophecy, the description of the restoration varies slightly:

16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:16-17)⁷

The specification of turning "*the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous*", or as other translations have it - turning "*the disobedient to the understanding and wisdom of the righteous*", I believe gives us an indication that this was not merely some kind of "bridging the generation gap" between parents and children, but rather a collective repentance – *a turning around of a people and a turning back of their hearts to their God*. The reference to "fathers" in Malachi and Luke is a reference to *the Jewish patriarchs*; and the reference to "children" is to *the Jewish people as a whole*. In fulfillment of this prophecy, what we see John the Baptist doing confirms he was sent to affect *a turning around of a people and a turning back of their hearts to their God*.

⁷ "**The disobedient** - Or unbelieving, *απειθεῖς*, the persons who would no longer credit the predictions of the prophets, relative to the manifestation of the Messiah." (Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible)

- He was preaching repentance to crowds of people, including tax collectors and soldiers – not just to “fathers”. (Luke 1:7-14)
- His message and ministry were radical – that is, “laying an axe” at the very ROOT of Jewish faith. (Luke 1:8-9)
- The prophet Isaiah described John the Baptist’s ministry as cataclysmic. (Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 1:4-6)

I concur with Adam Clarke’s commentary on the passage:

*“To turn the hearts of the fathers - Gross ignorance had taken place in the hearts of the Jewish people; they needed a Divine instructor: John is announced as such; by this preaching and manner of life, all classes among the people should be taught the nature of their several places, and the duties respectively incumbent upon them.... **To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.** By a very expressive figure of speech, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs, are represented here as having their hearts alienated from the Jews, their children, because of their unbelief and disobedience; but that the Baptist should so far succeed in converting them to the Lord their God, that these holy men should again look upon them with delight and acknowledge them for their children.”*

A Prophetic Paradigm

In the closing chapter of Malachi, as well as, in other passages in both the Old and New Testaments, we see that A RESORATION WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD. I am going to refer to this as *A Prophetic Paradigm*, where there is FIRST “restoration”, THEN “the Day of the Lord”. This paradigm is seen in Joel 2.

A Proclamation of the Coming Day of the Lord:

vv. 1-11

The Terrible Visitation

2:1 *Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming.
Surely it is near,
2 A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
So, there is a great and mighty people.
There has never been anything like it,*

*Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.
3 A fire consumes before them
And behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them
But a desolate wilderness behind them,
And nothing at all escapes them.
4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses.
And like war horses, so they run.
5 With a noise as of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.
6 Before them the people are in anguish.
All faces turn pale.
7 They run like mighty men,
They climb the wall like soldiers.
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.
8 They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path.
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.
9 They rush on the city,
They run on the wall.
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.
10 Before them the earth quakes,*

*The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
11 The LORD utters His voice before His army.
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?*

A Call to Repentance: vv. 12-17

*12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning.
13 And rend your heart and not your garments."
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
And relenting of evil.
14 Who knows whether He will not turn and relent
And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?
15 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,
16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,*

*Gather the children and the nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom come out of his room
And the bride out of her bridal chamber.
17 Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers,
Weep between the porch and the altar,
And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,
A byword among the nations.
Why should they among the peoples say,
'Where is their God?'"*

A Promise of Restoration: vv. 18-27

Deliverance Promised

*18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land
And will have pity on His people.
19 The LORD will answer and say to His people,
"Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied in full with them.
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.
20 "But I will remove the northern army far from you,
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
And its rear guard into the western sea.
And its stench will arise, and its foul smell will come up,
For it has done great things."*

*21 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the LORD has done great things.*

*22 Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.*

*23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication.
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.*

*24 The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.*

*25 “Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.*

*26 “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you.
Then My people will never be put to shame.*

*27 “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am the LORD your God,
And there is no other.
And My people will never be put to shame.*

The Fulfillment of a Covenant Blessing: vv.28-29

The Promise of the Spirit

28 *“It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
29 “Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

The Day of the Lord: vv. 30-32

The Day of the LORD

30 *“I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire, and columns of smoke.
31 “The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Will be delivered;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As the LORD has said,*

Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.⁸

So, in this prophecy we see the following **Prophetic Paradigm**:

- *A Proclamation of the Coming Day of the Lord*
- *A Call to Repentance*
- *A Promised Restoration with The Fulfillment of a Covenant –
Blessing*

The point of this article is to communicate the possibility of such a paradigm taking place BEFORE the Day of the Lord – the 2nd Coming of Christ.

⁸ For the sake of brevity, I will forego any exposition of Joel 2, and just let the scripture speak for itself to each reader. My intention is to merely display the prophetic paradigm inherent in the prophecy.

Prophetic Fulfillments

Typological, Multiple, Progressive

There are various schools of thought with regards to fulfillment of biblical prophecies:

- **Preterist View**: Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled in the past – usually not long after the prophecy was delivered. (“Full Preterists believe ALL prophecies have been fulfilled. “Partial” Preterists believe MOST prophecies have been fulfilled.)
- **Futurist View**: The majority of biblical prophecies will be fulfilled in the future.
- **Historicist View**: Biblical prophecies are historical records, the fulfillments of which unfold throughout the course of history.
- **Spiritual (aka “Idealist” or “Symbolic” View)**: Biblical prophecies speak of transcendent spiritual realities which are repeatedly being played throughout history like a drama involving God, Satan, God’s angels, Fallen angels, the Church, and the World System.⁹

⁹ For a more in-depth treatment of these four views, see my article: “*The Gospel of The Lion & The Lamb*”, <https://www.AtChristsTable.org>, or

Typological Fulfillment

Biblical Typology is Holy Spirit-inspired symbolism¹⁰ “signifying”¹¹ something in the Old Testament which is more clearly revealed in the New Testament.¹² We can define a “type” as a *prophetic symbol*, because all types are representations of something yet future. More specifically, a type in Scripture is a person or thing in the Old Testament that foreshadows a person or thing in the New Testament.¹³ Some biblical prophecies are Old Testament types which have fulfillments in the New Testament.

Multiple / Progressive Fulfillments

There can be multiple fulfillments of some biblical prophecies: Some can have both a “figurative” meaning, as well as a literal

<https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/PDF/Gospel-Lion-Lamb-Part-1.pdf> These four are the major schools of thought for most Evangelical theologians and Christians. Those adherents of a more “liberal” theology purport a “Literary-Analytical” approach which is based on the false assumption that prophecies are, in fact, not divinely inspired, but merely humanly inspired. Therefore, any supposed intended meaning of the Holy Spirit and the prophet can be disregarded. And the meaning of various prophecies is determined by identifying the various human sources and the supposed historical agendas they hoped to accomplish through disseminating the prophecies.

¹⁰ A symbol is something that represents something else. Hebrews 9:8-9.

¹¹ Revelation 1:1. Greek: *semaino*, Strong’s # 4591, “signify” (NKJV)

¹² Colossians 2:17

¹³ The word, “allegory”, is also used by the apostle, Paul in Galatians 4:24, Greek: *allegoreo*, Strong’s # 238.

meaning. And some can have both an early fulfillment and an End Time fulfillment. I believe that some biblical prophecies have been fulfilled, are being fulfilled, will be fulfilled. With this perspective – namely a “PROGRESSIVE FULFILLMENT” perspective – one can see truth in each of the schools of prophetic interpretation – Preterist, Historicist, Futurist, and Spiritual.

Joel's Prophecy

The apostle Peter clearly explained that what took place on the Day of Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

*¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the other eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, know this, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you assume, since it is only the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but **this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel:***

*¹⁷ ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says,
‘That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and your daughters will prophesy,
And your young men will see visions,
And your old men will have dreams;*

*¹⁸ And even on My male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days,*

And they will prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will display wonders in the sky above

And signs on the earth below,

Blood, fire, and vapor of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned into darkness

And the moon into blood,

Before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes.

²¹ And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Acts 2:14-21, 38-39

In Acts 2:17 and 20 we see:

- *A Proclamation of the Coming Day of the Lord*

In Acts 2:38 we see:

- *A Call to Repentance*

In Acts 2:17-18, 21, 38-39 we see:

- *A Promised Restoration with a Fulfillment of a Covenant Blessing*

But was this a COMPLETE FULFILLMENT of Joel's prophecy?

On the Day of Pentecost, we do NOT see the signs in nature mentioned in Acts 2:19-20. Could those verses be a reference to “the Day of the Lord” in the sense of His “coming” to Jerusalem in the form of the Roman armies and their destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D.? Possibly, but other scripture passages indicate it is much more likely a clear reference to the FINAL Day of the Lord, For example, Zephaniah 1:14-18:

*¹⁴ “The great day of the Lord is near,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the Lord!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.*

*¹⁵ That day is a day of anger,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,*

*¹⁶ A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.*

*¹⁷ I will bring distress on mankind
So that they will walk like those who are blind,
Because they have sinned against the Lord;
And their blood will be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like dung.*

¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold

*Will be able to save them
On the day of the Lord's anger;
And all the earth will be devoured
By the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a horrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth."*

Another example is Luke 21:25-28:

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting from fear and the expectation of the things that are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

So, we can anticipate ANOTHER, MORE COMPLETE, PROGRESSIVE FULFILLMENT of Joel's prophecy in the future.

