

THE CROSS IN EVERY MARRIAGE

Peter Hay, prepared for communion word focus, 24 May 2020

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Introduction

Today, we will continue to discuss 'the spirit of Jezebel'. This is our focus in relation to *the spirit and power of Elijah*, which is an expression of Christ's eyes coming to us as a flame of fire.

Jesus spoke to the presbytery and church of Thyatira in this manner - with 'eyes as a flame of fire' and 'feet as burnished brass', He addressed the issue of the spirit of Jezebel in their midst.

This brings to our attention the spirit and power of Elijah, because Elijah ministered to King Ahab and to the nation of Israel, who had worshipped idols because of the influence of Ahab's wife, Jezebel.

The Gospel of Luke teaches that the purpose of the ministry of Elijah is to 'make ready a people [who are] prepared for the Lord'. Luk 1:17.

The ministry of 'the spirit of Elijah' addresses our marriages

With this goal in view, the ministry of Elijah addresses our marriages, the culture of our immediate families, the relationship between three generations of families.

And, as we will consider next week, this is really the foundation of what it means to meet from house to house, and of the teaching and culture of a church.

In today's study, we are going to particularly focus on the way in which Jesus addresses us in our marriages.

Now, this ministry does also have an impact and an implication for every *individual*, but I particularly want to talk today about *the establishing of the cross as the cultural foundation of our marriages*.

The spirit of Jezebel

Let's go to the Scripture that we have been considering over the past two weeks and read it in a broader context.

'Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allowed that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality, and eat things sacrificed to idols.

'And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

'Indeed I will cast her into a sick bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

'I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I AM He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one according to your works.

'Now to you I say [speaking to the presbytery], and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say; I will put on you no other burden.' Rev 2:20-24.

Christ is addressing us as His people

Several groups of people were addressed by Christ in this passage. And remember that He was coming with eyes as a flame of fire; so, each of these groups should have received Him as He came in that way.

The *first group* is every *person* and every *marriage*.

The *second group* is those who *teach*, or advance, the doctrine of the culture of Jezebel.

The *third group* is the *presbytery* who allows this doctrine to be an instructive influence in the church.

The *fourth group* is *the children of Jezebel*; those who remain loyal to her false doctrine in the church.

Today we will look at each of these four groups, regarding the way in which *Jesus speaks* to us, and the *response* that we are to make or that Christ is calling for when He comes to us in the contexts of these four groups.

I. CHRIST ADDRESSING EVERY PERSON AND EVERY MARRIAGE

Let's begin by looking at *every person and every marriage*.

In the first instance, we are *all* the focus of Christ's ministry.

Jesus said that what He was addressing and the way in which He was addressing it would cause *all the churches* to know that 'I AM He who

searches the minds and the hearts and I will give to each one of you according to your works.' Rev 2:23.

In what He is saying to 'all the churches', He is not speaking to the church as an 'organisation'.

Rather, He is speaking to all the *people*, who are the church.

So, Jesus is coming to address *every one of us*, because He is coming to give to us according to our *works*.

He is addressing the other law in our hearts

When the Scripture says, 'He is the One who searches the minds and the hearts', this is He who comes with the word to lay our hearts bare, because He is addressing the other law in our hearts. Rev 2:23.

He wants to deliver us from the other law so that we are not walking in darkness, and that, rather, we are walking in the light and are fulfilling the works that the Father has prepared for us in Christ Jesus.

We have previously noted that the other law in our hearts, which is also the propensity to set our mind on the flesh, is *the fruit of the fall of mankind*.

A conversation in the Spirit from the Tree of Life

The *word of the cross* calls us away from a 'conversation' that is sourced from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to fellowship in the Spirit together at *the Tree of Life*.

Can you see that that 'fruit' is something that we *eat*? So, what we eat is a 'word', and that word fills our mouth and is the basis of our conversation.

There is a conversation that happens at *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, and we are being called to forsake that.

The word of the cross is coming to call us to do this, so that we can be *joined in the Spirit* to the conversation that is happening at the Tree of Life.

This is *a conversation in the Spirit*.

You will remember that Jesus said that 'those who are born of the Spirit are like the wind'. Joh 3:8. This means that they do not define their life from where they have been - either according to their failures or to what they perceive to be their 'good'. Neither do they determine a future, a

goal, or a good, through which, if they attain it, they will achieve life.

