

Chapter 1

Introduction

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel”, Rev. 7vs.1-3.

When the Lord was teaching on the principle of persevering prayer in Lk.18, He came to vs.8 when he asked,... *“when the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”* The word *“faith”* as used here obtains from the root word, which translates to: *“credence” “constancy” “Gospel truth” “conviction of Godly truth or truthfulness to God”*. The Lord’s question here bothers on Righteousness. His question touches on the relevance of spiritual activities to the main burdens of the kingdom of God at the time *“when the son of man cometh”*. His question concerns the nature and character of ministry at the time of the end. The Lord was expressing concern on a matter, which was vital on the mind of God. True faith is rooted in righteousness. True faith reveals itself in present activities with a great awareness that times are in the hands of God. Men of true faith live their today as though tomorrow may never come.

Nonetheless they are as sure of their tomorrow as they are of today; however their lives are lived in a way that portrays them as not being tied to their today with respect to the spirit of materialism knowing that here they do not have a continuing city but that they seek one to come. Because of this awareness, true men of faith live as to bear "*credence*" to that on which their anchor holds because they love their master. A man's daily activities reflect his true faith and what he exactly believes. A man's actions justify his belief! When God spoke to Abram in Gen 12 vs.1 and said, "*get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee*" in vs.4 the account said, "*Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him*". From that moment on Abram's activities revealed that his life was no longer tied to the country of his nativity, rather it was tied to that word, which the Lord had spoken unto him. That is true faith!

The man which spoke to Daniel in Dan 12 vs.10 said, "*many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand*". The greatest wickedness is not that which is rooted in the ignorance of the truth. The greatest wickedness is to know the truth and to work contrary to the truth. This constitutes rebellion or doing "*violence to the covenant*". This is one of the two legs of wickedness that the man told Daniel will be more evident at the time of the end. The wicked will do more wickedly! This word to the man Daniel agreed with the word of the Lord in Mt 7 vs.22-23: "*many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*".

There are many Scriptural truths which point to the fact that at this time of the end of the church age, the line will be very thin between the vile and the precious, between those who serve the Lord and those who serve him not. The Scripture predicted such a falling away or defection from the truth that *“if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* As a matter of fact, *“except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened”* (Mt 24 vs.22).

One of the series of events to round up the Church age is the sealing of the minds of the servants (Elects) of God. The sealing of the minds of the elects becomes very important. This is because unrighteousness, defection from the truth, working iniquity in the name of the Lord, and all summary of evils and wickedness as had never been so vehement before, are to lay siege on the minds of men such that the minds of men will expectedly be totally averse to God’s that it will take a determined work of God to protect the minds of the elects!

In Scriptures, what bothers God is not outright evil done by that which is known to be evil for that is easy to handle. The matter for great concern is when evil is coated and wrapped in a cloak of righteousness for that is outright deception. The matter for concern is when the righteous in his garment of righteousness takes on the character of evil; and that is expectedly to be the unique mark of this age. This evil will come to the peak and promote general activities of evil until there is a sudden divine intervention in the affairs of men.

In vs. 1 of Rev. 7, there were these “*four angels*” standing on the “*four corners of the earth*, holding the “*four winds of the earth*” that “*the wind*” should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor any tree. The fact of “*four*” reveals a universal application scripturally. The problem to be addressed is on a universal scale. What calls for a work of sealing is global and calls for divine attention. The divine reaction to the issue at stake is also not only to be of universal application but is to affect all realms of human endeavour - the earth, the sea and the tree(s)! The Book of Revelation is particularly a Book of symbols. Simply put the earth from this passage relates to carnal Christians - supposed to be spiritual people that are nothing but earthly minded and materialistic. Paul said in Rom. 8 vs.5, “*for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh*”. In vs. 18-19 of Phil 3, he was even more vehement when he said, “*for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*”. Paul’s words were not directed to outright unbelieving men and women rather his address was to Christians “*who mind earthly things*”. In 1 Cor 15 vs. 47-48, he affirmed, “*the first man is of the earth, earthy.... as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy...*” Carnal Christians are simply to be understood as being referred to as “*the earth*” in Rev 7 vs. 1. The “*sea*” is the sea of humanity who, broadly speaking, has its ways opposed to God; call it the world of unbelievers. The trees have “*life*” in themselves. Their seed is also in them but they fall into various categories by life, by fruit and by character hence the need to first seal the minds of God’s servants...Several times in scriptures, winds come into focus in relation to judgement. Winds are also intervention instruments of deliverance when divine interest is at stake.

However, when the word is not in its plural form, its meaning weighs more heavily on the side of the operations of the Spirit of God. This is the allusion to which the Lord Jesus Christ made in John 3 vs. 8. Angels can be either human or Spirit for the word “*angel*” simply means a messenger. That is why the word translated as messenger to qualify John the Baptist in Mt 11 vs.10, was the same word left as “*angel*” in Rev 7 vs.2 and Revs 2 and 3 when the Lord referred to the messengers or the overseers over the seven churches in Asia Minor as the “*angels*” over those assemblies. If this is clear, then the “*another angel*” of Rev 7 vs.2 is human and corporate - a many membered messenger of God; a body of “*intercessors*”! This “*another angel*” was seen ascending from the east! That is instructive! To talk of ascending is to talk of moving from a lower to a higher place of spiritual activities or experience. The fact that this “*angel*” is said to ascend from the east does not make him to have a lower spiritual experience. However, the east is symbolic of a place of spiritual activities that are in direct conflict with the purposes of God. The emphasis is not necessarily on the geographical but the symbolic east. You will recall the account in Genesis 11 from vs.2. Nimrod led a company of people from “*the east*” and found a “*plain in the land of Shinar*”. It is clear from Gen 10 vs.10 that the land of Shinar was the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod. It is also clear that part of this kingdom was declared “*Babel*” as revealed in Gen 11 vs.9: “*because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth...*” Any prophetic reference to the “*east*”, in some respect, is a direct allusion to man’s original rebellion, which has continued to take on the same character in every age.