Malachi's Prophecy

It is a historical fact that what Malachi prophesied Of Elijah and the Christ was fulfilled in the first century by John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. This is what Luke wrote concerning was John the Baptist:

¹⁶ And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1:16-17

Jesus of Nazareth confirmed John the Baptist as the prophetic fulfillment of this:

¹⁴ “And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 11:14-15

And a little later in Matthew's gospel Jesus said:

¹¹ “Elijah (John the Baptist) is coming and will restore all things, ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also, the Son of Man is going to

suffer at their hands.”¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.” Matthew 17:11-13

In verse 11, Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist and Himself had been sent to affect a restoration in Israel. And in verse 13, Matthew tells us that the disciples believed that John the Baptist’s coming was a fulfillment of that prophecy.¹⁴

So, in Luke 1:17 and Matthew 11:14 we see:

- *A Reference to the Coming Day of the Lord*

In Luke 1:16 and Matthew 17:12 we see:

- *A Reference to a Need for Repentance*

In Matthew 17:11 we see:

- *A Reference to a Restoration*

The ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth brought an end to the Old Covenant. Then through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit - the promised Covenant Blessing - the New Covenant was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost. Both John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth successfully carried out what God had

¹⁴ It is true that, initially, Peter, James, and John did think Elijah had “come” when he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. But Jesus did not confirm this as a fulfillment of the prophecy. Elijah’s “coming” on the mount did not “turn the hearts” of any Jewish people except possibly Peter, James, and John.

sent them to do and effected a restoration in Israel. But the fact is, this visitation was embraced by relatively few people in Israel. Jesus also points out that John the Baptist and He were largely rejected:

“... but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also, the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.” Matthew 17:12-13

And in Mark’s record we see Jesus also posing a question:

*“And He said to them, “Elijah does come **first**, and he restores all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?” Mark 9:12*

I believe that through this question Jesus indicates that while there was a fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy, there is a future fulfillment of this prophecy in which something – or someone - will come (again) *“in the spirit and power of Elijah”* for **ANOTHER, PROGRESSIVE FULFILLMENT of the prophecy – namely, **A MORE COMPLETE RESTORATION.****

Having said this, I must also say: The restoration brought through John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth did not win EVERY Jew in Israel – in fact, relatively few. Never-the-less, the work of God’s Spirit is PERFECT and COMPLETE.¹⁵ It does not need validation by great numbers of people. What God does is one thing. Humanity’s response is another thing. The scriptures indicate that, whether Gentile or Jew, only A REMNANT will be saved.¹⁶ If there is another John the Baptist / Elijah ministry preceding and preparing the way for the return of Christ in the future, it may – or may not – effect “a great harvest of souls”. *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”*¹⁷ Even after *“the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom as a testimony to all the nations”*,¹⁸ we have no idea about how large the Remnant will be.¹⁹ Never-the-less, I believe we can look for more “times of refreshing” and “the period of restoration” BEFORE the Day of the Lord – the 2nd Coming of Christ. This article is investigating the possible future fulfillment of this prophecy and the ESSENCE of the RESTORATION.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 22:31; Psalm 18:30

¹⁶ Isaiah 6:13, 10:20-22; Romans 9:28-29, 11:26.

¹⁷ Matthew 22:14

¹⁸ Matthew 24:14

¹⁹ Cf. “Who has believed our report?... They did not all believe the gospel.” Isaiah 52:1; John 12:38; Romans 10:16.

I believe the RESTORATION will have more to do with CHARACTER than numbers.

“The Period of Restoration”

“... *times of refreshing* may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until *the period of restoration* of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Acts 3:19b-21

Instead of “*the period of restoration*”, some translations render the phrase “*times of restoration*” - like “*times of refreshing*”. I think both renderings are valid. But actually, the Greek word is *chronos*²⁰, which can be translated “times”, in that it does not indicate one fixed event (that would be *kairos*²¹), but rather, it indicates a *space* of time or a *period* of time, akin to *aion*²², in which there are could be *multiple events*.²³ **So there is a “period of restoration”**

²⁰ Strong’s # 5550

²¹ Strong’s # 2540

²² Strong’s # 165

²³ However, I also maintain that with His return (1 Corinthians 15:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10) on “*THE DAY OF THE LORD*” (2 Peter 3:4, 10, 12), Christ will complete the restoration (1 Corinthians 15:24, 28), in fact accomplishing a number of things all at “*THE END*” (1 Corinthians 15:24) – namely, the destruction of Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet, Death and Hades (Revelation 20:10, 14), abolishing all enemies, rule, authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:22-24), creating a new heavens and earth (Romans 8:23; 2 Peter 3:13, 20), the “*Resurrection*

comprised of a number of spiritual seasons, in which various spiritual realities are “restored” to God’s people.

Refreshings and Restorings

The Greek word translated “refreshing” in this passage is *anapsuxis*.²⁴ According to Greek scholars, Strong and Vine, it can also mean “relief”, or “recovery” or “revival”. This article is not dealing with “revival”, but rather with “Restoration”.

The Greek word translated “restoration” in this passage is *apokatastasis*²⁵ - *apo*, “back again”, and *kathistemi*, “to set in order” – “to set back in order again”. According to Greek scholars, Strong and Vine, alternative translations might be “restitution”, “reconstitution”, or “mend”. And interestingly, the word is associated with HEALTH – namely, being restored to a former condition of HEALTH. I believe this Restoration has to do with THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION of God’s people – restoring

of Life” for “those who are Christ’s” (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:23), the “Resurrection of Judgment” for “those who do not know God, and “do not obey the gospel”, i.e. “ungodly people”, whose “names are not found written in the Book of Life” (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 20:15).

²⁴ Strong’s # 403

²⁵ Strong’s # 605

them, as it were, back to SPIRITUAL HEALTH in their hearts and lives.

Great Harvest? Or Great Heroes?

In Malachi 4:4-6, as well as in Matthew 17:11 and Mark 9:12, we see that A RESORATION WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD.

I believe Jesus made reference to this Restoration when He was to be baptized by John saying - "*in order to fulfill all righteousness*" (John 3:15)

The apostle Peter mentioned it on the Day of Pentecost ...

"... times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Acts 3:19b-21

The apostle James also referred to it ...

*“God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘after these things, I will return, and I will **rebuild** the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will **rebuild** its ruins, and I will **restore** it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the gentiles who are called by My name.’” Acts 15:14b-17*

The situation in Acts 15 is the apostle James addressing the Church in Jerusalem on THE ISSUE OF NEW GENTILE CONVERTS to Christ. Bear in mind that Christianity was known as “The Way”²⁶, and was considered a particular sect of Judaism.²⁷ In this passage, James was offering some very initial considerations regarding new Gentile converts to Christ. That is what Acts 15 is about. Moreover, from my study of the Early Church, I do not have the impression that the early Jewish Christians necessarily had an expectation of “a great harvest” of Gentiles. After all, Jesus was sent to the Jews²⁸; and He was the

²⁶ Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

²⁷ I dare say that many of us do not fully appreciate the implications of the Pentecostal outpouring, the Jewish Diaspora, and the “re-adjustments” in understanding for Jewish Christians were in the first century church. In fact, historians confirm that the full distinction between Judaism and Christianity wasn’t settled until circa 320 A.D. Cf. Articles: *When Did the Disciples of Jesus Stop Observing the Old Testament Laws* and *How the Apostles Were Expelled from Christianity* by Ron Ammundsen; *Worship in the Early Church* by Sue Bracefield; *A History of Christian Art* by Bernard Dick; Books: *The Early Christians: A Sourcebook on the Witness of the Early Church*, Eberhard Arnold; *Worship in the Early Church*, Ralph P. Martin; *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity*, Oskar Skarsaune; *The First Rites: Worship in the Early Church*, Kenneth Stevenson.

²⁸ Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24

Messiah of the Jews²⁹. It took quite some time for the apostles to embrace the revelation³⁰ which had been given to Paul³¹ regarding the gospel's inclusion of the Gentiles.³²

However, the quoted prophecy from Joel DOES speak of a “harvest” of Gentile souls, which of course, DID take place, and is STILL taking place. It is an aspect of the New Covenant. But we must not ignore the biblical warnings and prophecies regarding “apostasy”,³³ which in a manner of speaking REDUCES A “HARVEST” TO A “REMNANT”. A survey of Church History shows that while there have been many “harvests”, we observe also many “falling away” – case in point being Europe, United States, et al. Of course, restoring to life and health to a previously healthy spiritual condition – IS possible. And THAT is exactly the point of this article – a Restoration of a Remnant. Again, we must

²⁹ Cf. Jeremiah 50:6; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Micah 5:4-5; Mark 6:34; 14:27; John 10:11-16; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 7:17.

³⁰ Cf. Acts 10; Galatians 2

³¹ Ephesians 3:1-7; Cf. Romans 11:25; Ephesians 2:11-22.

³² For an in-depth exposition of this, request a .PDF copy of “Jewish Roots of Christianity” in my article “A New & Living Way: An Investigation into New Covenant Worship in Spirit & Truth”. Email: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

³³ Matthew 24:10, 12; Luke 8:13; 18:8; John 6:66; 15:6; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-8; 10:25-31; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 3:17; 1 John 2:19.

bear in mind that we have no idea of what the size of that Remnant will be.

In any case, this Gentile “harvest” is NOT the essence of this prophesied Restoration. The phrase which DOES speak of the essence of this Restoration is: *“turning the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers”*.³⁴ That is NOT a reference to new converts from among Gentile nations.

Regarding this Restoration, Peter speaks in terms of *“... the period restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”*³⁵ That has more to do with the SPIRITUAL CONDITION of people rather than the nationality of people. And Jesus spoke of *“fulfilling all righteousness”* – again, having to do with a SPIRITUAL CONDITION.

So, what is the NATURE and CHARACTER of that SPIRITUAL CONDITION? I believe the ESSENCE OF THIS RESTORATION has to do with the SPIRITUAL HEALTH CONDITION of God’s people, and my intention is to

³⁴ Malachi 4:5, Cf. Luke 1:17

³⁵ Acts 3:19b-21

“diagnose”³⁶ that more explicitly in this article. I believe the Restoration preparing the way for Christ’s Coming – The Day of the Lord - will turn the hearts of the people of God in such a way as to restore a HEROIC FAITH. As we mentioned, after *“the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom as a testimony to all the nations”³⁷*, the harvest will be a “remnant”, and their number may not necessarily be “great”.³⁸ But even if the HEROES of faith are few in number, they will be “great” in character.

Let’s consider again Malachi’s prophecy to further identify the “Fathers”, the “Children”, and the nature of the “Turning”. And let’s begin with the “Children”.

³⁶ Merriam Webster: “1 a: to recognize (something, such as a disease) by signs and symptoms. b: to recognize a disease or condition. 2: to analyze the cause or nature of.”