Can you see that Jesus said that they are 'like the wind'? They don't know where they are coming from or where they're going to. 'So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

Interestingly, when Moses wrote about Adam and Eve coming to the tree of life with Yahweh in the cool of the evening every day to fellowship, or to have communion, He said that Yahweh *Elohim*, the Lord God, would come in the *cool of the evening*. Gen 3:8.

The Hebrew words translated as 'cool of the evening', literally mean 'in the wind' or 'in the breath of God', the *ruach*.

It is a beautiful thought that, if we are born of the Spirit, as ones who are 'like the wind', then we are those who are part of a conversation that is occurring at the Tree of Life.

The Lord comes with the word of the cross to deliver us from our propensity to return to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the source of our conversation and the determination of how we are going to live.

So, we forsake that, and we are part of the conversation that is of the Tree of Life.

The point is that when the Lord comes to speak to us in that way, He wants that conversation to be *foundational to our marriages*.

Marriages in the Spirit

Our marriage is to be in the Spirit and in the truth, which is a conversation that happens from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life.

This has a particular implication for our marriages. It is a call for us to allow the word of the cross to reveal to us where we need deliverance from the culture of the Fall in our marriages; and this includes our fallen expectations of ourselves. These are all judgements that we make from the basis of our perception of what is good or evil.

Our fallen expectations of ourselves, of what we hope our life will be like, and of our spouse, are all a judgement, informed by the knowledge of good and evil. This is all in pursuit of what we determine to be a good life.

That is the conversation that the word of the cross is calling us to forsake.

Our acceptance of our need for deliverance from relating according to the knowledge of good and evil

The evidence of being progressively illuminated by the word of the cross in our marriages is firstly *our acceptance that we need this deliverance*.

It is the acceptance that we all *do* have another law within us, and that that other law is the basis of a form of relating at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Unless we can accept this as being true, and that our progressive illumination requires us to acknowledge this reality and to be delivered from that conversation, then we will believe that our fallen condition is spiritual and is the truth.

That is delusion, isn't it? It's not true!

This acceptance that we need deliverance in relation to our marriages and our families is the *understanding* of those who are *poor in spirit*.

If we don't believe this, we are saying that we have no sin.

And the apostle John said, 'If we say we have no sin [we don't believe that our marriage requires this kind of reformation], then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.' 1Jn 1:8.

That is a classic statement, because Eve was deceived by Satan, resulting in the other law becoming *the fundamental motivation* of her life and of the life of Adam.

Unless we accept that that is true, we will remain in that very deception.

John said, 'The *truth* will not be in us.' And that's what we want to know - we want to know the truth, because the truth will set us free.

Acknowledging the reality of our need for cultural reformation will be demonstrated through an ongoing discussion regarding the cultural practices that the Lord is calling us to put off, and *the grace of life* that He is ministering to us by His word.

Can you see that if you are committed to this reformation, you will be part of a conversation that is coming from the Tree of Life, and that is

giving illumination to our propensities and our responses that need to be put off.

Cultural reformation in our marriages

But, more importantly, it is a discussion on the culture that needs to be established in our life as a married couple.

Cultural reformation is happening in our marriages when we are part of this conversation. This will be happening in the lives and marriage of every couple who are *walking in the light of the word* that they are hearing.

This 'conversation' does not refer only to 'talking' - though, of course, that is an element of it - it also means *praying* together.

We have made the point several times that our conversation is also regarding our *conduct*.

Those two things are the same, so what we are *expressing* is demonstrated by *how we are walking*.

The word of the cross – the foundation of our conversation and conduct in marriage

So, this conversation involves embracing the conflict and 'mess' that can occur within a marriage as part of our fellowship together; it is us as individuals embracing this mess as part of *our participation in the cross*.

Can you see that this is the mindset of a person who is *spiritual*?

A few weeks ago, we explained that a person who is 'spiritual' is not 'perfect'. A person who is spiritual is able to see that the mess that they are engaged in, and are contributing to, is part of the sufferings of death that Jesus has already suffered.

And, by suffering them according to the grace of God, He has turned those sufferings from a judgement to a chastening, by which the other law is being removed, and new life is emerging and being established.

This is the word of the cross that is to be the *foundation* of our conversation and conduct as married couples.

It involves embracing the conflict and mess that can happen within a marriage as part of our fellowship together. This mess is the inevitable outcome of the expression of each person's 'flesh', or other law.