You will also note that the river in Ez.47, which takes its source from under the sanctuary of the “*millennial (End time) temple*” proceeds towards the “*east*” because there is a pre-determined purpose in Divine Mind to be accomplished in the “*east*”. The “*east*” alludes to the state of a spiritual people who have chosen the way of rebellion or said in another way, “*the east*” reveals the situation of a people who once knew God in His redemptive capacity and knew his demands but decided to choose the way of self-gratification - the carnal and materialistic path of serving God. God will not have shown as much concern but that such wield tremendous influence over considerable number of people. They must have attained a place of confidence in the hearts of the people before they begin to defect in subtle dimensions from the way of truth. Such was Balam! Such was Jezebel! And “*Core...*”! Jude 11. And Hymenaeus.. 1Tim. 1 vs.20 and Alexander the Copper Smith 2 Tim 4 vs.14!

The angel ascending from the east was heard “*interceding*” for a delay in release of divine “*judgement*” saying “*hurt not.... Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads...*” (Rev 7 vs.3). In vs. 2 this “*angel*” was said to have “*the seal of the living God*” and “*his*” target of concern is the “*foreheads*” of “*the servants of our God*”. The word seal is “*a signet*” or “*a stamp impressed*”. The purpose of a seal is “*to fence or inclose or to block up*” in relation to “*the mind or cognitive faculties*”. The seal as here expressed relates to the mind of understanding. When the angel that ascended from the east feels so strongly concerned about the foreheads (or the minds) of the servants of our God, the message is clear. The battle- ground is in the mind.

It is to be understood that this end time is to be characterized by spiritual activities and dead works which have general negative impact on the minds of God's people in relation to the overall interest and purposes of God. It is clear from scriptures that the minds of people will be so negatively impacted from activities of rebellion and twisted Gospel that the minds of many are bound to be twisted thereby taking on a new mind set and character which are alien to the nature of Christ and the character of the Gospel. The general way and attitude of many people are to be so averse to God's overall interests and purposes that it will attract sufficient Divine attention to warrant a well-packaged Divine reaction. Part of the Divine reaction is to raise the voice of "*the angel*" which was seen ascending from "*the east*". The purpose of God through the voice of this angel is to bring forth a corrective ministry that will have a universal application to recover the minds of those who are not "*son(s) of perdition*". This angel, through whose voice God is to bring forth this corrective ministry is not one single messenger of God. The "*angel*" is to be understood to be a set of messengers ordained by God for a corrective spiritual work in these closing days of time. Their ministry is supposed to be as a lone voice of witness to the Church and to the world. Noah was like that. John the Baptist was like that. That is God's principle so "*that he might be just*" who is "*the justifier of (them) which believeth in Jesus*" (Rom 3 vs.26).

What makes these fierce looking "*four angels*" in Rev 7 vs.1 position themselves strategically on the "*four corners of the earth*" and ready to unleash, must be astoundingly serious! No wonder, there is an urgent need to importune for "*the (true) servants of our God*". Many of God's people have simple, innocent and sincere minds but "*simplicity*" itself is a malaise, nay a plague - a terrible disease!

“The simple inherit folly.... how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?...” (Prov.14vs.18; Prov.1vs.22). To be simple spiritually speaking is not to be excused from God’s indictment but he is a God of mercy. May the good Lord deliver the simple from his spiritual folly.

Chapter 2

The Soulish Religious Activities

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea”, ... (Rev 7 vs.2).

Earlier in vs.1 there were “*four angels*” who have strategically positioned themselves on the “*four corners*” of the earth. Their intention is to hurt the earth, the sea and the trees. Prophetic Scriptures can be so interesting that they are of no benefit to the carnal and the materialistic mind. How much the church has become so materialistic! The Lord’s Christ ministered to the whole man with emphasis to making him realise his spiritual values and his beginning in God. The church that is supposed to be the voice of the same Christ ministers to sustain and enhance man’s values with regards to the powers and instincts in his soul which in turn fire up his fleshly activities. Little wonder why everything the world can offer to bring soulish activities to the peak has been imbibed by the church, imported into the church and integrated by the church with her God given values. Little wonder why such a terrible mixture in the church today!

Everything in the church is mixed: the music, the choir, the singing, the orchestral displays, the message, the dressing, the ecclesiastical arrangements, the methods, the gimmicks-name it, all are but stinking and deafeningly sickening.

It has become so bad that the church is populated for a two fold reason: the first is for the purpose of what blessing can be obtained from God and the expected blessing is all material anyway.

Child bearing, financial breakthroughs, promotions or general progress at work, prospering business, deliverance from one physical ailment or the other, from demonic afflictions, oppressions and all the “-ssions” strings attachable with such spiritual malaises, all account for but one leg of the reasons for the Church’s population on a general note today. The second leg-reason is for the purpose of fun, entertainment, and excitement. Man loves to continually excite himself. You delve into history of kings of Nations and their kingdoms and you will see what I mean! Man loves to break his monotony with fun and entertainments - angelic choir displays, good architecture, well-dressed and golden-bangles-carrying-more-than-ordinary-humans that excite the seat of lustful emotions, artistic and oratorical display of “*sermon*” of the man of God which is all laden with gimmicks, are all but part of the overall excitement-trip. The sincere, God-seeking, spiritually hungry and thirsty innocent souls who truly yearn for the living God in their hearts constitute but the insignificant few that worship God in spirit and in Truth and are in the minority.

While God will always bless even in the midst of complete deception because His Name is involved, and because it is His nature to bless, His Heart is nonetheless towards the poor, insignificant “*flock of slaughter*” even the “*poor of the flock*” that wait upon him. The four angels whose assignment is to hurt the earth, the sea and the trees know more than to suppose that their assignment is to afflict the rocks and vegetable soils and the apple tress, the orange trees or the Mediterranean sea or the red sea.

If God chooses to affect those ones, He will. However, those are not the ones that offended God, rather it is the humans in all of human spheres of operation who have continually chosen the path of rebellion against God who must suffer for their sins. They are the ones to suffer the hurt for the damages they have done. The targets of operation by the “*four angels*” are therefore humans and not those in-animate materials. Tradition has taught otherwise.

Something is certain about the angel spoken of in vs.2 of Rev 7: he has the seal of the living God. This seal is nothing but the true word of the living God - the undiluted living word that has no hidden motive other than a burning zeal and passion and genuine heart’s yearning for their God. David the Psalmist prophesied concerning his Lord in one of his Psalms “*upon the lilies*” when he said, “*for the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me*” (Ps 69 vs.9). What is this “*zeal*” all about? It is but the burning passions and desires that are all wrapped in only one goal or one desire to promote God’s glory and the glory of his temple. This is what the Lord’s Christ demonstrated in John 2 vs. 15 “*when he had made a scourge of small cords*” and drove out of the temple all those that sold “*oxen*” and “*sheep*” and “*doves*” and “*changers of money*”; he also drove out the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers money, and overthrew their tables. “*And said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence; make not my father’s house an house of merchandise*” (John 2 vs.13-17). Someone will say this was an over reaction by the Son of God. But that was the peak of abomination in the Holy place and God frowns at this in any age when its character is fully developed.