³⁷ Matthew 24:14

³⁸ Cf. “Who has believed our report?.... They did not all believe the gospel.” Isaiah 52:1; John 12:38; Romans 10:16.

PART 2

“The Children”

Malachi prophesied around 445 – 432 B.C., after the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.³⁹ He was sent to prophesy to Judah – specifically those who dwelt in Jerusalem and worshipped at the Second Temple. Most, not all but most, of these people were born in Babylon.⁴⁰ It’s interesting to speculate on why those who *were* born in Jerusalem, taken into exile in Babylon, and then returned to Jerusalem,⁴¹ cried when the temple was being rebuilt; but those who were born in Babylon shouted for joy.⁴² The Scriptures do not give an explanation. But with only the foundation laid, this temple lacked the CONTENT of the first temple – *“the Lampstand, the Table and the Bread of Presentation, the Golden Altar of Incense, the Ark of the Covenant in which was the golden jar holding the manna, Aaron’s staff which budded, and the Tablets of the Covenant, and the Shekinah*

³⁹ Cf. The Books of Nehemiah and Ezra

⁴⁰ It was approximately 50 years between the destruction of the First Temple and the laying of the foundation of the Second Temple. (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*) Those Jews who were in Jerusalem at the time of destruction, exiled to Babylon, and then returned to rebuild the temple would have been between 70 and 80 years old. (*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*)

⁴¹ Haggai 2:2-3

⁴² Ezra 3:12-13

Glory overshadowing the Atonement Seat."⁴³ The missing CONTENT was disheartening for "the old men"⁴⁴, but not for the younger generation – they seemed to be happy with just the FORM. But "the old men" were disenchanted about something. Was it because of the material quality of the rebuilt temple? Or because of the spiritual quality of the younger generation gathered around it?⁴⁵ There is the "good old days" phenomenon. If you are elderly, you understand it. Certainly the "good old days" were not perfect. And, over the years, some technological advancements have made some things "nicer", if not *better*. But most often, it seems "the good old days" were "*good*", because they had a certain *quality* – a certain *character* - that seems to dissipate as the generations advance. This article attempts to identify that certain *character*.

In any case, as it was, Malachi prophesied judgment to those people – "*the arrogant*"⁴⁶ - concerning the sins of their temple priests⁴⁷, familial and marital unrighteousness in their society⁴⁸,

⁴³ Hebrews 9:1-5

⁴⁴ Ezra 3:12

⁴⁵ However, in Haggai 2:9, the Lord does promise that the "latter house" will have "greater glory" – viz. because of the coming of the Messiah.

⁴⁶ In contrast to "those who fear (reverence and respect) the Lord". Cf. Malachi 4:1.

⁴⁷ Malachi 1:6 - 2:9

⁴⁸ Malachi 2:10-17

and their “robbery” of God – namely, their duplicitous support and service in the household of God at that time⁴⁹. Had the apostle Paul been there at that time, he would have described the spiritual condition these people as *“holding to a form of religious devotion although they have denied its power”*⁵⁰ – FORM WITHOUT CONTENT.

Considering what the Lord had to say to these people through the prophet Malachi, suffice it to say that most of those who returned to rebuild the temple, had come out of Babylon, but “Babylon” had not come out of them. They were of the same spirit as the original city of Babylon.⁵¹ *“This people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.”*⁵² Thus, their speech and actions were “Babel” – confused. They – and others like them throughout the generations of church history - have retained the spirit of *“Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”*.⁵³

⁴⁹ Malachi 3:8-15

⁵⁰ 2 Timothy 3:5

⁵¹ Genesis 11:1-8

⁵² Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8; Cf. Jeremiah 12:2; Ezekiel 33:31; Acts 8:21

⁵³ Revelation 17:5

The Seven Churches

Malachi's term - "Children" – then, applies to many professing Christians throughout the generations of church history - even those who profess to have "come out of Babylon".⁵⁴ The Seven Churches addressed in Revelation 2 & 3 mention these "Children" who are in need of "Turning" and "Restoration". These were actual churches and individuals in existence at the time of John's writing. But, through these scriptures, the Holy Spirit is also addressing churches and individuals throughout the whole Church Age. Two of the churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia) may represent qualities of the faithful Remnant, and the other five (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea) may represent those Christians who are in need of "Turning" and

⁵⁴ *"Come out of Babylon"* is a sentiment professed by a number of movements in recent church history which began during the Latter Rain Movement beginning in 1948 in Saskatchewan, Canada. Here "Babylon" is a term used in reference to "denominational" churches. "Denomination" means: *"Name, designation ... a general name for a category ... a religious organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices"* (Webster) Thus "Babylon" refers to "man-made" religious organizations. I identify with this sentiment, realizing it's not enough to "Come out of Babylon" – the spirit of Babylon must come out of us. Also, this is NOT to say that there are not authentic Christians who attend denominational churches. This may be a valid ministry calling if the PEOPLE (NOT the organization) are seen as a "mission field". There are some who are sincerely seeking Christ but do not yet know anything but denominational Christianity. So, the Lord has workers in these fields to help affect change in people's relationship with Christ. The organization itself will, by nature of the case, always remain an antithesis to authentic Christianity. Having said this, I do believe that the majority of people in denominational churches are there because they like the social aspects of the organization above sincere devotion to Christ.

“Restoration”.⁵⁵ The seven churches are:

(1) Ephesus ([Revelation 2:1-7](#)) – Those who have abandoned their first love and first works for the Lord.

(2) Smyrna ([Revelation 2:8-11](#)) – Those who are tested by suffering, poverty and tribulation.

(3) Pergamum ([Revelation 2:12-17](#)) – Those that need to turn from following false teaching.

(4) Thyatira ([Revelation 2:18-29](#)) – Those who need to turn from following false prophecies.

(5) Sardis ([Revelation 3:1-6](#)) – Those who have grown lax in their walk and work in the Lord.

(6) Philadelphia ([Revelation 3:7-13](#)) – Those who have patiently endured in the name and word of the Lord.

(7) Laodicea ([Revelation 3:14-22](#)) – Those who have become lukewarm in the faith and work of the Lord.

With regards to identifying the “Children” as it relates to this article:

⁵⁵ Some hold the view that the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 represent seven different periods in church history. While this makes for interesting speculation, the problem is that each of the seven churches describes issues that could fit the Church in any time in its history. Our focus should be on what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches in our generation.

The Faithful Children of Smyrna and Philadelphia

“Those who are tested by suffering, poverty and tribulation, and those who have patiently endured in the name and word of the Lord” may be seen to represent *a faithful Remnant*.

The Immature & Ungrounded Children of Pergamum & Thyatira

“Those that need to turn from following false teaching, and those who need to turn from following false prophecies” I believe represent “Children” who are *in need of “Turning” and “Restoration”*. While this has always been a problem in church history beginning in the first century, I am very concerned about the drift away from a “high view” of Scripture in recent generations and the plethora of “every wind of doctrine”⁵⁶ and “vain imaginings”⁵⁷ that are plaguing the Body of Christ. I have addressed that in other articles.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ephesians 4:14

⁵⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:5

⁵⁸ See: *Foundation Stones, From Children to a Mature Man, The Mysteries of God, The Spirit of the World* – <https://www.AtChristsTable.org> or <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/>

The Anemic Children of Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea

But the particular burden of this article is bound up with “those who have abandoned their first love and first works for the Lord, those who have grown lax in their walk and work in the Lord, and those who have become lukewarm in the faith and work of the Lord”. These are the “Children” who are in need of “Turning” and “Restoration” whom I am addressing in this article.



“The Fathers”

“The fathers” mentioned in Malachi 4 are a reference to the historic fathers of Israel, like Abraham, Moses, David, and others – namely, those who represented the spiritual heritage of their faith. Of course, the “fathers” were not to be the object of their faith – nor was the word of the fathers “The Law”. But, rather, **their lives gave remembrance of God’s Law and acted as examples of the faith that was being passed down from generation to generation.** As was mentioned earlier, Israel had lost its spiritual bearings, and needed to turn back and be

restored to “the faith of their fathers”⁵⁹, so to speak. And that faith was akin to the New Testament *“faith that was once for all time handed down to the people of God”* earnestly contended for by Jude in his letter to the Church.⁶⁰

“Church Fathers”

So, who are the “fathers” of the New Testament Church? Firstly, the apostles of Jesus - most of whom, according to tradition, died a martyr’s death. But the “fathers” are not limited to the apostles only. Other “fathers” include John the Baptist, Stephen, and James, son of Zebedee, all of whom were also martyred for their faith in Christ.⁶¹ Of course, the Pattern Son, the Lord Jesus Himself, is our Ultimate Hero.⁶² But when we read in the New Testament of the lives and ministries of these men, we see them also as models for our lives and ministries.

⁵⁹ Although it is a Catholic hymn, the refrain in Frederick William Faber’s composition *“Faith of Our Fathers”* carries a worthwhile sentiment: *“Faith of our Fathers! Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death.”*

⁶⁰ Jude 1:3

⁶¹ Matthew 14:1-12; Acts 7:54-60; Acts 12:1-2.

⁶² Colossians 1:15-19

The “fathers” would also include those who are actually referred to as “church fathers” of the Early Church. While only God’s Word is the infallible guide for faith and practice, the lives and writings of the Early Church Fathers can give us insight into what it means to follow Christ and defend the truth. None of the following Early Church Fathers were perfect (just as none of us are perfect): There are “Apostolic Fathers” who were contemporaries of the apostles, like Clement of Rome, who according to tradition was drowned at sea with an anchor tied to him; and Polycarp, who was burned to death in the Roman arena.⁶³

There are “Ante-Nicene⁶⁴ Fathers” like Ignatius, who was torn apart by wild beasts in the Coliseum at Rome, as well as Justin Martyr, who was beheaded under the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and Irenaeus, who exposed heresies and defended “the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people”.⁶⁵

There are also “Post-Nicene Fathers”⁶⁶ like Athanasius, whose unmoving dedication to biblical truth in the face of severe

⁶³ Also, Linus, 2 Timothy 4:21

⁶⁴ i.e., before the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

⁶⁵ Jude 1:3

⁶⁶ i.e.,
after the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

opposition led to the expression *Athanasius contra mundum*, or “Athanasius against the world.”⁶⁷

From a Hebrew perspective, the label, “father”, could be applied to any believer in the past – people whom the writer to the Hebrews describes as “*a great cloud of witnesses ... the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven ... the spirits of the righteous made perfect*”. Hebrews 12:1 & 22

To see these people as models for our lives and ministries is as “natural” as it is for young people to desire to emulate their heroes in the fields of sports or the arts. Certainly, it is immature to *worship* such heroes.⁶⁸ But being inspired by such heroes serves a good purpose – even a divine purpose – a purpose which the average contemporary Christian in Western nations has lost touch with.