Deliverance through our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings

If you don't have conflict in your marriage, it means that there has been some form of truce or compromise made in order to mitigate the effect of the other law.

This is because every person *still has another law*, and that other law *creates strife*.

And the only way in which to be delivered from it is through the circumcision of Christ, which is *our participation in the fellowship of His sufferings and death*.

We have to acknowledge that this conflict is inevitable, and to identify whether or not we are trying to 'patch over it'.

Rather, we are committed, by faith, to *remain* in the conversation where *the grace of God* is available to us.

Heirs together of the grace of life

Remember that we are to be 'heirs together of the grace of life'. So, it is *together* that we are able to stand and be delivered from the propensities that are causing the strife.

This is not only for the sake of deliverance itself; it is also so that we can get on and *do the works* that we are meant to do.

And part of those works is to *cultivate the divine nature in our houses*; to foster that culture with our children.

Conducting ourselves by faith in our marriage

When the cross is the culture of a marriage, either spouse, *or both* of them, view the mess as an element of the sufferings of death that Christ has already suffered for us.

You may be in a situation where one or the other spouse is not committed to this conversation. Yet, the Scriptures teach us that, without a word, through your conduct [the commitment to accept that the mess that you are part of, and the conditions of that part, is a fellowship in Christ's sufferings], you are being delivered from your own fleshly propensities and are being enabled to stand in the truth and in life, which then actually overflows as *life to another*.

Because the situation may not be that both are committed to this conversation, it doesn't mean

that that promise and blessing is not available to you.

The issue is: do you *believe* the word of the cross, and are you speaking, or *conducting* yourself, *by faith*, in relation to this relationship?

In doing so, we accept that, as Christ died this death - and this is the death of the mess that happens from time to time as we interact with one another - and we make it His death, our sin and other law are being put to death and removed from us.

In the fellowship of His death, our fleshly propensities are cut from our heart, and we are dying to sin.

At the same time, we are being *made alive* from the death of sin, with Christ, as a son of God.

Our commitment to speak with one another, by faith

Christ forgives us, and He forgets our carnal responses, consigning them to the sea of His forgetfulness, as we, by the faith that we have received in His blood, which has been shed 'in the mess', speaks to us. And we ourselves speak to one another about the issues that have resulted in the relational discord.

Can you see that the demonstration of faith wherein we believe that we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings is that, by that faith, we are committed to *speak* to one another?

This is not speaking that is accusing or excusing one another; rather, it's a speaking *by faith*, accepting that this context is part of our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, and that we have contributed to the mess.

Mourning turned to travail

This is *mourning*, which the Holy Spirit *turns to travail with Christ*.

Can you see that where you are committed to this, and you are turning to the Lord, you are obtaining *capacity*, which is the *grace*, to *mourn* and to *seek reconciliation*?

This is part of the mourning that the Holy Spirit Himself is turning to travail, or to fellowship, in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Why is this important? It is because, when Zechariah spoke about the spirit of grace and supplication that was to be poured out when

Christ was pierced, he said that this spirit of grace and supplication would cause mourning to every individual, every family, and every wife. This is an amazing principle.

You can see that if we are not drawing back from the word of the cross when it comes, and from the conditions of life that appear unfavourable, we have a *fellowship* that is a mourning that joins us to the travail of Christ - and something new is being 'birthed' in us.

Practically, if we are committed to this fellowship and to this conversation, we 'draw a line' under the matter, and we forget it.

And we *press on together* to do *the works that belong to our sonship in Christ*.

True romance in Christ

I want to bring this point to say that that is *true romance*. Romance and affection are supposed to be part of a marriage culture, but this is not the romance of the world - because that is passing away.

This is *true romance* because it is *established in the love of God*.

This romance is not a desire or a focus on the effect of another on *me*; this true romance is the capacity to worship in Spirit and in truth.

To 'worship in the Spirit' is to *receive the capacity of one Spirit* to meet one another and to *fellowship together* in Christ.

'Truth' is to *meet*, not according to our fallen perspectives, either of ourselves or of another, but to *meet according to our name as a son of God*.

Paul summarised this reality, this true romance, as being 'sanctification and honour'.

The conflict of the other law in marriages

As I said earlier, mess, or conflict, is an inevitable outcome of the expression of each person's other law in the marriage.

If there is no conflict, it means either that you are perfect and that you have been completely delivered from the other law, or that the absence of conflict is the result of a contrived peace, or truce.

