

INIQUITY IS IDOLATRY

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 5 December 2021

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Hello, everyone. In our last session, we considered the wonderful invitation that a friend of God receives to present themselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

They are invited to *participate in the agape meal of Yahweh*. That is an amazing, wonderful point.

A fountain for sin and uncleanness

On the ground of this fellowship, they are *washed by the ministry of the word*, which was described by the prophet Zechariah as 'a fountain for sin and uncleanness'. Zec 13:1.

Let us familiarise ourselves again with this passage. 'In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *for sin and for uncleanness*.

'It shall be in that day' [as this fountain for sin and uncleanness is effective in a person's life], says the Lord of hosts, 'that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered [The Lord is doing this 'cutting off']. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.' Zec 13:1-2.

In our last session, we noted, albeit briefly, that a person is *washed* from the *uncleanness* that is caused by *living according to Satan's lie*.

Deliverance from idolatry

As they are being cleansed, *the Lord himself removes the idols* from their life. He brings an end to the influence of false prophets in their life and causes the unclean and familiar spirits to depart from them.

Today we will consider in more detail the nature of idolatry and the process through which these idols are being removed from our lives.

In particular, we will draw from a paper that was prepared and presented at the National Bible Seminar in October, entitled 'The Spirit is Life'. These notes are on the Lampstand website.

It will be good to go through them again as these notes provide an important focus on *deliverance from idolatry*, particularly for those who have fallen from the service of worship to which they were delivered through salvation.

As they progress along the pathway of salvation, a person will be delivered from their idols, as part of this process.

It is possible for a person who has been born of God and joined to His covenant fellowship to fall again to the worship of idols. This is not a good predicament!

There are many within Christendom who have *failed to mature* because they have receded to idolatry.

Today we will speak, not only about the process that belongs for those who are first meeting the Lord, but also about how we are recovered when we do fall to idolatry. How are we returning to the Lord?

God's messengers address the issue of idolatry

Let us begin with the important point that *God sends messengers to address the issue of idolatry* in our lives.

It is important to note that, unless someone comes and proclaims our idolatry to us, we will be deceived into thinking that the idol that is in our heart is actually the Lord speaking. That is terrible; it is a terrifying situation to be in.

The point is that God, in His mercy, sends someone to address idolatry.

The effect of idolatry

'Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations [The Lord gave Ezekiel a mandate, a work to do, to go and show Jerusalem all her abominations.]'

'Then say [after He had shown all the abominations], "Thus says the Lord God: 'The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself. You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and you have defiled yourselves with the idols which you have made. You have caused your days to draw near, and have come to the end of your years.'" ' Eze 22:1-4. This is an amazing statement!

We note that the effect of a person's idolatry was *injury*, or *'the shedding of blood'*, within the body of Christ.

In our last session, we talked about the issue of betrayal, where there was no cleansing of uncleanness; it led to iniquity which caused the shedding of innocent blood. That is what betrayal is, and that was what the Lord said to Ezekiel – all of this 'shedding of blood' is *because of idolatry*.

Amazingly, commensurate with the impact which a person's idolatry has, in *causing injury to others*, is *the decline of the wellbeing* of the one who is worshipping idols.

So they have caused injury to people because of their worship of idols and, He said, 'You [by doing this] have caused your days to draw near, and [you] have come to the end of your years.'

That sounds like the apostle Paul's declaration to the Corinthians – that many become weak and sick, and die before their time, because they do not discern the Lord's body when they come to eat and drink at His table. 1Co 11:30.

Do you see that idolatry is the reason why people become weak, sick, and die; and they are unable to discern, or to properly participate in, the *agape* meal. As they do that, in a similar manner to the betrayer, Judas, they are actually 'shedding innocent blood'.

God's judgement upon those who reject His word

Unless our idolatry is made known to us through messengers, someone 'outside' of us, we will believe that the idols in our heart are actually the Lord speaking to us.

This is the mark of God's *judgement* upon those who reject His word. And this is a truly terrifying predicament to find yourself in.