The angel that has the seal of the living God consists of human messengers - men and women who will have chosen to refuse to go astray but rather have decided to keep "*the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from*" God, His Divine principles and the ways of the cross of Christ. This corporate, many-membered voice of witness is to be empowered by God to bring corrective ministry to re-orientate the minds which are not yet seared, those innocent men and women whose souls are genuinely yearning for God but who by some other than they can explain have found themselves under the wrong influences of "*idol shepherds*". This "*angel*" has a ministry towards them who are "*of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*", (*Is 57 vs.15*). The humble and the contrite ones are the "*servants of our God*" in *Rev 7 vs3*. To be "*servants of our God*" does not connote being "*a big man of God*" who has all the credentials of storming cities and Nations. It has nothing to do with title or ecclesiastical placement by human ordinations. However, it has everything to do with being God's bond-slaves, God's "*doulous*". Not bond-slaves because of physical activities and dead works many times wrongly interpreted as ministry but bond-slaves because they bear his true harness! They are yoked to their master. They know his will; they do his will. This is not talking physical, restless, fruitless and soulish activities. This is talking about the cross. This is talking about having encountered God in the place of total submission to his rule and authority over our lives. It is talking about a culture-the culture of a deep-seated personal relationship. It is talking about fellowship and communion. It is talking about a love relationship with the Saviour at a romance level. It is an expressive relationship in the place of divine presence under "*the wings of the Cherubims*".

Ministry is nothing aside of an outflow from a relationship. Ministry is not a department in a spiritual vocation. It is neither a spiritual vocation. Ministry has always been wrongly conceptualised by a greater majority of God's people. No wonder the popular prayer, "*God, what is my ministry?*" Ministry is not some experience peculiar and exclusive dependent on who is in focus. "*Because it is Bro Tom, then his ministry is....*" no, nothing of the sort. Beloved, ministry is an outflow. It is a life. It is an experience. It grows and flows out of a relationship and at no time become separable from the relationship that produced it. If the relationship grows, the ministry grows; if the relationship wanes, the ministry becomes polluted, poisoned, mixed, coloured and Satan-anointed. This is because ministry is the life of Christ that finds expression through men that relate with Him. That is why ministry that is expressed and the vessel of expression become united in one. That is why you can call Paul a ministry or a ministry Gift. **Any man or woman who gives himself or herself over to God according to the redemptive provisions through Christ can rise to the estate and in the glory of a ministry Gift.** A man or woman who expresses ministry through the means of human-divine-love-relationship is known by type and by character. Whatever he brings forth is spiced by the cross of Christ. The cross is the true measuring rod to place any ministry. Ministries will rise or fall only as they come side by side with the cross of Christ

"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev 7 vs.3). Apart from the inherent weakness conferred on man due to the fallen nature of Adam, the mind of man is one known moulding ground for the activities that produce his personality.

His mind is affected by what he sees, what he hears or by anything that can affect any of his natural senses. These mould and form his character and mind-set. Prayer is good and a spiritual weapon to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. However, experience will show that the true word of God is the indefatigable, un-defeatable, potent weapon that will demolish the high Jericho walls of human hybrid of ideas and imaginations coated in spiritual robes that have formed his mind-set, (Heb. 4:12). A man cannot think better neither can he act better than his environment. That is why the simple Christians of three to four decades ago lived to their vows of Christian consecration and God could in return honour them with tangible power and glory while the sophisticated contemporary day materialistic Christian knows next to nothing about the life of consecration. The Psalm of Asaph in Ps 50 vs.23 has continued to be a favourite and sings, *“whoso offereth praise glorifieth me(2ice) and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God”* The prophecy of Agur the son of Jakeh in Prov 30 vs.11-14 complements these thoughts when he wrote, *“there is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men”. God honours the generation that honours Him! “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Is 66 vs.2). “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. Amos 3vs. 7. The beauty about God is that He has feelings.*

His heart yearns for fellowship with men and when He can see one whose heart is truly seeking for Him, He bestows favour, honour, and respect on such a one. It is for this reason that He can only hearken to the intercession of this “angel” that has the seal of the living God, whose cry is *“hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads”*.. The seal, with which the servants of God are to be sealed in their foreheads, is the true and pure word that is in harmony with the Mind of God and which has the mark of his approval. God cannot but hearken to the prayer of *“this poor man”* of Ps 34 vs.6: *“this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles”*. This is, one because he has respect to the offering of his “angel” and two, because the subject of the intercession itself is *“the servants of our God”* who by circumstances beyond them have been as those bound in the great river Euphrates (Rev 9 vs.14).

There are great responsibilities before those who have humble hearts and contrite spirit. They are to exercise themselves to look away from the sickly, spiritual environment but rather exercise their hearts towards God because there is enough of Divine mercy to cause every heart, which is stirred towards God to also understand what the Will of God is for them in this critical moment in the history of creation. One thing unique about God and His principles run through the message to the seven churches in Asia Minor. There is the general aspect of each of the messages but each message ends with a unique note to individuals, *“he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...”* We are not judged based on denominational affiliations, political leanings in the denominations or ecclesiastical associations or relationships or placements.

Each man is judged based on his heart conditions in relation to the ways of the cross and its demands and that is the most fearful aspect of our walk with God, why? This is because a man may not even have a total knowledge of his own heart. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jer.17vs.9.* The only antidote to this problem is the true ministry of the Word. It is *“the word of God (that) is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” Heb 4 vs.12.* It is this word, which can no longer be found in its true nature and character today, but *“if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Ps.11vs.3.*

Chapter 3

Sealing – Understanding Its Meaning

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the Children of Israel. Of the tribe of... were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of ...” (Rev 7vs.1-8).

The graphic casting of this passage seems to identify it purely with the natural nation of Israel. However, the purposes of God go beyond natural boundaries, geography, colour, and culture. Hear the promise made to Abraham, *“and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..” (Gen 22 vs.18)*. Paul elaborating on this later said, *“To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3 vs.16, 29)*.

Paul further said, *“for the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith for if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect...for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called,”* (Rom. 4 vs.13-14; 9 vs.6b-7). Paul summarised these thoughts when he said, *“for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”* (Gal 6 vs. 15-16).

