

**DONKEYS
ARE NOT THE PROBLEM**

WHO ARE THE RIDERS?

Assignment . Attitude . Attain

KEMAS LIFT

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CHAPTER 1

The Donkey

We know that donkeys are one of the beasts of the earth. Adam gave them names at the naming ceremony in the Garden of Eden. All names assigned to the animals were without objection; hence, no creature protested. God approved the list of names that Adam gave to the creatures. In fact, the names Adam gave corresponded to the list God had with him. His performance was excellent; he acted like he had a peep on the list. This underscores the point that he was spiritual before the fall.

*And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof*¹⁹ - Genesis 2.

An ass is synonymous with a donkey. So, in the Scripture, we can replace it with a donkey. Some versions of the Bible have already done this for us. Three animals frequently appear together in the Bible. They are ox, ass, and sheep. They are so close to man, bringing service to him in many ways. They and their counterparts on the earth, the sea, and the flyers in the sky are older than the man. The scope of their assignment is limited to *be fruitful and multiply*²² - Genesis 1. But the man still to be created at this time has a broader scope of duty, which covers theirs as well. Therefore, they are not to be a problem on earth since man has a duty covering theirs: be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion. Suppose they should fall short in being fruitful and multiplying. In that case, the man with the authority to replenish and have dominion can empower them to do their duty. All the beasts were on the ground, but God did not cause it to rain until the rider upon the ass and the one who would use them to plough the ground was available. Rain is unnecessary when no man can go to work due to unavailability. Many people are asking God to bring rain. They even request that the former, present, and future rain to fall at the same time. But would you be ready to go and plough? God has always sought men to plough and bring Him harvest. I am expecting the three dimensions of rain because I want to be seen ploughing. When there is no man, God knows how to sustain lives. He will allow the underground water to keep things going.

For the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.⁵ But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground⁶ -Genesis 2.

While man is to be created, none of the beasts went into its place of service. So, the man is to deploy them to their productive usefulness. The ox and ass play similar roles as a beast of burden, more importantly, helping man accomplish his assignment to plough the earth.

Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together¹⁰ - Deuteronomy 22.

You cannot yoke the ox and ass together despite their similar duties. Not only due to the difference in size, but an ass also has a closer relationship with the man than an ox. Do not mix things up, saying it doesn't matter. Even if your assignment resembles someone else's, do not bring it together if it does not match the same level of understanding, growth, and direction in life. The plougher would suffer and expend more unnecessary energy to control an ox and a donkey that are yoked together. The attention that should be focused on the field will be used to sort out the differences between the two animals. You will be seen working, but the output will not match what you have put in. Using the wrong means or tools to execute your assignment will make you unproductive. Separate the ox from the donkey. Why bring in an ox if you are called to use a donkey? Confusion is not good. An ox is an adult castrated male cattle. Someone using this type of animal may bring in more produce from the field. You may not be correct if you use the crowd or the number of likes on social media to judge the potency of what you're doing. As good as quantity is, you must not neglect the quality the donkey gives.

Envyng others who use another method to achieve their assignment is unnecessary. You do not have to copy by bringing in an ox while working with an ass. Otherwise, chaos will start, and you will never be found doing your task. We live in a world where many choose to be copycats, imitate, and plagiarise the work of another. When it comes to being like Christ, we can imitate others as we see them imitate Christ¹ - 1 Corinthians 11. Jesus did not combine both animals as He rode to Jerusalem. Do not copy without receiving instruction from God to do the same. I have not seen one riding

on his ox. But with your donkey, you plough and safely ride home upon it. God says, do not yoke them together.

Rest—Not all animals were close to man after Adam named them. While the creatures in the water swim, the fowls of the air fly to several destinations. Some of the beasts of the earth roam around and do their things. All have their time, which they use as they wish, but the donkey was ploughing with man. Hence, it is not surprising the law recommends that man should rest alongside his donkey.

*Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day, thou shalt rest, that thou and your ox and your ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed*¹² - Exodus 23.

What is your donkey? It's that thing that serves you and helps you accomplish your God-given work. It is also how you achieve the will of God. Through service, the donkey provided companionship to man. So, it became predictable that wherever you see the man, you will see his donkey.

After the fall of man and following his progressive rebellion, some animals came from behind or from nowhere to the front stage and became companions to man. Unfortunately, there is always displacement in rebellion. Man and the things around him were in malalignment. Furthermore, in displacement, there is misplacement and replacement. The man misplaced his priority. Other animals around him replaced the first three: the ox, ass, and sheep. Those like cats and dogs became close friends with the man. They have been so close to almost becoming inseparable from him. He can now lead them to most places he goes and even show affection to them more than his fellow man. A man's life with another apparently became a cat and dog because of the redirection of affection and relationship. Evil started to rain cats and dogs onto the earth. The truth is that inside a fall, there is no rest. It does not matter how you fell or landed during a fall. Once there is a fall, there is pain. Pain replaces rest in a fall. Until taken away, pain continues to be the predominant symptom when one falls. Why the last Adam came was to take away the pains of the first Adam. Rest for man is, therefore, found in the restoration work of the last Adam.