This is what the Lord said to Ezekiel about this situation. 'Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols.' Eze 14:4.

The Lord will affirm your idolatry – so that you will think that what you are hearing is true. And He will do that to 'take you by the heart and take you out'.

This is a terrifying judgement – that is, when you believe that your 'darkness' is actually the 'light' in you. Luk 11:35.

He said, 'I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.' Eze 14:4-5.

Examples of idolatry in the Scriptures

Let us consider idolatry because, in some respects, it is quite obvious what it means to worship an idol. However, if we simply leave it there, we do not understand why someone does this – why they worship an idol.

The most obvious example of idolatry in the Scriptures is the worship of manufactured figures made out of wood or gold or other materials.

They were crafted symbols, and those crafted figures supposedly represented a deity, or a god, who bestowed particular blessings upon their adherents.

These adherents followed different types of Baals, because each type of Baal would, supposedly, give them something. They might worship for a good harvest or to get rain; they might worship a particular Baal for fertility.

The image supposedly represented a deity who gave to a person, or bestowed upon the worshipper, or an adherent, a particular form of blessing that they were after. That is obvious in the Scriptures.

Idolatry is iniquity

In our western society, we do not tend to worship deified effigies. 'Effigies' are symbols or crafted figures. We do not tend to do that; we do not tend to have many Baals in our houses. I was thinking that many people have images on their walls, and we will consider that.

We do not tend to worship deified effigies; but we 'give worth' to things. Remember that we are considering the worship of an idol. When we worship something, we are giving it 'worth'. So, we give worth, through *attention and time*, to practices that we believe will give us the life that we desire.

At this point, it is not necessarily 'a figure' that we might be worshipping; but it is giving worth,

through attention and time, to practices that we believe will give us the life that we desire.

Moreover, we may celebrate those who exemplify the life to which we aspire. So, in the end, there are images – be they real people or the media representation of people to whom we give worth, and who appeal to us, because they exemplify the life that we are pursuing.

In fact, these people are often called our ‘idols’. We idolise those who represent the life to which we are aspiring. These are both expressions of idolatry – the figure, and the pursuit of a particular expression of life.

The passage which we have read reveals the basic, or fundamental, principle upon which all idolatry is manifest – that is, *idolatry is iniquity*.

If we want to understand the most basic point about idolatry, it is not all the different types of figures. It is not: ‘What is it that you worth the most?’ In the end, most basically and essentially, idolatry is iniquity.

That is what the Lord said to Ezekiel. ‘Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart [*They are setting them up.*], and [*by doing that*] puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity.’ Eze 14:4. That is our key point – idolatry is iniquity.

Iniquity leads one to name themselves

The key is to *understand what iniquity is*. This is because that will be the basis for our idolatry.

Iniquity is living and walking according to one’s own understanding and the sight of one’s own eyes.

This way of living belongs to every person who is not obedient to the word of God that is ministered by those whom He sends – they *define their own name*.

The source of everyone’s name, or the word of their name, is God the Father. So, if we are resisting that word, it means that we are living by some other ‘sight’, or perspective. That will be our *own sight* and our *own understanding*, and so we will, by that means, begin to *name ourselves*.

When we define our *own name* and works, these works or the name that we give to ourselves is a manufactured *projection*.

God has a name for us.

Where we have rejected Him – or *because* we have rejected Him – we will craft an image of ourselves; who we want to be and how we want to be known and received. That is giving ourselves a name and defining the works that belong to that name.

In so doing, we will project something – that *projection is the idol in our heart*.

That is why He removes all of the named idols from the land.

In defining our *own name* and works, these idols will become manufactured *projections*. In this regard, they become the *idol* that a person pursues and worships. Whether it is a figure that we believe has certain powers; or it is an ideal; or it is a person whom we want to be like, the idol that we pursue is really a reflection of who we want to be and the life that we want to have.