The work of sealing evidently is for God’s spiritual nation, Israel. Israel simply reveals a covenant relationship. The word Israel is a covenant name and in Prophetic scriptures, it simply speaks of God’s covenant people that is, a nation of men and women who are related to God through Jesus Christ in his redemptive capacity and through his redemptive provisions. Whatever peculiarity can be associated with one particular son of Jacob has its redemptive anti-typical equivalent for the spiritual nation called Israel. The purpose of the sealing is therefore to in-work into God’s covenant people the divine anti-typical nature of these tribes of *“Israel”*. The nature of God being in-worked into these covenant people of God which in other words is termed as sealing is associated with *“twelve”* in the twelve tribes to reveal the divine purpose for those who are sealed in relation to their destiny for the throne. Twelve is associated with government. It relates to ruling and reigning with Christ. Ability to stay clear of all idolatry and all religious evils and maintain spiritual decency according to the culture of God in Christ Jesus leads to divine enthronement.

The over all purposes of God through the redemptive provisions is to change the nature of corruption which man acquired through the fall. Long after a man is born-again, the conflicts of nature continue in him. Paul expressed the conflict this way, *“for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: So that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* (Gal 5 vs. 17). Being born-again is the beginning of a long spiritual journey. The fact of having been born-again is not equal to having totally lost the capacity to sin. When a man is born again, he is hooked up to the Holy Spirit through his own spirit but his soul man and his body of corruption is entirely in his own control through his will. The Holy Spirit teaches and enlightens him on what the will of God is, but the responsibility of the man is to make a choice between his personal will and the will of God. What facilitates his ability to make the better choice in the face of a present challenge is the amount of the word of God which has become *“flesh”* in or become part of him. How much of such word of God has become part of a man depends on what spiritual environment to which he is exposed and the spiritual values and culture of such spiritual environment. The greatest disservice to God is for God’s shepherds not to labour to make the word, which is able to save the soul available to God’s flock. A natural man cannot be better looking than the kind of menu that is available to him. The culture of a spiritually progressive and dynamic covenant people of God is not to keep feeding on one monotonous spiritual diet. Those people will never grow nor be able to rise in victory over the conflicts of nature and the daily challenges posed by the sin-ridden environment. The purpose of the word is to change man’s vile nature; it is the word that brings man on the spiritual ascension trip. Jesus said, *“verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6 vs.53-54). The word that constitutes the sealing work must be capable of breaking the natural man from his attachment to the worldly values and from his trust and dependence on the things that have temporary span of life. Emphasis must return to the word of God. It is lack of it that has made room for emergency factory produced mass half-baked or unbaked Christians. The integrity of the word preached determines the integrity of the spiritual people produced.

The work of sealing is a work of separation. True ministry of the word will sieve between people and sort between the vile and the precious, between those who serve the Lord and those who serve him not. Sealing separates between the goat and the sheep and between sheep and sheep. “And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and he goats. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; behold, I even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle ... and I will judge between cattle and cattle” (Ez.34 vs. 17,20,22b). Jesus brought certain vital elements which revealed the nature of a work of sealing into focus when he said, “*think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword (the word of truth). For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in-law against her mother in-law. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Mt 10 vs. 34-35, 37-39).*

While in a general sense, there is God's programme designed for the people of God, in some unique sense, there is a dimension of the ministry of the word, which raises unto God a people whose lives matter nothing to them but only as they find a true expression in God through the ministry of ashes by the workings of the cross of Christ.

The work of sealing is a work, which reveals the state of a man's heart. What a man relates to is a direct manifestation of the state of his heart. Timothy said "*for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*" (II Tim 4 vs.3-4). Emergency "*Christians*" produced because of what they want God to do for them will most likely remain as babes for a long time if they abide as faithful Christians at all. This is because what was bait for making them become born again is what their hearts keep yearning for. "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Lk.12 vs.34). But the good Lord counselled, "*lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (Mt 6 vs.19-20). The issue is not, being blessed or not being blessed materially, the issue is: the matter, first of the heart. That is why the law is, "*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU*" (Mt 6 vs.33). The heart of man is so restless as the restless sea and why is he restless? Nothing but for that which he needs for his self-gratification.

He spends all his life in endless pursuit of that which does not last. Jesus said, *“take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store house nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?”* If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind for all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Lk 12 vs.22-31).

How men and women whose reasons for looking for God is what they want God do for them ought to learn the lesson as to the nature of God and what the Lord demands from them. The sooner this lesson is learnt the sooner they will stop exercising themselves in the futility of temporal pursuits which today are but tomorrow, no more. God’s overall goal and purposes will be to have a people with a re-orientated mind set. The fall of Adam bestowed upon man, a mind of corruption. His thoughts are become degenerate and grossly materialistic. In Gen 6 vs.5, the scripture says, *“every imagination of the thoughts of (man’s) heart was only evil continually”*. And in Gen 8 vs. 21 God said, *“the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth”*

Even when a man's thought appears positive to himself, it is still majorly evil, impure, coloured and selfish because his thoughts are produced from a marred, debased and degenerate mind. Even for the "born again", it takes a progressive work of recovery by the Holy Spirit to gradually in-work the mind of Christ into him. This is why it is not additional sermon to feed the carnal mind of man that the world needs but the Word of truth which exposes the true state of man and provokes him to desire, long and yearn for a work of regeneration, a work of recovery of mind, a work of restoration of his lost values, a work of reformation and re-moulding, a work of divine character formation and a work of re-instatement to man's former estate and more. This is why there cannot but be Divine disapproval of anything which appears spiritual but does nothing than keeps man in a stagnant status-quo in relation to God. Man is full of himself. Man is self-enthroned. Man is the god of himself; even the man who claims to be born again, if he has not come face to face with a remarkable encounter with God through the workings of the Holy Spirit, is a man that is self-enthroned. That is why the simpler hearted ones keep feeling a sense of lack of personal fulfilment in their spiritual walk with God. This is why a little word of exhortation produces such a stirring in such that they are brought to a point of need for another re-dedication!

Miracles and God's material provisions are not God's first emphases, rather those things are the Divine relief measures to assist the mind of man to come to rest so God can be able to reach him effectively by the instrument of the Holy Spirit in the environment of the true Word of God which is able to cast "*down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (II Cor 10 vs.5). May God cause his servants to know what the Will of the Lord is.