⁶⁷ Athanasius contended for the full deity of Christ in opposition to Arianism.

⁶⁸ Concerning “church fathers”: I definitely do not agree with the practice of the “veneration of saints”. The word “saints” is the English translation of the Greek word *hagios*. It is simply a term for all Christians because, being in Christ, we have been “set apart”, “consecrated”, “dedicated” to God. But some “canonize” certain historical Christian figures, such as martyrs, as “saints”; and pray to them for intercession. Whereas “there is only One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

“Elders in the Ecclesia”⁶⁹

We all know of course that many church leaders have discredited the name of Christ, never-the-less, Proverbs encourages us to:

*“... Walk in the way of good people and keep to the paths of the righteous.”*⁷⁰ In his Letter to the Hebrews, the writer repeatedly encouraged us to “remember” and “imitate” the faith of godly church leaders:

(Be) “imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises.” Hebrews 6:12

and

“Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” Hebrews 13:7

In his epistle, Peter exhorted his co-elders *“to be examples to the flock”*. (1 Peter 5:3b) I believe, by the Holy Spirit, that the mention of “fathers” in the Malachi passage indicates that certain present-day elders in the Ecclesia have a vital role to play in

⁶⁹ Again, in an effort to avoid being misunderstood, I must say from the outset of this section that, while I do believe the scriptures speak of “spiritual fathers”, “apostles”, and “elders”, I DO NOT ADVOCATE CERTAIN TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES associated with the terms “spiritual fathers”, “apostles”, or “elders”. For example, I do NOT advocate modern day “apostles” leading the “Ecclesia” in each locality and exercising “apostolic authority” to establish the kingdom during a proposed “kingdom age” before the Return of Christ. NOR do I advocate the idea that “spiritual sons” receive a special “mantle”, or “anointing”, or “inheritance” from “spiritual fathers”. e.g. <http://yourquantumlife.com>

⁷⁰ Proverbs 2:20

Restoration. In another article,⁷¹ I've written at length on the need for elders / spiritual fathers and the discipleship / mentoring ministry relationship. Here I would like to just briefly discuss two things about elders in the Ecclesia: firstly, *defining an elder*, and secondly, *identifying an elder in the Ecclesia*.

Defining Elders

Acts 20:17 gives us some definitive information about elders: “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him *the elders of the church*.” This verse tells us that the church leaders from Ephesus whom Paul is addressing are called “elders”. The Greek word is “*presbuterous*”. It is the Greek word from which we get the English word, “presbytery”. In the New Testament, this word appears first in Acts 11:30, and then in Acts 15: 4,6 & 22 - all in reference to the “elders” of the church in Jerusalem. According to the Greek scholar, W.E. Vine, the Greek word, *presbuterous*, is an adjective, not a noun, meaning *elderly* and/or *mature*.⁷² The concept of eldership found in the Gentile churches, like this one in Ephesus, was a carry-over from Israel. The elders sat at the gates

⁷¹ The Vineyard & The Husbandman, <https://www.AtChrist'sTable.org> or <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChrist'sTable>

⁷² *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Strong's #4245)

of the city⁷³ to give “righteous judgment” to the people⁷⁴, bear witness to the will of God and make decisions accordingly.⁷⁵

Those who ruled⁷⁶ as elders⁷⁷ in Israel were chosen because they had wisdom⁷⁸ and discernment⁷⁹ and were inclined to fear and serve God rather than people.⁸⁰ So we see that the term “elder” describes the spiritual stature of the church leaders Paul was addressing – they were physically and spiritually mature. In his *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, W.E. Vine explains that an “elder” is an “overseer” who “shepherds the flock”. “Overseer” is his ministry title, “shepherd” is his ministry description, and “elder” speaks of his spiritual stature. For definitions of “overseer” and “shepherd”, see the footnote below.⁸¹ For our purposes here, I have focused on the spiritual stature of elders.

⁷³ Proverbs 31:23

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 16:18

⁷⁵ Cf. Ruth 4:1-12

⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 1:13 (Hebrew) *roshe* (Strong’s # 7218)

⁷⁷ Exodus 3:16 (Hebrew) *zaqen* (Strong’s # 2205)

⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 1:13 (Hebrew) *chakam* (Strong’s # 2450)

⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 1:13 (Hebrew) *bene* (Strong’s # 995)

⁸⁰ Deuteronomy 1:17; 2 Chronicles 19:9

⁸¹ Acts 20:28 reads: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” This verse tells us a number of things: Firstly, these “**elders**” were also “**overseers**”. The Greek word is *episkopos*. It is the Greek word from which we get the English word “episcopal”. It is a combination word: *epi*, meaning “over”, and *skopeo*, meaning to “look” or “watch” – i.e. to “look over” or to “watch over” – “the flock”. So, this tells us **the ministry position** of these Ephesian church leaders. Reading Acts 20:28 again: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” So here we see that **the**

Identifying Elders in the Ecclesia

There are elders in the Ecclesia today who may have not yet been martyred like earlier church fathers but can similarly be identified by “the cost of discipleship” evident in their lives.⁸² I am not writing doctrine here; I am attempting to communicate spiritual reality: In a manner of speaking, we could say that just as John the Baptist came *“in the spirit and power of Elijah”*, there are some present-day elders who have lived and served *“in the spirit*

ministry function of an “elder”, called an “overseer”, is **“to shepherd the church of God”**. There is a noun form appearing in Ephesians 4:11, which is traditionally translated “pastor”, but is essentially **“a shepherd” – one who “shepherds the flock”**. The concept of shepherding found in the gentile churches like this one in Ephesus was also a carry-over from Israel. The prophet Ezekiel was clear regarding the Lord’s expectations of those who would shepherd His people. They were to feed the flock, strengthen the sickly, heal the diseased, bind up the broken, bring back the scattered. The Greek word for “shepherd” is *poimaino*. This is a verb which means to “feed”, to “tend”, or to “guide” the flock. Surveying the New Testament scriptures, we get an overview of *the activities of elders*: tending and shepherding, teaching, guarding and protecting, praying - regarding the oversight of the work of ministry, and for those in sin and sickness, leading and guiding, steering and governing, and ruling. A few comments on the last activity listed – “ruling”: Paul writes to Timothy and refers to elders who “rule well”. How would the apostle Paul describe “ruling well”? Well in the same sentence he said that it involved “labor in the word and doctrine”. The apostle Peter also offers the following: *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”* So, according to the apostle Paul, **an “elder” is an “overseer” who “shepherds the flock” – all one person**. The qualifications for an “elder” in Titus 1:5-9 and the qualifications for an “overseer” in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are essentially the same. This adds credibility to the fact that these are one and the same person. And we see that the apostle Peter paints the same picture in his epistle when he exhorts the **elders** to *“shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight....”* 1 Peter 5:2

⁸² Cf. Matthew 10³⁷, 16:24; Luke 14:26-27, 44; 1 Peter 2:21

and power” of the martyrs. These are elders who have “lost” their lives for the cause of Christ – something which Jesus is quoted as speaking about in all of the gospels. It is “losing one’s life for Christ’s sake”.⁸³ It is “forsaking all to follow Jesus”.⁸⁴ It is investing the whole of your life into “The Cause of Christ”.⁸⁵ It is “serving the purpose of God in your generation”.⁸⁶ This is, after all, THE ESSENCE OF THE HEROIC – GIVING ONE’S LIFE FOR THE CAUSE. Exactly what that looks like will be different in each case – there is no single description or formula. The Lordship of Christ plays out uniquely in each individual life. But in each case, there will be an easily recognizable QUALITY and FRUIT in the true elders of the Ecclesia which the Spirit of God intends to use to influence “the children” of the Ecclesia. Again, the purpose of this article is to offer an identification of the nature and character of that quality – the essence of what God intends to restore – namely, the fruit of HEROIC FAITH.

⁸³ Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33; John 12:25

⁸⁴ A See: “*Forsaking All to Follow Jesus*”

<https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristTable/PDF/Forsaking-All-To-Follow-Jesus.pdf> and “*Quo Vadis*” <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristTable/PDF/Quo-Vadis.pdf>

⁸⁵ Cf. Philippians 1:13; 2:21; Philemon 1:23

⁸⁶ Acts 13:36

A Word to Elders in the Ecclesia

I believe, by the Holy Spirit, that the mention of “fathers” in the Malachi passage indicates that certain present-day elders in the Ecclesia have a vital role to play in Restoration.

“These are the words of Amos, who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Amos 1:1

Amos was from Tekoa in Judah and was sent to prophesy to Israel. Tekoa means "trumpet".⁸⁷ The trumpet sound was used to call out and unite a people. But Tekoa was a wilderness. So, in the prophet Amos we see an image similar to that of John the Baptist, *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*⁸⁸ Amos was a "sheep breeder": spiritually speaking, he can be likened to one involved in making disciples, a mentor, if you will.⁸⁹ [Amos was also "a tender of sycamore fruit". (7:14)]

⁸⁷ The Hebrew root verb, *taqa*, means to bring forth a sudden blast of sound from a horn.