This is actually very basic. The word is ‘outside’ of us. The idolatry, or the worship of things that are other than the Lord, is because of something that is ‘inside’ us – that is, the crafting, or the naming, of ourselves. And that ‘thing’ that we love the most is a reflection of who we want to be – that is what we are pursuing, as the manufacturer of a projection.

Do you see the point that idolatry is iniquity; and iniquity leads one to name themselves, and to pursue a life of which they are the source?

He was bruised for our iniquities

Besides the fact that it is described ‘point blank’ in the book of Ezekiel, the connection between iniquity and idolatry is actually highlighted in all of the prophetic Scriptures pertaining to Christ’s offering journey as well. Eze 14. This is an amazing point.

‘But He [Christ] was wounded for our transgressions. He was *bruised* [*literally meaning ‘crushed’.*] *for our iniquities.*’ Isa 53:5.

He was bruised for our iniquities when He was beaten in the face. In the court of Caiaphas, He was punched in the face so that His face was ‘marred more than any man’. Isa 52:14.

‘He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised [*or crushed*] for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.’ Isa 53:5,

Let us consider the phrase 'bruised for our iniquities'.

'Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive [the Lord Himself speaking], because I was *crushed [or bruised] by their adulterous heart* which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols.' Eze 6:9.

Jesus said, through the prophet Isaiah, that He was crushed for iniquities. Jesus Himself testified that the crushing that He experienced was because of the adulterous heart of those who ran after idols.

Peter's iniquity caused Jesus to be crushed

Who was it who interfaced with Jesus when He was being bruised [or crushed] for iniquity?

It was the disciple Peter. We remember that Peter was a zealot; he was the 'religious' one. He said, in effect, 'I am going to lay my life down for You; I will journey with You; I am Your best mate.' Joh 13:37.

Right at the point where Jesus was being crushed for his iniquity, Peter looked at Jesus 'eye to eye', and that iniquity was broken in him. Luk 22:61-62.

Do you see that the most idolatrous person of all is the religious zealot? That is absolute iniquity; that is what caused Jesus to be crushed.

We are not talking about the idols of people 'out there' – who are worshipping cricket or football or pop singers.

We are talking about those who *presume* that they are worshipping the Lord.

Jesus was saying, in effect, 'I was crushed by that, and it was adulterous. You are professing love for Me, but you actually love something else – you love yourself. It is adultery.

Idolatry in the context of the church

In the context of the church, a person's idolatry is their claim to love and worship God while they live according to the spirit of the world.

In this regard, Peter said, 'I will lay my life down for you.' You may think that Peter was not living by the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world governs a person who lives *according to their own understanding*. A person can be completely religious

and completely of the spirit of the world, causing 'injury to innocent blood'.

In the context of the church, a person's idolatry is their claim to love and worship God while they live according to the spirit of the world, which means *living according to their own understanding*.

Their conversation will be as Peter's was. What was he doing? He was swearing by the time that he arrived at the court of Caiaphas. Mat 26:74.

Their conversation and conduct will be 'at odds' with their professed love for Yahweh and their connection to the presbytery. We have no fellowship with the Father and the Son if we are at odds with the fellowship of the presbytery. 1Jn 1:3.

This will be an adulterous relationship. Do you see that that is what the adultery is? It is professing love for one thing, but actually loving something else. It is loving the idol, which is a belief in one's own integrity and the veracity of one's own zealous works.

Unwilling and unable to meet the Lord, broken heart to broken heart and eye to eye, their rebellion becomes entrenched and familiar, so that they cannot discern its distinction from the culture being proclaimed in the word. That is amazing, isn't it?

If we do not have a moment where that is broken within us, we will continue in our idolatry, hearing the word, and saying, 'I am that word,' as we are 'going out'.

Validation of a projection causes injury to others

We have to receive a word from outside of ourselves; otherwise, we will zealously 'kill' the Lord and His people. That is what He said – idolatry causes the shedding of innocent blood. Eze 22:4.

The use and abuse of others to achieve one's self projective ambitions, which is the idol, is described by the Lord as 'shedding innocent blood'.