Chapter 4

Sealing – Its Nature and Character

The nature and character of the work of sealing as have been x-rayed for the past three chapters by examining Rev 7 vs. 1-3 can be complemented by the revelation given to the man Ezekiel.

“And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies towards the North, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side; and the man said unto him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eyes spare, neither have you pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. And they began at the ancient men which were before the house” (Ez. 9 vs. 2-6).

This vision by Ezekiel consists of several parts to it. The six men of this vision breaks into two ministries with different assignments. The respective assignments, which are both expressively manifest through the respective descriptions of these six men and also through their different commissions, are tied in one.

Their two assignments have but one goal. This is to accomplish a work of sealing of the minds “*of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*”. This one statement has already created a line of division between those who sigh and those who sigh not, between those who seek, know, and identify with the purposes and the burdens of the heart of God and those who do the opposite. Here we find a group of people who have a different mind-set. They seek to identify with God and His thoughts. They are uncomfortable and disquieted within them because God is uncomfortable and disquieted within Him. Because they love their Master, they have entered into a covenant of consecration with him. They have taken a vow of commitment and a vow of separation to love Him, to desire to do His Will and to carry His burden upon their shoulders. They have come to terms with the cross and they are willing to die to their own self-will, self-desires, personal goals and self-ambitions. Nothing matters to them but living for the Master. They have come to distinguish mere activities from relationship in relation to the Master. They have come to make a difference between mere dead works and a living relationship. They know there is a difference between service and knowing him.

They know there is difference between ministering to the Lord as distinct from ministering to the house and they know that the first comes before the second, that the second is just but an out-flow from experience in the first. They know what is true ministry, that ministry is but an out-flow of life from a relationship with the Master. They are aware that ministry is but a product of a living relationship with the Saviour who is also Lord. They know that ministry cannot be taken aside from or as being independent of a bestowed grace that results from the life of acquaintance in his presence.

They do not see ministry as a spiritual vocation, which attracts material benefits for which they need to seek in desperation. Ministry to them is that for which they least qualify and which requires extra Divine encouragement to bring about them as an experience. These ones have won the Heart and the attention of the Almighty. The God who rewards every true labour of love will not treat these obscure, insignificant, seemingly weak and un-important saints on equal ground with all other dwellers in Jerusalem; nay God does not deal with them in general terms with the generality of His people. He will but always separate such ones from age to age. They are the true yoke fellows, "*servants of our God*". They are the custodians of the Father's Mind. There is a Divine need to confirm their minds and establish their mind-set in the way of righteousness. They require a spiritual environment that stabilises their focus on the Lord. The Lord gives them the desires of their heart by causing them to have a right of access to the "*hidden manner*" in the "*golden pot*" inside of the Ark of his presence. The hidden manner reveals the mystery of His will. The hidden manner unveils and unfolds the counsel of God and the Divine purposes. It unites men with God at the foot of the cross and produces death to everything else but life unto God alone. This hidden manna is the instrument of sealing of the minds of these elects in the environment produced by the Holy Spirit.

This work of sealing is so important to God that "*one man*" among the six and who was clothed with linen, and was having a writer's inkhorn by his side was specially designated with the work of sealing of the minds of these saints who are "*separate from sinners*". And God "*called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that...*" Ez.9 vs.3b-4a.

These set of saints are very important to the Lord because they are able to reach and touch that which matters to Him most. The inkhorn is the pen of a ready writer with which the word which is able to save their souls is engrafted upon their minds. God spoke to Zechariah by prophecy and said, *“behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day”* (Zecch 3 vs.9). Joshua was the high priest - a type of which Jesus is the anti-type. This stone stands in prophecy to represent a people who have found favour in Divine eyes and who receive a unique attention and bestowal, which is only exclusive to the son of God- *“upon one stone shall be seven eyes”!*

When God spoke concerning Israel - the type of which God’s saints are but the anti-type he said, *“behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”* (Jer 31 vs.31-33). God’s covenant with His people is the covenant of His law - His truth. This covenant of hearing the truth was broken by these people.

His programme for restoration involves a re-enactment of His truth and this He does through the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those that love Him and who do not detest hearing His word. *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”, (Ps 119 vs.11)*. His covenant is to seal the hearts of His people with His Truth and this He does by the work of engraving in the hearts of the people. The overall goal of God is to have a people into whom the Divine nature has been in-worked. People of His likeness; people who are His true image-His express image! The writer of Hebrew said that Jesus is the *“brightness of (God’s) glory and the express image of his person” (Heb 1 vs.3)*. This is God’s goal for man - to turn man into the *“brightness of his glory, the express image of his person”*. The mind of every natural man is faulty, corrupt and depraved: *“the imaginations of his heart is continually evil”*. Even for the man who has enjoyed, in measure, the grace brought about by the redemptive provisions, it takes a patient and consistent yieldedness to God through exposure to the right environment of the Truth mixed with faith to overcome this terrible body of death. *“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 7 vs. 24-25)*. This is why God shows Divine interest for men and women, who pay special attention to the word of Truth. *“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”(Is 66 vs.2)*. In *Ps 50 vs.5-6* he said, *“gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness...”* God’s ultimate purpose is to change our vile body. It is a progressive work of patience. It requires a desire for truth and for righteousness. God will always bless – even the worst sinner. Material prosperity is therefore never a sign or mark of righteousness.

Nothing attracts Divine favour and attention like a heart that yearns for righteousness, a heart that desires to live for Him. The Psalmist prophesied of Jesus, *“sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo I come...I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”*(Ps 40 vs.6-8). Divine Will is His law engraven upon the hearts so that Divine righteousness, nature and character may be imparted to a people that yearn to do His will.

Malachi wrote, *“and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord...”* (Mal 3 vs.3-4).

The work of sealing is not putting some physical tattoos on the physical foreheads of some anciently, beard wearing, long-robed, natural sons of Jacob in the land of Palestine for so some tradition has claimed. Traditions have always resulted from limited imagination of the puny minds of men to apprehend the spiritual periscope of divine thoughts and truths. Man due to limitation imposed by his depraved fallen nature has always interpreted scriptures carnally thinking that material can be made equal to the spiritual since the material appeals to his carnal taste. However, the work of sealing is rather a spiritual work and consists of in-working the divine nature and character through the ministry of the word of Truth from Divine mind. It is a process that is designed of God to effect in man, God’s image and God’s likeness. It involves a making, a fashioning, a creation, a re-moulding and a re-modelling. *“And God said, let us MAKE man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...”* (Gen 1 vs.26).