The next question is, where is your donkey? Where is the tool for your assignment on Earth? I trust that a dog has not taken the place of your close

company. I also trust that the monkey has not assumed the position of your donkey. The loss of God's presence in rebellion makes people live a defensive life owing to insecurity. Man is more sensitive to himself but insensitive to others. He focuses on securing what he feels remains but ignores restoring what was lost at his fall. You will notice that keeping dogs is partly to fight insecurity. Imagine if the world were secure; even the police would not need dogs. Those who work do not fight, and those who fight do not work. Bring your donkey and get to work! For there is your rest. God rested when He worked.

Man and donkey rest when they plough the earth. I don't know if man and dog will find rest. Some have made serpents even their pets. It crept in due to the breach man created in his life. Some others have embraced a monkey instead of a donkey. All of these are shortfalls of falling short of the glory of God. If you think all animals are the same, take a monkey to plough. It will be jumping from place to place, from one tree to another. Finish tilling the ground and plant an orchard of bananas, then let us see what your harvest will be in the presence of a monkey. Your donkey will make you a don! It holds the key to your harvest, while monkeys will mock your produce. Check what is mocking your life!

Redemption and Sacrifice - This is another benefit both man and his donkey share. Redemption became God's design for man while he lay in the fallen state. That which encourages his return to the garden to resume his abandoned job must be deployed. You will ride on your donkey back to the ploughing field. The redeemer, the lamb of God that took away the sins of the world, was carried upon the donkey while heading to be the Passover sacrifice. Let's see the relationship man shares with the ass in redemption and sacrifice.

All that opens the matrix is mine and every firstling among the cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male.¹⁹ But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shall you break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty²⁰ - Exodus 34.

From the above scripture, we see that every first delivery out of the womb is given to God. Also, in some animal categories, they must submit their

first offspring to the LORD if it is a male. In this category, there is no command to bring a substitute for their males. But for donkey and man, the case becomes different—redemption begins to speak. The lamb is used in exchange for a male ass. It is also a replacement for the male firstborn of man. No other beast was treated similarly in this way, like a man, except the donkey. This is one of the purposes the sheep that is also close to man serves. Another purpose could be meat because man's diet has changed since his fall. Initially, he was commanded to eat the herbs, seeds, and fruits from the garden's trees, not animals³⁰ - Genesis 1. He switched from being herbivorous to omnivorous later. Perhaps vegetarians are trying to find their route back.

Back to the scripture above, we often quote the part that says, '*and none shall appear before me empty.*' Indeed, in these situations, as above, one should not come without evidence fulfilling the demands made by God, be it the firstborn donkey or the firstborn son of man. In the case of a donkey, for every empty appearance without a lamb substitute, the neck of a donkey is gone! It was that serious. You either chose to lose a lamb or a donkey. Appear with a sacrificial lamb, and you gain your donkey. Come empty when redemption is needed, and you lose your donkey. Given the territorial oversight donkeys have over the flock, the productivity of the livestock will dwindle. Crops and harvest in the fields will be affected when a donkey dies.

There will be a shortage of donkeys if a man keeps appearing before God without a substitute. You can count how many necks of donkeys will be broken when this law is not obeyed. The man should understand the value of what he's given and quickly bring an exchange to preserve what will help yield an increase in his field. Remember, he eats from the ploughed and planted field. It is emptiness before God when a man does not bring a redeeming lamb for the firstborn male of his ass or sons. That will be a representation of the void that will be in his field at the time of harvest. When he brings the lamb, he releases something smaller to keep that which is more significant. Amazingly, He wants us to sacrifice our small and gain big. What God requests from us is not that big compared to what He intends for us to have! Have a donkey and give me a lamb. Have your son and give

me a lamb. Isn't it a good bargain? It's your son and the donkey that will go to till the field.

Do not break the neck of your donkey. A donkey with a broken neck is dead. In case it survives but wears an orthopaedic neck collar, where will the ploughing yoke be placed? There will be nowhere to put the yoke if the neck is broken. Don't save a lamb for a donkey because you will keep your field fallow. In this kingdom, we lose to gain. That which we gained brings more gain. Lose a lamb, gain a donkey, and increase your harvest! 'Do not appear before me empty' meant two things from our scripture above. First, you give to create room for more. Giving God the first because He asked for it would not be your last giving. In the case of the donkey and the firstborn son, it also means what you give to keep what has already been given to you.