Ultimately, it was *shedding the blood of Jesus*, because that was what was causing Him injury.

The Lord said that a person is defiled by what they do to others in pursuit of validating their projection. I know that is 'a mouthful', so I have

written a couple of illustrations. You will be able to discuss these illustrations further because, once you see the principle, you will see how evident it is.

I will make this point again. The Lord said that a person is defiled because they worship an idol, and by what they do to others in the pursuit of their validation of their projection.

In validating their projection, they worship an idol, and this causes injury to someone.

Examples of self-validation that cause injury

Let us consider some examples in the church. The first is a person who *obligates others* to engage in a service team, because of the identity verification that they receive from being a leader of a team.

The idol of this person is that they have leadership over others; and the injury, or the shedding of blood, is that they obligate and demand the compliance of people to that because, as long as they have a team, they are a leader of something. They are validating a projection, and this causes injury, or the shedding of blood, to the innocent.

Second, is a person who believes in the pastoral counsel that they give. They *presume* to counsel on matters in the church. Perhaps the counsel that they give is consistent with their name and grace – and that might be true.

But, in this scenario, a person believes that the pastoral counsel that they give is *consistent with their name and grace*; yet that counsel draws people away from their accountability to present themselves for offering on the ground of the presbytery.

This person gives pastoral counsel because they think that it is consistent with their own name. And, as they are doing it, instead of that word releasing or encouraging a person to their personal offering of themselves on the ground of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, it *draws them away from it*.

So they have received some validity, some verification, from giving all this great counsel. But the outcome is that the other person has not drawn near and has not obtained the life that belongs to them.

This is because the *life is found only in the fellowship of Yahweh*. So, 'blood has been shed'.

The third has to do with *courtship*. Let us consider a person who initiates a courtship with someone because they think that they are a 'good match' for them. On what basis would we make a judgement about a good match? It would be a judgement through the perspective of our own understanding, wouldn't it?

Perhaps that person would be a good match for them because of their ministry capacity or their relational 'nous' or their appearance. Whatever it is, it is all about how the other person makes them feel.

In other words, one is using the relationship with the other to verify their own sense of identity and its projection, so that they will appear to others in the body in a particular way – as a 'solid couple' or as a 'good house'; a future 'ministry house' perhaps, because of their association with the one whom they are courting.

So, one is pursuing a particular image, but they are taking from the other person or defrauding that person, for their own sake. It is shedding innocent blood. That is idolatry.

Obviously, no-one who is doing this *thinks* that they are doing it or causing harm. Do you see the point that no-one intentionally goes out to injure anyone?

The light of the word reveals the condition of our heart

That is why we need the light of the word to reveal the condition of our heart. Otherwise, we will continue in that, and we will continue to shed innocent blood.

The only way through which we can obtain true perspective is to *walk in the light of the word* and to *forsake other words or other appealing gospels*, which the prophet Jeremiah, interestingly enough, described as 'wooden idols'.

It is the other words and living by those other principles, which is then affirmed by people who are also idolatrous, which causes us to place ourselves in this predicament.

What will that look like, in practice, and how can we be delivered from it?

'Keep yourselves from idols' – walk in the light of the word

The apostle John wrote his first epistle having seen a revelation. When he concluded his first

epistle, the final word of this amazing instruction to the whole church for nineteen hundred years, the very last statement is, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols'. 1Jn 5:21.

This is a very important point; it is like the exclamation mark of this amazing letter. What did he mean when he said, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols'?

In other words, he was saying, 'Walk in the light of the word, rather than in the sight of your own eyes and the dictates of your own heart.'

This is because idolatry is iniquity; and iniquity is living according to your own sight and understanding. To keep ourselves from that, we have to walk in a *different* understanding.

Flee idolatry – participate in the fellowship of the communion

Similarly, when the apostle Paul addressed the Corinthians, he wrote, 'Flee from idolatry'. 1Co 10:14.