There is a specie of men, sons and daughters of Adam, who are rising and will rise in faith, power and glory as they lay hold on all the benefits of redemptive provisions and despise the debilitating forces of the body of corruption and break through into victory over sin and corruption and all that is called death and its attendant shame and reproaches and proclaim a new day of glory upon creation. God's attention is always to be concentrated upon all them who look beyond the realm material, but have a continuing burning zeal and a deep groaning for the dawning of a new day in God. A people who rather see Satan as Satan - the enemy that he is and believe God and every word that proceeds out of His mouth which said, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. That a people of God's purpose will rise in power and glory to become the fulfilment of all of Divine goal and design on a day of glory is as certain as the word spoken by God is immutable. Divine urgent work today is to accomplish this work of sealing the minds of his servants who desire nothing but see His will done in the earth. For such men and women whose forefronts are made as the three Hebrew lads, their goal and aspiration go beyond what they can enjoy in the realm mundane whose benefits are but temporal and glory ephemeral. They are determined to establish the rule of God upon the earth.

The seed that empowers a man to find fulfilment in this thought, which is encapsulated in the Divine work of sealing, is inseminated at the very instance when a man is born again. And every man or woman who is born again has the potentiality to express the fullness of the reality of this thought if he or she places his spiritual priority right and exposes himself or herself to the right spiritual environment.

Chapter 5

Sealing – Those in Focus

“He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate...every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inhorn by his side..” (Ez.9vs.1-2).

Cause them that have charge. *The vision in Ez 9 is a revelation of certain spiritual ministries that have divine custody, responsibility and spiritual oversight over the city of God’s people. It is also a revelation of certain dimensions of grace, which is for the specific purpose of discharging certain spiritual responsibilities that bother on oversight by divine empowerment. “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb 5 vs.4). Looking at Ezekiel, he was one among “the men that came from the way of the higher gate”. In Daniel’s day in Babylon, Daniel was not necessarily among the vocal, visible leadership chosen among the people by lot using urim and thumim yet there was the voice that manifested itself through the “decree of the watchers”.*

Hear the man declare in unambiguous manner, *“this matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will...”(Dan 4 vs.17).* It is clear that at this time in Babylon, there are at least three sets of leadership in relation to the Jew in Babylon. There was the visible Babylonish political government symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar.

There was the spiritual/political leadership that the people knew back in Jerusalem and many of whose members are right there in Babylon and under the rule of Babylonian captivity. There was also this set of young lads who had no visible credentials to be in leadership either political or spiritual among God's people in captivity. However, these boys had "*another spirit*" and this placed them above all other forms of government/leadership, both visible and invisible. Therefore, they can declare with the invincibility of the character of their inner quality: "*by the word of the holy ones*". Just as Daniel among some rather obscure, invisible, not so vocal boys who cannot be taken by mistake for anything called leaders by human factors of assessment or any standard known to man, Ezekiel found expression in some kind of amorphous spiritual leadership of some sort which rather became God's vehicle of expression of his spiritual rule, authority and oversight.

When the Divine instruction was given to cause "*them that had charge over the city*" draw near, six men appeared. These six men immediately broke into two by ministry, by assignment and by commission. One group consisting of one man among the six was commissioned solely to accomplish Divine desire for a group of secluded, "*afflicted,*" "*tormented*" *destitutes*. That only one of the six men was designated solely for this group reveals their character. They are but few insignificant ordinary men and women who pose no threat by number to any; they may be so few that they find expression freely in all occupations. Such were "*the seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*" in the days of Elijah as recorded in 1Kings 19 vs.18.

That the one man commissioned to set a mark upon the foreheads of these men was associated with linen cloth identifies this ministry of setting a mark on the foreheads of the men, with that of the Lord Jesus Christ. It depicts His unique ministry in all of the Divine provisions “*for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (Col 2 vs.9). Identifying Him in this respect is to reveal that the people to whom He was commissioned in this passage are those in whom is found His burden: they identify with His purpose in all respects. They have contacted what is His running, overbearing and unique burden and they must receive Divine work of engracement and engraving or sealing!

Then the other five of “*the six men*” which do not necessarily interpret to mean the literal numerical count but which by every intent and purpose reveal another level of spiritual ministry towards “*the city*” - the people of God. “*Five*” represents grace; it is also a number that represents the five-fold ministry gifts. It is to reveal that the Divine work, which amounted to Divine indictment here, will come vide a combination of spiritual instrument and tools of expression, which will be of five-fold ministry gifts in nature and character. This is also to be seen as the ministry of Jesus Christ at another level for a peculiar purpose-this time an indictment! It is a corporate voice expressing Divine mind by different and distinct anointing but speaking the same thing but with diverse unction to bring God’s people to the place of acknowledging their state with corresponding repentance.

Said in another way, the six men express two levels of ministry from the same Divine source as personalised in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each level of ministry has a message in Divine Mind to a target of delivery. They are two ministries to two sets of God’s people.

One set as Zephaniah put it, are *“them that are sorrowful... who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden”* (Zeph.3 vs.18). God said in this Book of Zephaniah, *“I will gather them that are sorrowful”*.

In Ez.9, they are referred to as *“the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”* In Ps. 50 vs.5, they are called *“my saints... that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”* In Mal 3:3, they are the anti-type of the *“Sons of Levi”*.

This set of people in any age, hardly become visible through political manoeuvre except as they are manifested by circumstances, either to bring forth the word of God for the purpose of indictment, or to hold back the hand of the enemy or to hold the hands of God for a needed Divine intervention. They hardly meddle with the affairs of this world, neither are they lost in the game of a mixture of the things of this world and the things of God. They do not work for fame, for recognition or for acknowledgement. They can be shy and men of the wilderness yet they can be bold and stern when they come face to face with challenges that reveal the character of which they are made. There are always such men and women not known but by the heavens who stand every time to minister to their needs. Such was the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry for, *“he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not”* (John 1 vs.10-11). There are those who carry His seed and His burden and will do His will and His bidding at whatever cost to their personal ego or personal ambition for says the Psalmist, *“a seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.*

They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this” (Ps 22 vs.30-31).

This seed is viewed in Divine eyes differently. It does not constitute an exclusive class aside of those among God’s people who by reason of dedication, separation and consecration, have distinguished themselves to serve the Lord in a “*perpetual covenant*” by sacrifice. The first level of ministry is to this set of people while the other level of ministry is to all who do not find expression in this first target of delivery.