⁸⁸ Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23

⁸⁹ Amos was also "a tender of sycamore fruit". (7:14)

"Two years before the earthquake", which took place between 767-753 B.C. , Amos spoke the following words:

" Woe to those who live in ease in Zion, to those who feel secure on Mount Samaria. They think of themselves as the elite class of the best nation. The family of Israel looks to them for leadership."

Amos 6:1 New English Translation

Spiritually speaking, the second half of the verse speaks of mature Christians - elders in the Ecclesia, who may or may not be "leaders" with titles publicly known but are none the less spiritually mature elders who can be an influence on younger generations in the Ecclesia. It says that these mature ones themselves tended to put their trust in "Mount Samaria". We see an example of this with the Samaritan woman Jesus met with at Jacob's Well. This woman, a type of the Church, tended to put her trust in Mount Samaria.⁹⁰

Mount Samaria, which was also called Mount Gerizim, was a place with an impressive spiritual history. On this mountain God had appeared to Abraham and made a covenant with him. Abraham built an altar there. Jacob also bought land, pitched a

⁹⁰ John 4:20

tent, and built an altar there. God told Moses to bless this particular mountain because it was in the Promised Land. Spiritually speaking, this mountain represents a rich spiritual heritage which these elders can make claim to as being part of their own spiritual histories - wonderful spiritual experiences they can reference and share with those they mentor now in their mature years.

Now Amos is saying that at least some of these elders were "*at ease in Zion*", resting on their laurels, so to speak. Those of us who are spiritually mature "sheep breeders", capable of mentoring others, need to heed his warning. In our mature years, we can enter into a comfortable ease, resting on the spiritual riches amassed in our earlier years. This is certainly a God-given deposit of wisdom from which we are to give out to others. But this deposit cannot be something we are "*at ease*" with - spiritually "*fat*" - lest we become like the people both Isaiah and Jesus referred to: "*The hearts of these people have grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes have closed.*"⁹¹

⁹¹ Isaiah 6:10; Matthew 13:15

God has much more He desires to do today. Actually, I believe it would be accurate to say that God NEEDS to do much more today and in the future in order to fulfill His plans and purposes - *"in order to fulfill all righteousness"*⁹² - in order to *"rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, to rebuild its ruins, to set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord"*⁹³ - **more** *"times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord"* - *"the period of restoration of all things , which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."*⁹⁴

⁹² John 3:15

⁹³ Acts 15:16-17

⁹⁴ Acts 3:19-21

PART 3

“The Turning”

“He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Malachi 4:6

One might ask: “Who turns first?” Should the “fathers” pursue the “children”? Or should the “children” pursue the “fathers”? Both. And this will be a work of God. We are utterly dependent upon God’s Spirit to work within BOTH “fathers” and “children”. Those who are younger should pursue those who are true fathers in the Ecclesia. I have been ministering in the Ecclesia for more than 40 years, and in my personal experience, I have found very few – a few, but very few – younger brethren who recognize, value, and pursue the experience and wisdom of older brothers. And over those 40 plus years, this seemed to be the case increasingly so.⁹⁵ Yet, in his epistle, Peter exhorts: *“You who are younger, be subject to*

⁹⁵ I think one factor is the Internet – a wonderful source of information and learning. But it seems most young men think they can be “self-taught” by searching the Internet, not realizing that information is just the beginning. One must receive insight, understanding, discernment, discretion, and wisdom. These things come from the Holy Spirit, who is The Teacher. But true elders in the Ecclesia, who are submitted to the Holy Spirit, can be vessels and vehicles of the Holy Spirit in the teaching, transformation, and maturing process.

the elders."⁹⁶ And in his Letter to the Hebrews, the writer repeatedly encouraged us to "remember" and "imitate" the faith of godly church leaders: *(Be) "imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises."* Hebrews 6:12 and - *"Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."* Hebrews 13:7

At the same time, during those same years, I've observed how church ministers are functioning more and more as merely administrators of various ministries and have not made time and opened up their lives for discipling younger brethren. Yet, Jesus told Peter to *"feed and shepherd His sheep"*.⁹⁷ And in his epistle, Peter exhorted his co-elders *"to be examples to the flock"*.⁹⁸ Paul also exhorted the elders in Ephesus to *"watch over, be on guard for, and shepherd those entrusted to them"*.⁹⁹ So, once again I say: this will be a work of God. We are utterly dependent upon God's Spirit to work within BOTH "fathers" and "children".

⁹⁶ 1 Peter 5:5

⁹⁷ John 21:15-17

⁹⁸ 1 Peter 5:3

⁹⁹ Acts 20:28



“He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Malachi 4:6

“He will come in the spirit and power of Elijah....” Luke 1:17

Who is “He”?

*“**He** will restore” “**He** will come in the spirit and power of Elijah....”* Just as John the Baptist was “he” who came *“in the spirit and power of Elijah”*, I believe the Spirit of Prophecy is referring to yet another “he” that will come *“in the spirit and power of Elijah”*, before the final Day of the Lord.

I understand this “he” to be a collective entity, rather than an individual. What can I give as an argument for such an interpretation? I would offer the following: Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit came upon various individuals for a period of time to accomplish a particular will of the Lord – an individual with an anointing which came from the Christ of God. Examples would be Moses, Joshua, David¹⁰⁰, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, et. al. But notice what Jesus said about such an individual in comparison with someone in the Kingdom of God of the New Covenant:

“This is the one about whom it is written: ‘Behold, I am sending My messenger ahead of You who will prepare Your way before You.’ I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Luke 7:27-28

In the New Covenant, God doesn’t just *come upon* an individual for a period of time. He comes to *reside* within an individual **AND within a collective body – “*the Church, which is His Body*”¹⁰¹.** The Church – the collective Body of Christ – was birthed on the

¹⁰⁰ David was anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16). Cf. Acts 15:22 “... *He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will(s) [Literally, “wishes”].’*”

¹⁰¹ Ephesians 1:23, 5:24; Colossians 1:18, 24

Day of Pentecost. And, while the risen Christ does “give gifts to (individual) men”, **God’s New Covenant purposes are carried out through Christ’s Body, collectively.**¹⁰² So, I understand this Restoration to be affected, not by an individual, but rather by **a collective movement taking place in the whole Body of Christ.**

“He will restore...”

With Jesus as the Head of that Body, and the Holy Spirit giving life to that Body, the spiritual reality is that *“it is God who is at work in you”*.¹⁰³ Just as Jesus said, “I will build My Church”¹⁰⁴, we can understand the “He” to be **the Spirit of Christ working through His Body collectively.** Therefore, in reality, **this is a work of God** – *“not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit....”*¹⁰⁵ These words are a prophecy of Zechariah spoken *while the temple was being restored.* Reconstruction on the temple, which had been halted by opposition from neighboring Samaritans, was resumed under the exhortations of Zechariah and Haggai – **both “father” types in Israel, and both vessels of the Holy Spirit.**

¹⁰² Ephesians 4:7-13

¹⁰³ Philippians 2:13; Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:10

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 16:18

¹⁰⁵ Zechariah 4:6; Cf. Hosea 1:7

Zechariah experienced a night vision.¹⁰⁶ In it, an angel showed Zechariah *a golden lampstand being fed oil from two olive trees*. Throughout Scripture, oil represents the working of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷ The two olive trees are symbolic of **Zerubbabel the governor of Judah and Joshua the high priest – two more “father” types in Israel - both vessels of the Holy Spirit**. The golden lampstand represents the temple. In the New Covenant the temple is the people of God¹⁰⁸ – the “children” of God. The message God was communicating through the vision was that **His Spirit would once again work through His people to affect a Restoration**.¹⁰⁹

I believe it can be argued from Scripture that the fulfillment of this prophesied Restoration would take place **through the New Covenant – during the Church Age – before the Day of the Lord**.

¹⁰⁶ Zechariah had eight visions in one night. This was the fifth one.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 1:6; 61:1; Luke 4:20-21; Acts 10:38; James 5:14; 1 John 2:20, 27

¹⁰⁸ John 2:21; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Ephesians 1:23, 2:21-22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24

¹⁰⁹ Zechariah 4:1-14

“Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart.”

Jeremiah is a prophet the Holy Spirit used to speak about the promised New Covenant.¹¹⁰ In Jeremiah 31, he uses the actual term, “New Covenant”.¹¹¹ But there are other places in which he alludes to the New Covenant.¹¹² This is an example which suits our purpose here:

¹⁴ *“Return, you faithless sons, declares the LORD; for I am a master to you, and I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ **Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you knowledge and understanding.** ¹⁶ And it shall be in those days when you become numerous and are fruitful in the land,” declares the LORD, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor miss it, nor will it be made again.”* Jeremiah 3:14-16

“... one from a city and two from a family....” May be taken as a reference to that Remnant which we have already mentioned in this article. And with the words, *“they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor miss it, nor will it be made again.”*, the prophecy is pointing to a time AFTER the Old Covenant, for under the Old

¹¹⁰ Cf. “Old Testament Prophecies of the New Covenant” by J. Ligon Duncan.

<https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/classes-and-training/ot-prophecies-of-the-new-covenant/>

¹¹¹ Jeremiah 31:31-34

¹¹² Jeremiah 32:37; 50:4-5

Covenant the Ark of the Covenant – containing the Tablets of the Law – occupied The Most Holy Place in Moses’ Tabernacle and the First Temple in Jerusalem. Can we point to a time, under the Old Covenant – after Jeremiah’s ministry¹¹³ – when we could say, the Lord “*gave shepherds after His own heart*”? This prophecy is pointing to the New Covenant with a fulfillment in the Church Age.

“Return, you faithless sons....” Equates with the “children” in Malachi’s prophecy. In the gospels, we see that Jesus had nothing good to say about the “shepherds” in Israel during His time.¹¹⁴ He wept over Jerusalem, because the people were “*like sheep without a shepherd*”.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Jeremiah was active as a prophet from the thirteenth year of Josiah, king of Judah (626 B.C.), until after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon’s Temple in 587 B.C. He lived in the final days of the crumbling nation of Judah. He was, appropriately, the last prophet that God sent to preach to the southern kingdom, which comprised the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. God had repeatedly warned Israel to stop their idolatrous behavior, but they would not listen, so He tore the 12 tribes asunder, sending the 10 northern tribes into captivity at the hands of the Assyrians. Then God sent Jeremiah to give Judah the last warning before He cast them out of the land, decimating the nation and sending them into captivity in the pagan kingdom of Babylon. Scripture doesn’t tell us of any “shepherds after His own heart” until Jesus of Nazareth in the gospels and His apostles in the Book of Acts and the Epistles of the New Covenant scriptures.