All the writers declared that this is a problem. It is a problem, as you go through the pathway of salvation. And it is a problem when you fall from the heights to which you have been raised. Rev 2:5.

Paul indicated that, when we idolise something in our heart, we are doing *more* than worshipping an idol. When we love it very much, it is more than merely the fact that we think that this is worth cherishing. It may be a particular lifestyle, a ministry aspiration or a work aspiration or other pursuits.

When Paul exhorted us to flee from that, he was saying that it is more than simply delighting in something or cherishing it. He was saying that, when you do that, we make ourself *subject to the demonic*.

Do you see that what you treasure causes you to be of a particular 'spirit'?

Paul wrote, 'Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.' 1Co 10:14-17.

Do you see the connection here? What does fleeing idolatry have to do with how we eat and drink the communion?

For most of us, I think it is very obvious, isn't it? If we are living in the pursuit of an idol, we are *not eating and drinking Christ's blood*. This is what Paul said. We have to *flee idolatry so that we can partake, or participate, in that fellowship*.

Unclean spirits accompany idols in the heart

'Observe Israel after the flesh: are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then?' Paul tried to 'get all the chessmen on the board'.

Here is his point. 'What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? [Is there any validity to idolatry or what is offered to them? No!] Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons.' 1Co 10:18-20.

The worship of idols is not benign. It is the worship of the *demonic*.

'The things that the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?' [That means that we provoke Him to wrath, causing a person to become weak and sick, and to die before the time.] Are we stronger than He?' 1Co 10:20-22.

Do we think that we are a little cleverer than the Lord, in that we can claim to be a part of the *agape* meal but entertain the spirit of the world outside of that *agape* meal context?

Do you see that Paul was really getting to 'the grist of the mill', if you know what that means? He was getting to the point and the real issue. This raises a key point for us to understand. *Unclean spirits accompany idols in the heart*. You cannot get away from that.

Do not be deceived – evil company corrupts good habits

Fellowship on the basis of idolatry is fellowship with demons or unclean spirits.

We cannot fellowship with Christ at His table and in His house, and then make the table in our own house into 'a table of demons'.

How would we make it a house of demons? It would be by facilitating and pursuing lifestyles that we love more than we love the Lord.

So, on the one hand, we are claiming to be part of the *agape* meal, but we are living by the sight of our own eyes and by our own understanding, which is demonstrated by *how* we speak to one another; *what* we speak about; and what comments we make about things.

Further, how we go about our lives can demonstrate the worship of idols, which is a communion of demons. This will bring the wrath of Christ upon us.

When discussing the subject of 'fellowship with demons' regarding the conversation that we have around the table, Paul was not referring to the conversations that we have in our workplace or the conversations that we have at school.

He said that that is *not* the table of demons, because we are not 'communing' with them; we are not giving ourselves to them in the belief that that is where our life is found.

Paul was referring to the conversations in the church, which are 'over and against' the conversation established in the fellowship of the presbytery. Where those two are at odds with each other, demons have access to your house.

'I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolators, since then you would need to go out of the world.' 1Co 5:9-10.

Paul said that we will interact and converse with such people in our schools and work places – and they are sexually immoral, covetous, idolatrous. They are dead in trespasses and sins; that is the way of life under the rulership of Satan in the darkness of the world.

When Paul told us not to have any company with them, he was not saying, 'Get out of the world.' That is *not* what he said.

'But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named *a brother*, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolator, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person.' 1Co 5:11.

Paul was saying that the conversation and the engagement that we have with these ones becomes demonic when that is the conversation or the connection that we have *in the church*.

Furthermore, Paul said that *we should not make these people our friends*. So, if you know that someone in the fellowship is sexually immoral, covetous, an extortioner, an idolater, a reviler or a drunkard, their conversation is an alternative, 'mixed wine' conversation.

If you know it, and they are not repentant so that they are not joined to a process by which they are delivered from that, you are choosing that table as adultery over and against the love feast that belongs to the Lord.

'Do not be deceived.' 1Co 15:33.