It will be the outcome of one person *conquering* another, and the other person having *capitulated* to them. This is a 'parallel' marriage.

The 'peace' is more of a 'truce' than peace, because true peace is actually found in the cross.

We know that this is the case because, when Adam and Eve fell, the Lord said that conflict would be inevitable.

He said to the woman, 'Your desire will be toward your husband and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16.

This is the impact of the particular expression of the other law that is peculiar to a female and peculiar to a male.

Being delivered from contrived 'peace'; knowing the peace of the fruit of the Spirit

That is what we are being delivered from.

We do not want a contrived peace where there is simply a point of shared agreement for the sake of alleviating stress.

Rather, we want to *meet in the cross* so that there is actually deliverance from that 'other law' principle, and that the peace that we are receiving is actually the *fruit* of the Spirit Himself.

It is important to note that if our peace in our relationships is not in the cross, resentment and corruption will not be far from these relationships. These relationships will definitely be in the *dark*, because they are functioning by the principle of the flesh, which is *darkness*.

As we will see, this leads to the activities of the spirit of Jezebel.

2. CHRIST ADDRESSING THOSE WHO TEACH THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL

Let's move now from Christ addressing our marriages to consider His speaking regarding those who *teach the doctrine* of the spirit of Jezebel.

This does not refer to everyone, as we have just discussed. This is a group who presume to have, or who actually have, a ministry profile within the church.

We know this because Jesus said, 'Jezebel calls herself a prophetess, *teaching* and seducing my servants.' Rev 2:20.

As she was 'teaching', it means that a *ministry* expression was happening.

Teaching the deep things of Satan

Jesus said that the *doctrine* of those who are of the spirit of Jezebel is 'the deep things of Satan'. Rev 2:24.

This statement directs our attention to the fall of man, because there was no deeper and destructive interaction than the one that Satan had with Eve, and then Eve had with Adam. Death spread to *all men* because of that interaction.

This is 'the deep things of Satan', and this gives us some sense of the nature of the spirit of Jezebel.

'The spirit of Jezebel' does not simply refer to couples whose marriage culture is fallen. Their marriage culture *will* be fallen.

It is more than that - the spirit of Jezebel is the *promotion* of this *culture* as being 'spiritual' and 'true'.

Note the distinction. *Every* marriage culture will have a fallen element, because we all have the other law within us.

But not every marriage culture will be of the spirit of Jezebel, because most of us are hearing the word of the cross, walking by faith, establishing the cross as the cultural foundation of our houses, and seeking to be delivered from that fallen culture so that we are standing and walking in what is *new*.

But the spirit of Jezebel *takes what is fallen*, or what has been 'offered by Satan'. It is the delusion that Satan offered to mankind, where life can be attained through the pursuit of one's self-defined good; and that that is true religion, or the true Christian way.

So the spirit of Jezebel is not benign; it *actively* teaches that this is the means by which we are spiritual and true. This is the distinction.

The nature of the doctrine of the spirit of Jezebel

The easiest way to broach the subject and to demonstrate how the spirit of Jezebel works in the church is to look at the way Jezebel, who was King Ahab's wife, functioned in the nation of Israel.

Under the influence of Jezebel, the nation was seduced to the worship of idols and, in particular, to worship Baal. Further, Jezebel massacred the

prophets of the Lord, and established and provided for 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to take their place.

The word for the god Baal means '*lord*', or '*master*'. So, when the doctrine of the spirit of Jezebel is received, it brings a person under bondage to the lordship of Satan.

We made the point that the spirit of Jezebel is 'the deep things of Satan.' And, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the other law, or the desire to have life in themselves and to define their own destiny, became another law within their hearts. When they lived by that other law, it then placed them under the dominion, or lordship, of the spirit of Satan.

When the spirit of Jezebel teaches this doctrine, it places all those who *receive* it under the lordship, or captivity, of Satan himself, which is the principle of Baal. That is amazing, isn't it?

So Baal, meaning 'lord', or 'master', was the name given to the collection of Canaanite pagan gods that were thought to provide fertility for crops and livestock; to promote fruitfulness; and to provide the avoidance of suffering associated with time and chance, or associated with the elements.

We see that it is a belief in fruitfulness and prosperity.

It was the belief that Baal was the one that provided the rain, and also enabled the fertility of livestock, so that people could obtain wealth and would not be subject to the suffering of loss or of inadequate provision.