Attributes of donkey

Bonding: Donkeys naturally enjoy the company of their kind. When other donkeys are absent, they may bond with horses, mules, or other small stock. Donkeys can develop strong bonds with their companions, and separating bonded pairs can create enough stress.

Territorial: Domesticated donkeys may exhibit territorial behaviour. A donkey's territorial instinct is so strong that they are used to guard herds of sheep and goats against dogs, foxes, and wolves. Most donkeys live happily alongside these companions.

Love to Learn: For a donkey, learning begins from the moment they're born and continues throughout their life. Every time you interact with your donkey, they will learn something. During learning, a donkey grabs only what is effective for them. As a result, donkeys quickly learn things that are closest to their natural behaviours.

CHAPTER 2

Balaam And His Donkey

Who is Balaam?

We must adequately classify and put Balaam in his rightful place. He has a complex personality that must be unravelled. Some view him as a prophet who has the dual capability of seeing through the realm of God and as well through divination. Others see him as a prophet of God who was swayed by money. The truth is that Balaam is a proficient diviner, a profiteering merchant soothsayer, a false prophet, and one who was neither hired by God nor worked for Him. Let's follow through the scriptures and isolate him for who he is.

And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of the Moabites at that time.⁴ He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:⁵ Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me these people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.⁶ And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand, and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.⁷ And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you a word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.⁸ And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?⁹ And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying,¹⁰ Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them and drive them out.¹¹ And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed¹² - Numbers 22.

Pethor means of foreign origin. It's a place in Mesopotamia; hence, Balaam was a Mesopotamian prophet. We are conversant with this country, for it is also Abraham's place of origin. They are popular in idol worshipping. Abraham was called out and purged from these people, but there was no time we heard that God called Balaam.

Also, if we disassemble his name, it will sound like 'Baal I am,' meaning I belong to Baal. It's interesting to know that the caller, Balak, and the called, Balaam, bear Baal, an idol god in the prefix of their names. Let's also give Balak a straightforward interpretation. It will sound like 'Baal ark,' which will mean the presence of Baal.

Two other things that support who he was are the purpose of the contract Balak king of Moab issued to him, which was to come and curse Israel, and the reward of divination as a mobilisation fee. His curriculum vitae is replete with skills in all manners of cursing. So, he was highly employable in this regard. God does not raise cursers! It was said of him that whosoever he cursed was cursed, and whosoever he blesses is blessed. He cannot bless anyone, but he can manipulate people out of their blessings to bring the unqualified to the experience of the blessed. This is the law of exchange. If, by disobedience or lifestyle choices, you do not walk in keeping with the laws that keep your blessing, you will lose it to a less qualified. Balaam is known to push people into disobedience through enchantments. An exchange occurs in the spirit realm so that one who should receive evil will have good, and the one who should have good receives evil. This was his enterprise. It is a common witchcraft practice. God has never raised a prophet to be doing this kind of job.

Anyone who goes to curse whom God has blessed will receive a curse upon himself. For Balaam to take a step to go and curse God's chosen means, he was receiving curses upon himself as well as working against God. Which true prophet can do this kind of thing? When the messengers of Balak arrived with the diviner's part-payment mobilisation fee, he did not rebuke them that he wasn't a diviner. The label on the envelope was "diviner's reward," not "prophets reward or offering." It is evident in the above scripture that we must distinguish this man for who he is.

The spirit realm is a world, and there are many players: God, angels, Satan, demons, and all manner of spirits, and the man who has dual realms operates there also.

Any being carrying out any assignment in the spirit realm can encounter God irrespective of whether he's working for God or against Him. The essence of God's appearance to Balaam was to interject and intercept him so that he would not inflict injury on His people. This is not the first time God has appeared to idol worshippers. He did so to Abimelech to save Sarah. He communicated to Pharaoh in a dream about a looming global famine. This is because there was one Joseph, a carrier of the blessing, in his country, who must not die because of hunger. This dream communication would not occur to Jacob or his brothers in Canaan because it would not be helpful since the carrier of the blessing has translocated to Egypt. So, God appeared to Pharaoh. It also happened in Babylon when God visited Nebuchadnezzar in another hard dream. The essence is to announce and preserve His own, the Hebrew boys. In other words, God talking to Balaam does not qualify him as His prophet. After all, God talked with Satan concerning Job.

Balaam's life looks so deceptive, making it difficult to classify him as either a prophet or a diviner. By principle, when good and evil are found in anything, it can't give out good. This is why the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil did not help Adam and Eve. So, we can't expect less from Balaam. It does not appear that he's a backslider prophet but rather a diviner. Let's consider some of Balaam's speech that may compel you to reckon him as God's servant even though he was not: '...as the LORD shall speak unto me,' '...for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you...' 'I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God to do less or more.' These are the languages of Zion spoken by a strange man. Unfortunately, no one could trace when his prophet journey or walk with God started. Suddenly, he emerged from a heathen nation and began to tell us that he was representing God, but with a mixture of harm and help. That's not part of God's character. No prophet of God in the Bible practised this, even in a backslidden state like Johnna.