If you do that, you are in such delusion that you can possibly bridge that. Do not be deceived.

'Evil company corrupts good habits.' 1Co 15:33.

If you keep that company, you will begin to behave in an idolatrous manner; you cannot help it. That is what iniquity does; it deviates from the truth of God. And the more that you do it, the more that you think that you are still righteous. That is great judgement.

Such a person is growing weak and sick and falling asleep. 1Co 11:30.

Awake to righteousness through repentance

'Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness.' 1Co 15:33-34.

If you have been engaged in that, you have to *awake to righteousness*. You can only do that *through repentance*.

'Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God.' 1Co 15:34.

Do not embrace people who delight in their uncleanness. I am not saying that we have to reach perfection today. However, we have to be confident that a person has reached a certain level of perfection before we can have *agape* fellowship together.

The *agape* meal is full of people who are committed to walking blamelessly – not sinlessly – *blamelessly*. They are connected to the process from which they are being delivered from being covetous, an extortioner, an idolater etc.

If someone is delighting in their uncleanness and saying that that is true, *get yourself away from it*.

But, if someone is like that and they are testifying that they are being delivered from that, praise the Lord for His salvation.

If they are testifying that they are *learning* to walk in a new and living way, you can encourage them, and you can testify, yourself, because you are in the same process.

If we embrace people who delight in uncleanness, we will be overtaken by the unclean spirit which is oppressing them, and we will be corrupted and destroyed.

Examine ourselves when we eat the *agape* meal

This word was proclaimed at the National Bible Seminar. In light of this exhortation about idolatry, it is timely – because this is in the Spirit – to examine ourselves, as Paul encouraged us to do, when we eat the *agape* meal.

He said, in effect, ‘Examine how you eat and drink lest, because you are not discerning the body, you are becoming weak, sick, and dying before your time.’ 1Co 11:30. That describes people who are shedding innocent blood because of their idolatry.

We all have to examine ourselves as Paul instructed us to do.

The emotions that are driven by an unclean spirit

The following three questions are for us all to consider. They may be of assistance, particularly if you are growing agitated; if you are confused about the word; if you are cynical; if you are depressed; if you are manic – this means having hyper-energy about everything; if you are anxious; if you are angry; if you are frustrated about life and about what is happening; if you are fatigued; if you are suspicious; or if you are completely unrestrained in your life.

These questions are important, because *all of those emotions are being driven by an unclean spirit*. Did you hear what I said? All of those emotions, the ferment, are the evidence that you are motivated by an unclean spirit, which is the evidence that you are in idolatry.

The list can go on – agitated, confused, cynical, depressed, manic, angry, anxious, frustrated, fatigued, suspicious, unrestrained.

A way of deliverance – questions to answer

What are these questions?

The point is, if that is a demon that you are oppressed by, put that to work for you, and say, ‘I am feeling like that; I don’t want to be.’ You do *not* need to live like that.

I want to say that, if you are like that, it is no-one else’s fault. It is no-one else’s fault; but there is a *way of deliverance* for you.

Do not say, ‘It is the messenger’s fault’; or ‘my messy family’s fault’; or ‘my “work injustice” fault’. That is the response of a person who is *stumbling in offence*.

Where you feel like this, name it for what it is, and say, ‘What is the idol, which is being energised by this demonic oppression, that is causing all of these emotions?’

These questions have come straight from the paper titled, ‘What is the nature of my idol and what is my uncleanness?’

Now, that is not ‘you making a judgement about where you have been good or evil’.

The question, ‘What is my uncleanness?’ is asking, ‘What *word have I rejected* that has left me unclean?’

We remember that it was Judas who rejected Jesus’ word concerning the *agape* meal. That left him ‘unclean’, and brought him to a situation where he did not *believe*.

The first question is: ‘What is the nature of my idol and what is my uncleanness?’

The second question is: ‘What is the image of myself that I am creating as an idol in my heart; who do I want people to think I am; who do I want to be; what am I aspiring to?’