It was a god that symbolised the productive force of nature, including the rain, and was worshipped with considerable sensuality.

The worship of Baal was an experience that had a sensory effect - it affected the senses of those who were participating, as though this *sensuality* marked the *reality* that Baal could provide this fruitfulness.

Can you see that the experience that they 'felt' was a presumed foretaste of the blessing of fruitfulness that Baal would provide?

Baal's wife was Asherah, whose name was derived from the words for 'tree trunk' or 'cone of stone'. So, Baal, if you like, was married to 'a tree trunk',

which we can identify as being likened to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A worshipper of Baal was joined to that tree as the *source* of their life.

But Baal not only had a wife; he also had a mistress. His mistress was named Anat, and she was the goddess of war, or strife; the goddess of love and fertility.

This is quite a picture of the spirit of Jezebel, and of the doctrine that she promoted in relation to the worship of Baal and other elements of sensuality that were part of this belief in the provision of fruitfulness, and a romantic culture that was achieved by pursuing Baal.

The spirit of Jezebel operative in the church

What, then, does that 'look like' in the church?

The spirit of Jezebel in the church is a spirit that endeavours to *promote romance and fruitfulness* as a 'good' to be pursued.

When I talk about romance, I'm not, in the first instance, saying that the spirit of Jezebel teaches that people need to go and find a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or that marriage should be full of flowers and love letters – that sort of romance. That's not what I'm talking about.

In this case, romance is *the cultivation of a context*, an environment, in which a person lives, where each person's 'good' is acknowledged, nurtured and valued.

So, this is a 'pleasant' culture where there is an embracing and a facilitation of fruitfulness as the good that you set out to achieve.

This spirit within the church is typified by women of ministry couples who have many good ideas about how the church should run, and how others should, or should not, live in order to have more fruitful and less painful lives.

As we'll see, the spirit of Jezebel does not refer only to women. However, it is a feminine expression and pursuit; and it is full of good ideas about how to best facilitate the love of God.

This romance is the cultivation of an image of *fruitfulness*.

Self-defined virtue

It is an expression of her own *self-defined virtue* which she believes others should emulate,

because she lives by a romantic view, which is a *religious* view.

And, from the basis of that *judgement*, she exhorts others to live the same way. She sets herself as the example, if you like.

Self-centred romance; darkness

This expression is a 'form' of love. And it is particularly the loving of the 'unlovely', as if embracing all expressions is the way to optimise or to facilitate the shift from unloveliness to virtue when, actually, the only way to do that is in the *cross*. The way is only through 'death', where all of the 'unlovelinesses' remain dead, and we stand up in new life.

But you can see that there is a deception there - a *darkness* that doesn't see this.

Now, this form of love masquerades as the love of God. Why do they do this? The pursuit of this romantic, religious culture is because of their own 'need to be needed'.

Can you see that this form of romance is actually *self-centred*?

Their activity is because they themselves are devoid of identity, and because they need to be needed by others who think that they are to be admired and imitated.

They are not *serving* or *loving* at all, are they?

In this regard, 'Greater love has no-one than this than to *lay down their life to reveal another*'.

Self-validation; deception

Their religious activity is for *self-validation*.

It is a means of 'finding' themselves because they are in darkness. They actually don't know who they are, but they are endeavouring to find themselves through their pursuit of good, and through the *reception* of that good by others.

We recall that Paul said that Eve, when she was under this condition, was *deceived*; she was deluded.

That delusion is the darkness.

Eating the food intended for angels

Even before Eve gave the fruit to Adam, she *believed* that what she had eaten had given her what Satan had offered to her.

When this fruit is 'fed' to a leadership husband by his wife, and they 'eat' of it – they are invested in

the same 'conversation' – he will support his wife's endeavours, and will believe in their contrived virtue and in the wisdom that they espouse.

This is an amazing point because, when a man does that, he actually *turns his head away from Christ*, who is the source of true wisdom, to receive another 'wisdom' from his wife.

This actually places a 'veil' over his head.

Can you see that? He is actually deriving his 'wisdom' from the food that his wife is feeding to him, rather than by *looking into the face of Christ* which, in the first instance, is *the face of the presbytery* for him.

Presuming to minister like an angel – with wisdom and power

Now, some men may even take their ministry cues and encouragement from their wives. Those who eat the fruit with which Satan deceived Eve, endeavour to *minister* like an angel ministers.