¹¹⁴ e.g., Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47

¹¹⁵ Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34

I am making a case for the idea that the Lord's promise - "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart" – must be fulfilled in the New Covenant, during the Church Age – equating with the "fathers" in Malachi's prophecy, beginning with the Lord's apostles. I am also suggesting that this may be equated with certain elders in the Ecclesia. Which elders might those be? **The ones whose lives have such an influence – akin to "the spirit and power of Elijah"¹¹⁶ – so as to help affect a "turning" in the lives of others, for this is what is communicated in the prophecy. Let's take a closer look at the scriptures concerning this "turning":**

"He will turn..."

In Malachi 4:6, the *New American Standard Bible* 1977 & 1995 versions translate the phrase "He will restore..." But the 2020 version translates it, "He will turn...", as do most other translations. The Greek word is, *apokathistemi*.¹¹⁷ "Restore" is a good translation; but **"turn" communicates the nature of the restoration.** The *New English Translation (NET)* captures that meaning in the related verse - Luke 1:16: *"He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me."* Indeed, this is the meaning Luke

¹¹⁶ Luke 1:17

¹¹⁷ Strong's # 600

intended to give in his gospel where he a different Greek word – *epistrepho*, which means “to turn about again”, “revert”, “come back again”.¹¹⁸

The NET Bible translates Luke 1:17 this way:

“And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

We see that in Luke’s gospel, the second phrase of this verse differs from the related verse in Malachi. Here is a very literal and amplified translation of that verse: *“... and (to turn) those who are unpersuaded, unconvinced, unyielding, and untrusting¹¹⁹ to having the same interests and affections, and character¹²⁰ as those who are righteous (namely, the ‘fathers’).”*

I believe what is being communicated here¹²¹ is that a generation or generations of people, while belonging to God, grew up lacking *“the same interests and affections, and character”* as their *“fathers”*. God is looking for a “Davidic People” who like David

¹¹⁸ Luke 1:17 Strong’s # 1996

¹¹⁹ Greek: *apeithes*, Strong’s # 545

¹²⁰ Greek: *phronesis*, Strong’s # 5428, from the verb, *phroneo*, Strong’s # 5424.

¹²¹ i.e., Luke 1:16-17

would be: “... a man after My heart, who will do ALL My will¹²².”
.... And “serve God’s purpose in his own generation”¹²³ -
dedicating their lives, investing their lives, “losing” their lives for
God’s purpose – the Cause of Christ – in their generation.

“He will come in the spirit and power of Elijah....”

How are we to understand that phrase? John the Baptist, who was the first fulfillment of this prophecy, is not recorded to have worked “miracles”. But his life – including his message and ministry – was powerful. Likewise, the “he” of the progressive fulfillment of this prophecy may or may not be identified by the working of “miracles”, but their lives – including their message and ministry – will be powerful.¹²⁴ In both cases, the power resides in their MARUTEO¹²⁵ - the Greek word meaning “bearing witness”: Like John the Baptist, their lives, message, and ministry will be marked by persecution and some form of martyrdom. That is,

¹²² In the Greek text, the word is plural: “all My wills”, or “all My desires”.

¹²³ Alternative translation: “... served his own generation by the purpose of God”. Acts 13:22 and 36.

¹²⁴ The idea of “working miracles” is valid, but it is a *figurative* meaning of the Greek word *dunamis*, Strong’s # 1411, which actually means “ability”, “might”, “force”, rooted in the verb, *dunamai*, Strong’s # 1410, meaning “to be able”. The word, “spirit”, is the translation of the Greek word, *pneuma*, Strong’s # 4151, meaning “breath”, “vital principle”, or “mental disposition”.

¹²⁵ Strong’s # 3140

“those who witness for Christ by their death”.¹²⁶ What do I mean by, “some form of martyrdom”? I mean some form of LOSS OF LIFE, as in “losing your life” for the Cause of Christ. A phenomenon attested to by the Lord Himself, as well as all four gospel writers.¹²⁷

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”
John 12:24

There is an Old Covenant picture – a type and shadow – of this “maruteo” – this “loss of life for the Cause of Christ” – in the ritual of the Burnt Offering consecrating Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. It was *“offered up in smoke on the altar with the burnt offering - an ordination offering for a soothing aroma; it was an offering by fire to the Lord”*¹²⁸ – picturing a life gone up in smoke for the Cause of Christ.

¹²⁶ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*; Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13, 17:6.

¹²⁷ Matthew 10:38-39, 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24, 17:33; John 12:25.

¹²⁸ Leviticus 8:1-36, Cf. vv. 16, 21, 28

Elijah's Witness

We should not separate the idea of “*the spirit and power of Elijah*” from the lifestyle of Elijah. As we are introduced to Elijah in the Scriptures, we are given pictures of his lifestyle: Living at the Brook Cherith, being fed by ravens and drinking from the brook; and then staying in the humble abode of a poor widow in Zarephath, being fed from her bowl of flour and oil.¹²⁹

John the Baptist's Witness

John the Baptist's life and ministry was certainly a witness of his coming martyrdom. But it also spoke of how he chose to live his life here and now on this earth for the Cause of Christ. He was a bridge between the Old Covenant concept of the kingdom of God with the Jewish expectation of the Messiah bringing in the kingdom here and now - during their age, on this earth. However, **everything about John the Baptist's lifestyle alluded a HEAVENLY KINGDOM in that it was obviously different and contrary to human culture – from the food he ate to the clothes**

¹²⁹ 1 Kings 17:1-16

he wore.¹³⁰ I am not saying we can have *“the spirit and power of Elijah”* by eating weird food and wearing weird clothes. That is merely Old Covenant externalism. Never-the-less, our external lives should REFLECT an internal “spirit and power” which bears witness to, not this world, but bears witness to something of a HEAVENLY origin and a HEAVENLY citizenship. Our Lord’s kingdom *“is NOT OF THIS WORLD....”*¹³¹ So, we are longing for *“a HEAVENLY COUNTRY - looking for “a HEAVENLY CITY”*.¹³² *“Our citizenship is IN HEAVEN”*¹³³ We are *“sojourners and immigrants, strangers and exiles”* in this life here on earth.¹³⁴

Influence

So, how will the Holy Spirit work through “fathers” to help affect this Restoration – this turning of the hearts of the “children” to the HEROIC FAITH of the fathers? Just as His Spirit worked through the lives of surrender and service of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and just as His Spirit worked through the testimonies of

¹³⁰ Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6

¹³¹ John 18:36

¹³² Hebrews 11:16; 12:22

¹³³ Philippians 3:26

¹³⁴ 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13

Zechariah and Haggai, I believe God's Spirit will work through the **INFLUENCE OF "FATHERS" WHO ARE ELDERS IN THE ECCLESIA BY THE WITNESS OF THEIR LIVES OF SURRENDER AND SERVICE.**

In my reflecting on HOW "the fathers" would actually affect a turning of the hearts of "the children", it seemed to me the word, "INFLUENCE" was the best descriptor. I researched the etymology of the word and found its historical meanings very interesting:

*"Influence (n). Late 14c., an astrological term, "streaming ethereal power from the stars when in certain positions, acting upon character or destiny of men," from Old French influence "emanation from the stars that acts upon one's character and destiny" (13c.), also "a flow of water, a flowing in," from Medieval Latin influentia "a flowing in" (also used in the astrological sense), from Latin influentem (nominative influens), present participle of influere "to flow into, stream in, pour in," from in- "into, in, on, upon" (from PIE root *en "in") + fluere "to flow" (see fluent). The range of senses in Middle English was non-personal, in reference to any outflowing of energy that produces effect, of fluid or vaporous substance as well as immaterial or unobservable forces. Meaning "exertion of unseen influence by persons" is from 1580s (a sense already in Medieval Latin, for instance Aquinas); meaning "capacity for producing effects by insensible or invisible means" is from 1650s."*

Suffice it to say that when INFLUENCE is taking place, something (of a spiritual nature) is FLOWING INTO others which affects CHANGE - or in our case here, A TURNING OF THE HEART. The goal of this article is to discuss the nature of the “something”.

Paul, the apostle, on “Spiritual Fathers”

“For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.”

1 Corinthians 4:15

Firstly, Paul refers to himself as a spiritual father¹³⁵, and unabashedly encouraged the Corinthians to imitate him. Many – and rightly so - have apprehensions regarding what Paul is actually saying here. I myself, as a young disciple, was a “victim” of some abusive doctrine and practice¹³⁶ which emerged from a

¹³⁵ He likewise had the liberty to refer to himself as an “apostle”: 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 2:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1

¹³⁶ Namely a movement in the 1970s which came to be referred to as “The Fort Lauderdale Christian Growth Ministries Shepherding / Discipleship Movement” and emphasized “spiritual covering” and “authority and submission”.

misunderstanding of this verse. Secondly, we must notice that Paul did NOT say you have *only one* “father”, but rather that we don’t have *many* “fathers”. Obviously God is our only “Heavenly Father”. But Paul is referring to the possibility of multiple “spiritual fathers” on the human level. God, our Heavenly Father, is our spiritual SOURCE. So, as a “father through the gospel”, Paul was not claiming to be a spiritual source in this sense. But he referred to the possibility of receiving the INFLUENCE of a “spiritual father” – even multiple “spiritual fathers”. And that the INFLUENCE of a “spiritual father” was different than the information or knowledge available through “tutors”. Here, Paul was referring to first century *tutors* who were literally “boy leaders”¹³⁷ – namely, Greek slaves serving Roman school boys. By contrast, the INFLUENCE of a “spiritual father” sets the tone or frame of reference – establishes the spiritual context or environment – models a faith and spirituality – which others can identify with.