Examining the instruments of the six men, one was an inkhorn, the other the slaughter weapon. This is but additional confirmation of the nature and character of the works to be accomplished in each target of delivery. “*And one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side...*” An inkhorn consists of a case for reed pens and incorporates a container for the writing liquid. It is clear that the unique assignment of the man who had the inkhorn is to write on (or seal) the minds of those for whom he was assigned. The necessity for this writing is four fold. One, the people concerned have identified with a burden, a vision, or a purpose to date. The Divine writing will confirm and establish their mind in the same.

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and toward all men,... to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father...” (I Thes.3 vs.12-13). “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (II Thes 2 vs.16-17).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5 vs.10).

The second fold reason which necessitates the writing to be accomplished by the man with the inkhorn is to engrave Divine law, Divine statutes, Divine burdens, Divine counsels, Divine mind and purpose with attendant grace and ability upon the hearts of the people for whom the man is commissioned. *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31 vs.33-34).

The writer of the Book of Hebrews referring to this Scripture said, *“for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8 vs.10-12).*

The third fold reason is to in-work into them the Divine nature that is, to imbue them with grace in the inner man; to work into them Divine ability and power; to quicken Divine nature and character from within their spirits and to give them the Mind of Christ. The writing establishes in the people concerned a reconstitution in their cell structure. The writing is to substitute the corrupt nature of the fallen man with the in-corruption that is in Christ. It constitutes a Divine help and assistance to lift those men from the pit of defeat and failure, which is made possible only through the work of Grace. *“For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day”* (Zech. 3 vs.9). *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Rev 3 vs.12).

The fourth fold reason is to make a separation to the intent that the men that find such favour may partake neither of the evil that may come upon the others nor of the sure Divine indictment. *“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil”* (II Thes 3 vs.3). *“Come, my people, enter thou unto thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain”* (Is 26 vs.20-21).

The second instrument identifiable with the “*six men*” of Ez 9 vs.1-6 is the “*slaughter weapon*”. The slaughter weapon was identified with the hands of these “*six men*”. This weapon though indicting and “*judgemental*” in nature, is not vindictive. Rather it is to be seen as a ministry directed towards causing God’s people to see their sins and bringing them to repentance. The “*slaughter weapon*” is so divinely designed as to accomplish in the target of delivery a recovery of mind and a submission to the Lordship of Christ.

God said to Malachi, “*but who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord...*” (Mal 3 vs. 3-4). May God bless your hearts and give you understanding in the knowledge of His Will.

Chapter 6

Sealing – Necessity in Faithfulness

“And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand....” (Ez.9vs.2).

When in (Rev 7 vs. 1-3), an angel sought to first seal *“the servants of our God in their foreheads,”* it was against the background of an impending judgement. In the same way, the fact of an impending judgement in the Book of Ezekiel brought the necessity to set *“a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”*. The nature and character of the sins, which necessitate setting a mark on the minds of the Elects, can only be best described as *“abomination”*. The incidence in Ezekiel Chapter nine brings out this picture very clearly.

It is very instructive to note that the six men that are assigned to *“slay”* in Ezekiel Chapter 9 approached the temple from the way of the north and went in straight to stand by the brazen altar. A journey through Ezekiel Chapter 8 will show that the northern approach to the Temple was where the image of jealousy stood and the further you proceed into the Temple the worse the abomination. Each of the listed abominations was sufficiently serious to warrant Divine disapproval and consequent judgement. Besides the image of jealousy, there was the chamber of imagery, then the women weeping for Tamuz, then the sun worship and the worship of Asherah. Each of these could provoke God’s wrath, because of what they not only stand for but also because of the calibre of persons involved in their worship, and right in the Holy place!

That which was central in the entire graphic display of image worship was the conspicuous way in which men who claim to be God's standard shamelessly set aside the lordship of Jehovah and bring themselves under the lordship of another spirit. Underlining the activities of the purported spiritual leadership was deception, harlotry, idolatry, sorcery, witchcraft and every abominable act. The activities were so subtly perfected that it took prophetic grace of the dimension in which Ezekiel operated to unearth the canker worms. Yet, the same spiritual leadership who perpetrated these evils would sit before the man Ezekiel pretending to seek words from the Lord.

The image of jealousy stood right at the entrance of the Holy place. The image of jealousy consisted of the worship of Tamuz. The worship of Tamuz can be linked with Nimrod of Genesis 10 and 11. A detailed study of the activities of Nimrod will give an insight into God's reason for his utter rejection and detesting of everything which carries the semblance of a man who stood for nothing but outright rebellion. Nimrod stood for anything, which is the exact opposite of the work of Jesus Christ. The calculation is a subtle displacement of the Lordship of Jesus in the lives of men. It can make it-self so obvious and it can be so obscure. The only thing that exposes it for what it is, is the cross of Christ. Anything that cannot stand the judgement of the cross of Christ has this imagery. This is why the six men went and stood by the side of the brazen altar for that is the symbol of the cross.

The simplest test of any spiritual work is the cross. What the cross does is to cut to size! It bruises the ego. It makes naked all that are shrouded in secrecy. It exposes the thoughts of men's hearts. It is a light, which exposes the darkness of pride. It brings humility.

It brings self-abasement instead of self-enthronement. To walk with God satisfactorily is to follow the way of the cross. The cross is the only check against evil and wickedness. The seed of idolatry is potentially in every heart of man. This is because self, which is called man, is a god in himself and loves to be worshiped.

The greatest enemy of man is (his) self; the greatest enemy of righteousness is the self-life. The origin of every evil lies in self-gratification and self-consideration otherwise called selfishness. To know how and where a man stands with respect to Divine plans and purposes and Divine scale of measurement is very simple. Even though a man may not adequately know his very heart, every motive, if sincerely assessed, can be rightly placed.

Any motive, which can be traced to the defence of self or gratification of self or self-justification, projects an image - the image of self. As long as self can make sense in any matter, the idea of God makes no sense. Self and God are enemies. Both cannot be loved at the same time. If one is loved, then the other is hated. *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Mt 6 vs.24)*. Surprisingly many activities, which are dubbed spiritual, more often than not, are nothing but activities that enthrone self. Anything however glamorous and however spiritual it may appear, when it gives self-satisfaction and self-attention, check it, it may not be God! The two can never meet. That which brings self-satisfaction hardly meets God’s approval or divine standard however gold plated. Hear the Lord indict the Pharisees, *“ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Lk 16 vs.15)*.