A person has been ensnared by this fruit and conversation when the mode of their ministry is a projection in pursuit of ministry 'like an angel'. This is with 'all wisdom and all power'.

And the *expression* of that person is of someone who presumes to minister with great wisdom, through the exercise of power, on the basis of *charisma* or on the strength of their personality or on the basis of their qualification which they believe gives them a 'right' to speak.

Their right is not the right to be a son of God, is it?

It's a *presumed* right, based on their knowledge of good and evil and on what they can contribute.

So this conversation results in a form of ministry, not just by the wife, but now also by the husband, that is an expression of the flesh.

Corruption in the administration of Christ

Now, this can lead to corruption *in the administration of Christ*; and that is no more acutely demonstrated than in the relationship between Jezebel and Ahab.

I will refer to the account to do with the field of Naboth.

You'll remember that Naboth had a field, a vineyard, that was next to Ahab's palace, and

Ahab coveted that vineyard. He wanted Naboth to sell that to him, and Naboth wouldn't because it was his *inheritance*.

He did not want to give up his *sonship* – 'inheritance' speaks about 'sonship'.

And he did not *capitulate* to King Ahab, who sought to *take dominion over his faith*, which is another way of explaining it. So, what happened?

'So Ahab went into his house *sullen and displeased* because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers". And Ahab lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food.'

Now, that is the biggest 'sook' of all time, isn't it? Why was he behaving in this way? It was because this 'congregant', this person who was part of the covenant nation of Israel, wouldn't engage with Ahab in the way that he felt he should be *received*. He felt that he should be taking dominion over the nation, and he was not being received. So he went away, sullen and displeased – he was having a huge tantrum.

'But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit [your identity] so sullen that you will eat no food?"'

The way this is written is beautiful because, remember, we started by talking about the 'food' that is at the knowledge of the tree of good and evil and the 'food' that is at the tree of life. Here is a conversation specifically about *food*.

'He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard'."

'Then Jezebel his wife said to him [another way of saying it is, 'Then Jezebel took some food to give to her husband who wasn't eating. And what did she say to him?], "You now exercise authority over Israel [That's brilliant, isn't it? That's like saying, 'You stand up and take dominion over this place. Be a cherub in this nation; exercise that authority.' Can you see that she was 'feeding' him with the food that belongs to angels?]

'Arise, eat this food [that I'm giving to you], and let your heart be cheerful; *I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.*" IKi21:4-7.

She was going around intervening, interfering, within the congregation of Israel, with a view of obtaining this 'good' - which was her husband getting this vineyard.

However, all that she was doing was causing destruction and death.

Cultivating leaven – worthless doctrines

The spirit of Jezebel is a particularly feminine expression, driven by *the pursuit of romance*.

However, as we considered a couple of weeks ago, the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, and other leavens, flourish and cause *death and destruction* in the church when those who are part of a presbytery *receive direction* from the spirit of Jezebel, and *allow* it to become an *instructive* influence in the church.

The point is that where the spirit of Jezebel is, it *opens the door for, or cultivates*, other *leavens* - and all those other leavens were actually the *idols* of the Baals.

Remember that the Baals were 'wooden idols', and Jeremiah said that 'a *worthless doctrine* is a wooden idol'.

The spirit of Jezebel promotes these worthless idols, or leavens, as instructive influences in the church.

No sight; not walking in the light

The homes of those who are of the spirit of Jezebel are inevitably 'carnal'. The cross is not at the centre of the house. They are not walking in the light; nor are they able to *see* their own impact.

This is an important point to note.

What actually happens is that there is quite a bit of *dystrophy and discontent in that household*.

However, when they present themselves among others, they will present a *romantic veneer* as though they are the exemplars of the good that they are encouraging everyone to attain - but it is a complete facade.

There is a *complete disconnection* between the *reality* of their relationship and the *good* to which they are encouraging everyone else to attain.

Because they are not walking in the light, either with each other or with the presbytery, or in the context of fellowship that they are a part of, their 'feet' are *not* 'shod with the gospel of peace'.

Not bringing peace; bringing confusion

While they may be speaking, perhaps even straight from the Scriptures or from the Bible School curriculum, what they *demonstrate* with their feet, which is their *conversational conduct*, is actually something else.

This is a *confusion*, isn't it? So the evidence of this disconnection between what is true and what is not true is confusion.