But what was the vehicle for such apostolic INFLUENCE?

¹³⁷ Greek: *paidagogos*, Strong # 3807.

So having great love toward you, we were willing to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you were dear to us.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be strengthened. This is so that I may be encouraged together with you by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.”

Romans 1:11-12

We see here in his letters to the Romans and the Thessalonians, Paul uses the word “impart”, which means “give to” or “share with”.¹³⁸ And he refers to a “*spiritual gift*”. What is that “*spiritual gift*”? Will it be “*bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.*”¹³⁹? No. An objective reading of those verses quoted from Paul’s letters speak of “giving our own lives” and thus “encouraging each other’s faith”. A literal translation of the first phrase would be: “*giving the spirit which animates us*”.¹⁴⁰ And the most literal translation of that second phrase would be: “*called to each other’s side to encourage one*

¹³⁸ Greek: *metadidomi*, Strong’s # 3330

¹³⁹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Timothy 4:14. “Laying on of hands” is an Old Testament foundation stone. (Hebrews 6:1-2) In the New Testament it is seen as a ritual or sacrament, if you will, accompanying prayer for healing, and the public recognition of ministry calling. I believe the practice of the laying on of hands in these ways is valid. But, as I stated earlier, I do NOT advocate the idea that “spiritual sons” receive a special “mantle”, or “anointing”, or “inheritance” from “spiritual fathers”.

¹⁴⁰ Greek: *psuche*, Strong’s # 5590

another's FAITH."¹⁴¹ The "spiritual gift imparted was the INFLUENCE of their lives lived in surrender and service in the Cause of Christ – that is, *"serving God's purpose in their own generation"*¹⁴² - dedicating their lives, investing their lives, "losing" their lives for God's purpose – the Cause of Christ – in their generation. These are *"people of whom the world is not worthy...."*

And what is it that motivates and enables people to live such lives? FAITH – the kind of faith that longs for *"a HEAVENLY country"* and looks for *"a HEAVENLY city"*¹⁴³ – the kind of faith that enables people to live a life as *"sojourners and immigrants, strangers, and exiles"* in this life here on earth.¹⁴⁴ This kind of faith is largely lacking in our generation. The faith I see today in western Christianity is largely a faith that looks to God to "bless" our efforts in achieving personal "success" in this life – personal desires and goals which we have set for ourselves. This is a self-centered faith. We need a God-centered faith.

¹⁴¹ Greek: *parakaleo*, Strong's # 3870

¹⁴² Alternative translation: "... served his own generation by the purpose of God". Acts 13:22 and 36.

¹⁴³ Hebrews 11:16; 12:22

¹⁴⁴ 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13

And make no mistake, this kind of faith is adventurous, risky, even “dangerous” – a “life and death” kind of faith. HEROIC FAITH.



“Heroic”

Heroic

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self-sacrificing, brave, courageous, daring, epic,
fearless, intrepid, laudable, noble, stout, valiant

Before starting to write this article, I asked a few people how they would define “heroic”. They gave me what they thought described a “hero” – the noun, instead of the adjective, “heroic”. I had been thinking that what is called a “hero” in contemporary western society had become something other than what a “hero” use to be. The fact is, like many other things, “heroes” and the “heroic” have been “deconstructed” and now have different definitions. The causes which people are choosing to “lose their lives for” are for are more and more elevating that which is ungodly, celebrating Humanity, rather than godly, and to the glory of God. But that is not my main point. While I do think that western societies have perverted that which is considered “heroic”, what has motivated this article is specifically THE ABSENCE OF THE HEROIC IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY – particularly in the younger generations. It’s been on my heart for quite a while; but it has taken some time to crystalize in my mind. I hope to share here what Holy Spirit has instructed me regarding “**HEROIC FAITH**”.

HEROES of FAITH

Hebrews 11



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I believe every verse the writer to the Hebrews wrote in the 11th chapter describes the term “**Heroic Faith**”. The whole chapter speaks of *faith* and the *heroic*. But I won’t do an expository commentary on each verse. In fact, I will only quote some verses of the chapter which I think are “self-explanatory” regarding the “**HEROIC**”. Each passage warrants a message in itself.

Hebrews 11:8-10

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he left, not

Heroic

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knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as a stranger in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

A commentary ...

"This, according to the writer of Hebrews, is because Abraham—and by extension, his children—looked forward beyond even their own lives. The reference here to "the city that has foundations" might be an echo of the visions seen by prophets of the Old Testament (Ezekiel 40—48; Isaiah 60—66) and given more detail in the book of Revelation (Revelation 21:9–14). The city is the New Jerusalem, a feature of God's eventual conquest over all sin and death (Revelation 21:2–4). **Their faith explicitly led them to believe that God's ultimate purpose for them was not earthly, but heavenly. This same perspective is important when reading the other examples of faith given in this passage.**"¹⁴⁵

Hebrews 11:13-16

"All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country which they left, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.bibleref.com/Hebrews/11/Hebrews-11-10.html>

better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

What is the perspective of this kind of faith - this life or the next? Is the focus on personal "success" in this life or the eternal purposes of God. Manifesting something in this natural realm, in this life, can be a *result* of faith. But the **purpose of this kind of faith** is to carry us to the next life. The writer specifies – "*they died in faith not receiving the promises*" in this life. They saw and focused on that which was future. They lived this life with a view to the next life.¹⁴⁶

Hebrews 11:32-38

"And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made

¹⁴⁶ While I do not think that this kind of faith is reserved only for the poor and oppressed in this life, I have always found it interesting that this was the faith of the slaves in America's history. This theme dominated "Negro Spirituals": For them, this life here on this earth was so horrid that their cry to the Lord was to escape this life on this earth to be graduated to the next life in heaven. A good example is a song based on the story of Elijah's "graduation" (2 Kings 2:1-18): "*Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home....*"

strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mocking and flogging, and further, chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, on mountains, and sheltering in caves and holes in the ground.” Hebrews 11:32-38

“People of whom the world was not worthy...” That phrase always grips me! I like what Marvin Vincent says about the phrase: *“Their plane of life was higher.”*¹⁴⁷ **When the world celebrates its heroes, it celebrates itself – its own humanity. In contrast, the demonstration of HEROIC FAITH is a celebration of God. The world has absolutely no concept of this – yet it’s true - “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church” because some are captivated by such HEROIC FAITH. In the examples above the “heroic” looked different in each case. Yet each had that easily recognizable QUALITY and FRUIT we associate with the “Heroes of Faith”. THE ESSENCE OF THE HEROIC IS THE GIVING OF ONE’S LIFE FOR THE CAUSE. THIS is the ESSENCE – the nature and character – of the “Turning” and**

¹⁴⁷ Vincent’s Word Studies

“Restoration” which is to come BEFORE the 2nd coming of Christ - the Day of the Lord.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸At the time of this writing, I am 77 and my wife Frances, is 81. We are in the “twilight” of our lives, so to speak. What did our faith look like in our personal lives? That is actually a long – and very rich – story. It would require another writing. But a few things are discussed in my articles *Forsaking All to Follow Jesus* and *Quo Vadis*. These can be read and freely downloaded at: <https://www.AtChristsTable.org> or <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/>

Heroic

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Epilogue

"Your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions."

Joel 2:28

"And your young men will see visions,

And your old men will have dreams."

Acts 2:17

Men of a Certain Age¹⁴⁹

*Men of a certain age are weary,
Everything roles along.
Nothing has changed for thirty years now,
It's still the same old song.
Apathy for your anger,
Compromise replaced your rage
Things you once stood for
Now you stay seated,
Men of a certain age.*

*Men of a certain age are grumpy,
Nothing has turned out right.
All of those things you hoped to accomplish
Seem to be set aside.
Where is that great adventure?*

¹⁴⁹ Following is a song written by Robin Mark. There is a recording of it on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS8oEsLCCvg>

*How can I turn the page?
Rub it all out and start it over?
Men of a certain age.*

*But who told you to quit?
Who said to step down,
Who said to stop running?
Who said that time had been called on your day?
Who said the anointing had been taken away?*

*The battle is won, the kingdom is come,
It's time to start running.
So, pick up the baton and get back in the race -
Men of a certain age.*

*Men of a certain age are heroes,
At least in their children's eyes.
Standing for what they once believed in,
No hint of compromise.
Running the race with patience,
Until their final day,
Faithful in every word and deed.
You men of a certain age.*

Rise Up O Men of God¹⁵⁰

*Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
His kingdom tarries long;
As faithful workmen, watch and pray
And light the night of wrong.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait—
Your strength unequal to the task,
But Christ in you is great!*

*Lift high the cross of Christ;
Tread where His feet have trod;
As brothers of the Son of man,
Rise up, O men of God!*

¹⁵⁰ These are the original lyrics by William Merrill, 1911.

from A Psalm of David¹⁵¹

“Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power.”

The next part of the verse describes, in a poetic way, the quality of this volunteerism and its value to the Lord:

“In holy array (or in the beauties of holiness), from the womb of the dawn, You have the dew of Your youth.”

Those who volunteer for His work - those who enlist for His battle (in accordance with other translations), are the front line, the Advant Garde, the soon-to-be-released glorious breaking forth of God’s Spirit bringing a watering and renewed life.

I am also reminded of the sacrificial efforts of the men who came to David at harvest time while he was still in the Cave of Adullam - before the new expression of God’s kingdom was to be manifest:

¹³ At the time of the harvest, three of the thirty leaders went down to David at the Cave of Adullam. A band of Philistines was camped in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David was in the stronghold at the time, while a Philistine garrison was in Bethlehem. ¹⁵ David was thirsty and said, ‘How I wish

¹⁵¹ Psalm 110:3

someone would give me some water to drink from the cistern in Bethlehem near the gate!’¹⁶ So the three elite warriors broke through the Philistine forces and drew some water from the cistern in Bethlehem near the gate. They carried it back to David, but he refused to drink it. He poured it out as a drink offering to the Lord¹⁷ and said, “O Lord, I will not do this! It is equivalent to the blood of the men who risked their lives by going.” So he refused to drink it. Such were the exploits of the three elite warriors.”