Sealing is evidently God's way of approving of that which is right and in harmony with Him as different from that, which is man. In Lk 16, Jesus elucidated on self-justification. It is clear that whatever does not receive divine approval must be supported with strong argument by man why it must be God. That which is not God must require man's justification.

Spiritual activities that are divinely initiated are usually accomplished without necessarily drawing man's attention or drawing attention to man. Genuine spiritual activities are devoid of noise making, fanfare and human ceremonies and bring man no glory at all because man is not supposed to be in the centre but God. The irony in spiritual drama is that two parallel activities are always available at any given time, one will be genuine the other not. The genuine is likely to be quiet and obscure in nature and can be passed unnoticed. On the other hand, that which is counterfeit will draw public attention; it will be noisy and overt in nature and it will bring glory to men and draw attention to their worth and their qualities. It brings fame and public acclaim. To make it appear God, it is to be backed by self-justification. Incidentally, our ways may not be approved of God and yet the work of our hands may appear blessed. This picture was well typed out by the lives of Esau and Jacob. Apparently, God blessed both, but it was clear that their priorities were different. What each paid greater attention to was different. Divine assessment of each was also different. For many years, Jacob had nothing to show for the paths, he trod for they were all quiet dealings by God. It had to be a long trek of divine training in the wilderness of spiritual lessons for God's instrument of raising a spiritual nation must first be stripped of his own personal perceptions so that his visions of God can be clearer and more focused.

Ezekiel was greatly concerned and disturbed and sought to prevail on God to see cause to lessen his hands of judgement on the people. God answering Ezekiel said, “*the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city is full of perverseness...*” (Ez.9 vs.9). Evidently, it was for the reasons adduced by God that a mark (Sealing) had to first be initiated for a section of his people. When God instructed to “*slay*” earlier on, he said the slaying should begin from His sanctuary. The implication is that His spiritual leadership was not to be spared. Why God will not spare the leadership is easily inferable. The leadership must have been part of the iniquity and the perverseness; they must have subtly encouraged it. To give encouragement to iniquity by spiritual leadership is simple. Pretending not to see when evil is perpetrated is worse than participating in the evil itself. Evil goes unchecked because those who have spiritual responsibility are weak and slow to condemn evil. For the land to be full of blood suggests violence. Violence gains ascendancy because those who have spiritual responsibility to address violence abdicate their responsibility because of self-gain and self-glory. If men who are opportune to exercise spiritual oversight are not benefiting directly or indirectly from the gains of violence, ignorance and confusion, they have the spiritual strength and the will to redress the situation and their words are as a cutting edge. There is spiritual weakness when those who take spiritual responsibility play dual roles not approved of God. Such dual roles in divine eyes amount to false weight or double standard. When violence and ignorance seem to be prevalent and support a personal cause or lead to self-gain and enrich materially, tendency is to display weak spiritual disposition in rebuking the evil.

If in any circumstance, those who have spiritual responsibility do not declare the Mind of God for the people, God holds them responsible. This is why God said, *“the city is full of perverseness”*.

Perverseness will appear too strong to be used in this connection. However, this is God’s assessment of the situation on the ground. Perverseness is a heart condition. It suggests wilfulness is involved. It depicts a heart that deliberately chooses to pursue a wrong course. This must be for self-gain or no one will insist on a course that does not bring some self-reward. The greatest concern here is that the elders of Israel are not absolved of the evil. It is either that they overtly participated in the acts or they gave subtle support else they refused to condemn it through the spiritual instrument of leadership - the word of God. It shows a spiritual people who do not prove to have the Mind of God. It paints a picture of a spiritual leadership who does not comprehend God’s perspective and the divine appraisal of the spiritual environment. This situation warrants the drawing of a line of separation between a people and a people, between those who *“sigh and cry for all the abomination”* and those who do not. It is God’s principle to cause a separation even among a spiritual people.

Sealing is separation – separation between what is approved of God as distinct from that which is unapproved, separation between that which is God’s ways as opposed to man’s ways. God said in the course of restorative work of Genesis, *“let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so”* (Gen 1 vs.6-7).

The Psalmist alluding to God's greatness said, "*praise (God) in the firmament of his power*" (Ps 150 vs.1). The "*firmament*" is God's instrument of dividing "*the waters from the waters*". The firmament relates to the heavens. It is a spiritual scale of measurement, to measure how we relate to heavenly things. Some waters are more related to heavenly things than others are and yet they are all "*waters*". The firmament of God's power that He demonstrates by His Word rightly places us with respect to how the works of our hands and the meditations of our hearts appear in His eyes.

When the waters that have been gathered are exposed for what they are, by the instrument of the firmament, the heaven appears distinct just as the earth appears distinct. The work of sealing reveals the true nature of every spiritual work and it makes to stand distinct what we are as individuals before God. It exposes our true state and our heart lie naked in His Eyes. In the light of His Word, deception appears as deception while truth becomes unveiled. Sealing is a divine instrument that reveals the true character of our spiritual activities.

Sealing is "*proving what is acceptable to the Lord*" (Eph 5 vs.10). Paul said, "*all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light*" (Eph. 5 vs. 13). Light is separation of truth from falsehood and deception. Light divides and separates that which is acceptable to the Lord from that which is not acceptable. What the Lord demands is a heart that longs to please him. All our spiritual activities and service becomes but dead works if they cannot redress evil. If our lives, our words, our testimonies, our sermons, all our spiritual programmes and all we stand to represent cannot make shameful the works of darkness and wickedness, then it is all dead works. The law cannot be altered.

Light and darkness can never meet. When light appears, darkness disappears because light judges darkness. If evil, darkness, and violence thrive, it is a direct indictment on the spiritual environment. The power of the Gospel, when the true Gospel is preached, must but cause to crash everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. If evil, insincerity, and wickedness thrive, it is either that the true light of the Gospel is absent or there is a terrible mixture. Spiritual mixture brings spiritual confusion.

When there is spiritual confusion, divine attention is aroused and God takes responsibility to redress the challenge by Himself; first by instituting a sealing so as to separate minds from minds, motives from motives, waters from waters and then comes Divine visitation beginning from His sanctuary - the people that should be custodians and God's standard of righteousness. May God cause our hearts to be exercised in righteousness and may our ways, our thoughts and our motives be acceptable to the Lord.