Then the third question is: ‘How am I endeavouring to verify this identity of my own making; what actions am I taking to pursue or to maintain this idol; and what effect might it be having on other people?’

Recovery from idolatry – present yourself for fellowship and acknowledge your iniquity

Let us finish on a high note – that is, *recovery from idolatry*.

We *all* need to examine ourselves in this way; but we can all be *restored to the fellowship* that the Lord desires for us.

“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: *Return*, backsliding Israel,” says the Lord; “I will not cause my anger to fall on you. For I am merciful.” Jer 3:12.

What are we supposed to do *by the mercies of God*? We are to ‘present ourselves a living sacrifice’. Rom 12:1.

The first point for every person in ‘returning’ is to *avail themselves of the mercy of God*. And ‘availing ourselves of the mercy of God’ is the *presentation of ourself* to the fellowship of Yahweh, which is *the fellowship of the presbytery*.

“I am merciful,” says the Lord; “I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity.” Jer 3:12-13.

So, in the light of the word that is coming, and as you consider these questions, *acknowledge your iniquity, or your deviation from the word*, that is leading to uncleanness, which is leading to idolatry and oppression by unclean spirits.

‘Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree.’ Jer 3:13.

I love that. That sounds like a person whose idolatry has multiplied and they are pursuing whatever they can – every initiative or every type of activity that they think will give them ‘life’.

What does the Scripture say? ‘Scattering their charms to alien deities under every green tree.’ The ‘green tree’ represents everything that looks as though it has life.

Let go of relationships that keep us bound in idolatry – the sword of the word

‘And you have not obeyed My voice.’ Jer 3:13.

That is amazing, isn’t it? That is the alternative to *obedience* to the word of the Lord. Another way of saying it is that, because we will not be obedient to the Lord, we pursue idolatrous initiatives and endeavours.

“Return, O backsliding children,” says the Lord; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” Jer 3:14.

Do you see the point? Division occurs through the word of the cross. We have to let go of some of these relationships that are keeping us bound in idolatry, and to allow ‘the sword of the word’ to actually bring division, so that we can be joined properly.

Let go of your idolatry, and your life will be multiplied

‘For I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds [over-shepherds, or ‘masters of assemblies’] according to My heart, who will *feed you* with [according to] *knowledge and understanding*.’ Jer 3:14-15. Ecc 12:11.

How good is that? If you are to be fed with the knowledge and understanding that comes through shepherds, whom the Lord has placed in the midst of this flock, you have to *let go of your own knowledge and understanding*.

Do you see that your pursuit of your own knowledge and understanding, and your reliance on it, is the *iniquity that leads to idolatry*?

‘Then it shall come to pass, when you are *multiplied and increased in the land* in those days.’ Jer 3:16.

How good is that? If you *let go of your idolatry, your life will be multiplied*. This is ‘*exanastasis*’ – ‘life up out of the dead’.

“It shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increase in the land in those days,” says the Lord, “that they will say that no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore [nor shall you live by the sacrament of it].” Jer 3:16.

In the end, we have to *let go of all the sacraments*, because all of those sacraments, including the pursuit of the ark of the covenant, are absolute idolatry. It is the religious zeal exemplified by Peter.

Jerusalem, the church, will be called ‘the throne of the Lord’

‘At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord.’ Jer 3:17.

I love this point. The church will be called ‘the throne of the Lord’. That is where Jesus is seated in the midst of seven golden lampstands, with seven stars in His hand. Rev 1:12,13,16.

How amazing is this verse! 'Jerusalem [the church] shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be *gathered to it* [to the name of the Lord].' Jer 3:17.

As we relinquish our own idols, we are being drawn into the fellowship of His name. And that is what that verse records: 'No more shall they follow the dictates of their [own] evil hearts.' Jer 3:17.

This is a helpful passage in our understanding of how we are *delivered from our idolatry*.

It is also helpful in our understanding *the great blessing that is promised to us in the fellowship of Yahweh*.