2 Samuel 23:13-17

A Solitary Man¹⁵²

There is a solitary man, alone in a great expanse of desert. His bearded face is set like a flint, facing a certain direction, from which a gale wind is blowing. And as it blows upon him, he turns to a purse hung upon his shoulder - a worn, weather-beaten purse. And as he opens it, he takes out a morsel of bread. It has been stored away as a provision - an apparent small storehouse, yet totally sufficient – hidden away, yes, even as hidden manna.

This solitary figure of a man serves in a unified army, arrayed but scattered over the face of the earth. And as we were to look, we would not see any of his troops, for he walks in this wasteland alone. Though this army is scattered throughout the earth, each one is a soldier of strength - each one having a great resolve in heart, and each one possessing the hidden manna in their purse.

He is on a mission. He knows the direction in which he is to walk, and so he has set his face like a flint and takes notice that he is walking against the winds – the winds of tribulation. And he knows that at the given time he will reach his destination; and upon arriving, he will know what his mission was. He will perform it swiftly, with strength and power, and then be released into his next mission as he receives from the Spirit the command and direction.

¹⁵² A prophetic word I delivered at a gathering in Ladysmith, South Africa in 1987. After the meeting, I asked an elder of that assembly what he thought of that prophetic word. (1 Corinthians 14:29) His response was: “I’m sure it was for somebody.” At that moment, I realized it was for me!

As he walks alone, he thinks to himself: In years gone by, he never would have imagined himself in such a calling, and in such an atmosphere and environment. And though he senses the great challenge within his heart, and the great importance of his mission - battle upon battle, victory upon victory - he longs for the end. And silently from his innermost being, comes the cry: "Come Lord Jesus, that I may eat and drink at Your table in abundance. But thank You for the morsel of hidden manna which is my strength at this time."

ADDENDUM

4 ⁴ “Remember the Law of Moses My servant, the statutes, and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. ⁵Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. ⁶He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with complete destruction.”

Malachi 4:4-6

Remembrance

In this Addendum I’d like to share some additional thoughts which are more closely related to fatherhood than to the *Heroic* per se – namely, two particular aspects of spiritual fatherhood which were rooted in Hebrew culture but are rare to find in contemporary western cultures – the acquisition of sound doctrine and the wisdom gleaned from history.

“Remember the Law of Moses My servant, the statutes, and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.” Malachi 4:4

Sound Doctrine

How are we to look at this verse in light of the New Covenant?¹⁵³

“The Law of Moses” – given on Mount Horeb¹⁵⁴ – was for Old Covenant believers in the nation of ethnic Israel. “The Law of Christ”¹⁵⁵ has been given to New Covenant disciples of Christ in every nation.¹⁵⁶

Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant Law.¹⁵⁷ Yet, we are *“not being without the law of God, but under the law of Christ”*.¹⁵⁸ But in the Old Testament scriptures we can find New Covenant implications of what Jesus accomplished. So, is there a New Covenant implication the Holy Spirit would have for us in this verse? I’m sure there are other insights to be had, but this is what I received: **The “Law of God” is sound doctrine.** In other words, *“Remember*

¹⁵³ Rather than Dispensational Theology or Covenant Theology, my theological lens is called New Covenant Theology. For a simple and clear understanding of New Covenant Theology, see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-covenant-theology.html>

¹⁵⁴ Exodus 19-31; Cf. Exodus 34. Mount Sinai is an alternate name for Mount Horeb:

<https://www.carm.org/other-questions/are-mount-horeb-and-mount-sinai-the-same-mountain/>

¹⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-31; Cf. Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 5-7. The Law of Christ is the “internalization” of The Law of God. For a simple and clear understanding of The Law of Christ, see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/law-of-Christ.html>

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 28:18-29; Cf. Psalm 22:27-28; 98:2-3; Isaiah 42:1-4

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 10:4; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:9.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2. Just one aspect of the Law of Christ is that it is the “internalization” of The Law of God: Compare Jeremiah 31:33 with Hebrews 10:16; compare Isaiah 29:13 with Matthew 5:27; compare Leviticus 19:17 with Matthew 15:7-9; 23:25-27.

sound doctrine.” In the context of this passage in Malachi, we can extrapolate that “the fathers” should help “the children” “Remember sound doctrine”.

I am very concerned about the neglect - and even the denigration - of sound doctrine in our generation. As in the Early Church, we once again need to have thoroughly biblical discussions and definitions of major Christian doctrines.¹⁵⁹ The Church in our generation - and for those who want to make a distinction, even the Ecclesia in our generation - has a dire need to “Remember sound doctrine”. I have written on this topic in an article entitled, *The Foundation Stones – Joined to the Cornerstone*.¹⁶⁰

Not all elders in the Ecclesia are necessarily the “gatekeepers”¹⁶¹ of sound doctrine. The Lord has appointed some as teachers¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Some of the major heresies which confronted the Early Church are listed here: <https://www.wednesdayintheword.com/earlychurchheresies/> And as with the Early Church, I believe the Spirit of Truth is at work guiding the Ecclesia into all truth (John 16:12-15) also again today through intensive discussions of doctrines such as: “Who and What is the Word of God?”, “What is the relationship between the Old and the New Covenants?”, “What, When, and Where is the Kingdom of God?”, and “What is the Atonement?”, “How can a Christian be in the World but not of the World?”, “How does the Christian relate to the State?”, et. al. However, it is not within the scope of this article to enter into the various discussions of these things here.

¹⁶⁰ Read and Download: <https://www.AtChristsTable.org> or

<https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT018.html>

Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T_HRFYZRjI

¹⁶¹ Cf, <https://www.gotquestions.org/gatekeepers-in-the-Bible.html>

¹⁶² Ephesians 4:11

for the Body to help define doctrine so that *“we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.”*¹⁶³ But this is my point: In recent church history¹⁶⁴ there has been a plethora of “winds of doctrine” proliferated via the Internet and various ministry movements – some based in authentic moves of the Spirit, some emerging from a corruption of a move of the Spirit (usually by centering on certain aspects instead of centering on Christ), and being merely a travesty of a move of the Spirit, essentially as “marketing schemes” for the promotion of an individual ministry or groups of ministries. *“There is nothing new under the sun”*¹⁶⁵ and elders can recognize present-day “movements” in the last two categories which are merely new versions of past “movements” dressed in new garb. **Elders in the Ecclesia have lived through these things, and those elders “after God’s own heart” have learned to discern what is true and what is false in message and ministry according to sound doctrine. This discernment needs to be shared with the younger generations in the Body, pointing them to Christ and also pointing them to Christ-appointed teachers in the Body who are**

¹⁶³ Ephesians 4:14

¹⁶⁴ Viz. the past 75 years or the past two generations

¹⁶⁵ Ecclesiastes 1:9

teaching sound doctrine which can address errors in message and ministry.¹⁶⁶

History

⁸ “*For inquire now of the former^[a] generation, and pay attention^[b] to the findings^[c] of their ancestors;^[d] ⁹ For we were born yesterday^[e] and do not have knowledge, since our days on earth are but a shadow.^[f]”*

Job 8:8-9 New English Translation¹⁶⁷

Suffice it to say, those of the younger generations would be wise to pursue historical perspective and understanding from

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Exodus 10:2; Deuteronomy 6:20

¹⁶⁷ Footnotes in the NET Bible:

- a. [Job 8:8](#) Bildad is not calling for Job to trace through the learning of antiquity, but of the most recent former generation. Hebrews were fond of recalling what the “fathers” had taught, for each generation recalled what their fathers had taught.
- b. [Job 8:8](#) The verb כֹּנֵן (*khonen*, from כָּוַן, *kun*) normally would indicate “prepare yourself” or “fix” one’s heart on something, i.e., give attention to it. The verb with the ל (*lamed*) preposition after it does mean “to think on” or “to meditate” ([Isa 51:13](#)). But some commentators wish to change the כ (*kaf*) to a ב (*bet*) in the verb to get “to consider” (from בִּין, *bin*). However, M. Dahood shows a connection between כֹּנֵן (*knn*) and שָׁלַל (*sh’l*) in Ugaritic (“Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography,” *Bib* 46 [1965]: 329).
- c. [Job 8:8](#) The Hebrew has “the search of their fathers,” but the word is probably intended to mean what that observation or search yielded (so “search” is a metonymy of cause).
- d. [Job 8:8](#) *Heb* “fathers.”
- e. [Job 8:9](#) The Hebrew has “we are of yesterday,” the adverb functioning as a predicate. Bildad’s point is that they have not had time to acquire great knowledge because they are recent.
- f. [Job 8:9](#) E. Dhorme (*Job*, 116) observes that the shadow is the symbol of ephemeral things ([14:2](#); [17:7](#); [Ps 144:4](#)). The shadow passes away quickly (116).

the elders of the Ecclesia. We see in Scripture the phrases,
"Ask your fathers ... our fathers have told us ." ...

*"Remember the days of old, consider the years of all generations.
Ask your father and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell
you."* Deuteronomy 32:7

*"God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us
the work that You did in their days, in the days of old."*

Psalm 44:1

³*"Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.*
⁴*We will not conceal them from their children, but we will tell the
generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His power and
His wondrous works that He has done. ⁵ For He established a testimony
in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our
fathers that they were to teach them to their children, ⁶ So that the
generation to come would know, the children yet to be born, that they
would arise and tell them to their children."* Psalm 78:3-6

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill and Frances have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done formal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years helping to establish churches and train church leaders. Their Bible teaching ministry has taken them throughout the United States, as well as to other countries like Brazil, England, and Zimbabwe. They have pastored several churches, and as an itinerant Bible teacher, Bill has ministered in hundreds of churches on four continents. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed to church leaders worldwide. Bill and Frances have ministered together speaking in churches, leading spiritual formation seminars, personal mentoring, and administrating an international partnership of church leaders. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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Heroic

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