These people will be very sincere. They will be doing what they do, believing that they are an assistance to those who are receiving them.

So they are not malevolent, going out to try to destroy people. But, because what they do is motivated by darkness, it has an inevitable *destructive* effect.

Cutting down the messenger

In considering this, I thought that they are not being contrary. However, that's not quite true, because the spirit of Jezebel will actually be judgemental and opinionated about the presbytery and the way in which the church is being administrated.

Jezebel did not only set up alternative prophets - 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. She also *killed the prophets of the Lord*.

There is an *undermining of what is true* through the spirit of Jezebel. And, where a man and a woman debrief together and have opinions about matters that they are not accountable for, that is that same spirit at work.

It is actually *cutting down the messenger*.

And if you do that in relation to other houses - where you facilitate such a conversation with them as well - you are causing offence to those other houses. This is because, if they believe that, they themselves then become critical of or disconnected from the messengers - the messenger becomes dead to them.

Can you see that this is a quite destructive spirit that can gain purchase in a church?

Time to repent

I will end this section by making the point that Jesus acknowledged that people who operate by the spirit of Jezebel, even though they are dealing in the deep things of Satan, belong to the church.

This is quite an amazing principle and, hopefully, you get a sense of the effect of the eyes of Christ as He comes with eyes as a flame of fire, because He said to the presbytery of Thyatira, 'I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality and she did not repent.'

My sense is, that in this season, as the Lord is restoring to us the word of the cross, He is coming to every church, to every presbytery, to every family and to every married couple, with the word of the cross, calling us all to *repentance*.

So, if *your ministry* has been based in the spirit of Jezebel, then the Lord is giving you time to repent.

You are not immediately cut off, which is an amazing mercy when you think about how destructive this spirit can be in the church.

The point is that we need to *humble ourselves* so that we can receive grace and supplication, and can be delivered from our own darkness, because we cannot deliver ourselves. Remember that this is the reality of being poor in spirit.

3. CHRIST ADDRESSING THE PRESBYTERY

Let's move from the topic of the spirit of Jezebel, and recall that Jesus was not speaking first and foremost to the spirit of Jezebel.

Rather, He was actually speaking to the *presbytery*, admonishing them for allowing that spirit to *teach* and seduce in the church. He was saying, 'I have this against *you*, that you allow this principle to operate'

Interestingly, He said that they were committing 'adultery' by *embracing and giving validity* to this teaching. That's an amazing statement.

Jesus said that if you allow this spirit to teach in the church and to give direction to the presbytery, they are committing adultery.

So what did He mean by this?

He was saying that the presbytery was not remaining faithful to the word of the cross.

They had *deviated* from the ministry of Paul, whose initiative was to present the church as 'a chaste virgin to Christ'.

We will read a beautiful passage to highlight what the harlotry, or adultery, is; and what

messengers are supposed to do in relation to the word of the cross.

Paul was speaking to the Corinthians.

'For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.'

This is beautiful because, as Paul was speaking, Christ was coming to the Corinthians with eyes as a flame of fire.

Remember that His eyes reveal the fellowship of Yahweh, which is like 'a vehement flame that waters cannot quench'. This is the great, jealous love of God. Paul was saying, 'I am ministering to you and bringing that jealous love to you, Corinthians.'

'For I betrothed you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness [the deep things of Satan], so your minds [if we are born of the Spirit, we are to set our minds on the Spirit] may be corrupted from *the simplicity of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ*.'

Can you see that the *simplicity* is over and against the *confusion* of trying to mix the true with another conversation, another fruit? So, Paul was directly addressing this confusion.

'For if he who comes preaches *another* Jesus whom we have not preached [This is an *alternative* word, it's a 'Baal'. You are being wed to 'another god'], or if you receive a different spirit [the spirit of Jezebel] which you have not received [from me], or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! [Or, 'You will be taken captive to that idolatry'].'
2Co 11:2-4.

That's amazing, because John finished his letter, after speaking about the whole crystallisation and articulation of the gospel, with a final word. 'Little children, flee from idols' – the very last word of his first letter.

So, true messengers are calling and ministering to us all, so that we will remain faithful and chaste, prepared for the coming of Christ.

Isn't that the ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah?

Paul was coming with *fatherhood* towards the Corinthians.

4. CHRIST ADDRESSING THE CHILDREN OF JEZEBEL

This leads on to the final point – Christ addressing the *children* of Jezebel.

This is a particularly notable aspect of Christ's address, because He said, 'I will *kill her children with death*.'

That should register as being somewhat confronting and quite sharp because, if you are 'killed with death', you are really, certainly *dead*, aren't you?

It's one thing to be killed, but it's another thing to be 'killed with death'.

In this regard, He was saying, 'I will send her children to eternal damnation.' That's the death to which He was referring.

Children in the church nurtured from the spirit of Jezebel

This is critical. These are children in the church *who have been nurtured from the spirit of Jezebel!*

In the setting of Israel under the Old Covenant, the children of Jezebel were the prophets of Baal. How do we know that?

It's because the Scriptures record that the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah *ate from her table*. They were *fed* by her, just like a mother feeds the children who are around her table.

Those prophets of Baal were 'the children of Jezebel', and their life and ministry expression was *the fruit of the spirit of Jezebel*.

So they will perpetuate that teaching, both in the pursuit of a romantic lifestyle themselves, and in the proliferation of all the leavens – the alternatives to what is true – by those who remain faithful to her teaching.

They live by the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the truth, and they pursue life *from the basis of darkness*.

A response of judgement and offence at the word of the cross

Now, the most tell-tale sign that we are children of the spirit of Jezebel is the *offence that we feel* when the word of the cross challenges our romantic, or ideal, culture that we are pursuing as 'good'.

When the word of the cross comes and we think, 'Oh, that's a bit harsh' or 'That's an evil thing to say', immediately that is evidence, or is revealing, that a *judgement* is being made from the basis of our perspective of what is good or evil.

We are drawing back from the word, and we are meeting it 'in secret', or by *projection*.

In particular, we judge the word and the messenger from the basis of our own understanding of the gospel or by what we think the word means and should mean for our life.

Whose children are you?

The question that we all must answer is, 'Whose children are we?'

Remember that Paul said, 'I *birthed* you', to the Galatians. And he said, 'Galatians in whom I am *travailing* again in *birth* so that Christ may be formed in you'.

So the question is, 'Whose *children* are you?'

Some of us will recognise, as we are illuminated by the word, that we have been 'fostered', and our Christian experience has been fostered, by the corrupting and alternative spirit of Jezebel.

Once we see what that looks like and how it operates, we will acknowledge that that is true.

Now, if that's so, you are touching *the mercy of God*. If you are accepting that that is true, then you are able to turn from that, and the Lord is delivering you from that so that you will not be killed with death.

Instead, you will be *joined to His death*, which is by grace.

And you will be able to stand up in what is new, and to get on and do the works that were prepared for you in Christ.

But you may be one who says, 'Oh no, I wasn't a child of that corrupting influence in the church; I am a child of Vic Hall' or 'I am a child of Bruce Hamilton' or 'I am a child of Jesus Christ.'

Now, you can see that, immediately, when we say that and associate ourselves with a particular fatherhood, we are *carnal*, as Paul explained.

We are actually no different from the children of the spirit of Jezebel, because the children of the spirit of Jezebel live by a fleshly, carnal principle.

And Jesus said, 'Don't call any man "Father".'

Now, that doesn't mean that the ministry to us of leadership men or others has not had a birthing effect.

The ministry of the messenger joins us to the fellowship of the presbytery

It does mean that the *outcome of the ministry of a messenger* who is part of a presbytery should *join us to the fellowship of the presbytery*, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

Can you see that we are not to say that we are children of 'this one' or children of 'that one'?

If we are truly children of those who are ministering by grace, the evidence will be that we are *joined to fellowship*, and that we *walk in the light of the word* that is coming from the very fellowship from which they are ministering.

This is what the apostle John taught us. 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.' 1Jn 1:1.

John was highlighting that he was part of a *fellowship*.

But then he said, 'My little children. I write to you little children.'

So John was ministering *according to his name*, but he was able to do that because he was *part of a presbytery*.

John asked what the effect is if you receive his word.

It is not your 'allegiance' to John.

Rather, he said, 'We are declaring this so that you may have fellowship with *us* [part of a *fellowship*; not loyalty to an individual], and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.'

Conclusion

Next week, the Lord permitting, we will consider what it means to 'overcome'.

Then we'll particularly look at the ministry of 'the spirit of Elijah' – to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.

Importantly, we'll look at what it means to *turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*.