In the occult, before they attack, they will peep to measure the status of their enemy with God. This will inform their mode of operation or even whether they should proceed with their plan. The controller of the spirit world and the physical, of course, is God. Proficiency in Zion's vocabulary, lexicon, and fluency does not make a true prophet. Balaam meticulously went around seven different portals, efficiently built altars, and made sacrifices to attract spirits to decimate Israel. He was looking for a loophole to launch an attack on each occasion. In chapter 23 of Numbers, the LORD forced His words into Balaam's mouth, and he began to bless them and speak of their greatness. A similar thing happened in the gospel of John when they intensely sought for Jesus to kill Him. The hired assassins returned to those who sent them and began to speak good of Jesus. God will make your enemies your public relations officers.

And some of them would have taken him, ⁴⁴ but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said unto them, why have ye not brought him?⁴⁵ The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.⁴⁶ Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?⁴⁷ - John 7.

Balak - Balaam System

This is a combined satanic strategy that brings the secular and the religious into the union to stop the children of the kingdom and the purpose of God. It is all about Baal. We have seen how their names depicted the promotion of the course of Baal. The outcome of their action led Israel to worship Baalpeor. This dimension of Baal showed up when Balaam resorted to plan B.

And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel³ - Number 25.

Israel associated herself with this spirit through the invitation link of whoredom. Some young men clicked the link and began streaming this demon into their lives in real-time through the Midianite women. Twenty-four thousand died by joining this link. You can see the outcome of the demon-empowered counsel of the witch prophet, whose counsel could be playing out in your life without you knowing. I don't know the number of things that have died in your life, and now your body is about to drop dead

since that sexual uncleanness crept in. The alternative plan of Balaam resulted in this massive slaughter. It's better to imagine the number of people that would have died under his original intention of Plan A. The fatality rate would have been unbearable. You can now appreciate why God was intercepting this enchanter. Moab was not an obstacle to Israel as they headed to their inheritance in Canaan. Fighting them was not in the blueprint of their mission. Balak saw them as a threat to him and his nation. He must have worked against Israel and failed. Then, he raised a gang up with Midian to deploy the services of a warlock. A Balak-Balaam system is the invitation of a demonic priesthood into a community of people, organisations, or institutions to stop, hinder, or destroy the existence and progression of people.

The Error of Balaam

Error is not necessarily a departure from normal. To say that an error is a mistake, a wrong action, or a falsehood will not fully capture the weight of its meaning. A mutation that leads to the shortage of what should be, or the addition of that which is abnormal, is an error. In genetics, there are what are called inborn errors. In these conditions, there are genetic mutations leading to an abnormality in the function of enzymes. This may lead to the absence of the production of a particular protein by the cells or, on the other hand, an excess production with an accumulation of unwanted proteins. In any case, severe and often life-threatening diseases will result. An error has to do with removal and addition. It could be voluntary or involuntary. A believer can establish error in himself by removing God's truth or adding the devil's nature. The unregenerated that has no God in himself achieves error by using God's vocabulary. The spirit behind what he's saying or acting makes it an error. In their case, they can't remove God because He isn't there in the first place. Balaam deceptively painted God around his life so that if you listen to his words and encounters, you may be forced to classify him as a prophet of God. So, he added the name of God as he was running what stands out as a witchcraft show.

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core¹¹ - Jude 1.

At the core of Balaam's error are greed and gain! People see the error, but the two captains driving it are Greed and Gain. It would be life-saving for you to stay away from any church driven by either of these pilots or rather pastors. When a man removes God from his life and adds the devil, know that 2G, that is, Greed and Gain, is at work. The Bible says, '...ran greedily after the error of Balaam.' The energy supply of that race is greed, and it has an endless, relentless supply of energy. That's why greedy people can never say it's sufficient. As long as greed is the supplying force, a crash brings the race to a halt. You do away with it, or it will do away with you! The trophy that motivates greed is gain. This 2G network is a killer. It kills godliness and assumes that gain is godliness. As with inborn genetic error, people will see various symptoms of the condition. However, the enzyme dysfunction at the centre of it all is not easily noticeable. There must be a series of tests to find it. If you suspect you are running into an error, you may need to submit yourself to a screening test before symptoms emerge. Trusted people who comply with God's word will serve as investigation centres.

Balaam's error manifested as a resolve to disobey God despite knowing God's mind and stance. It was expressed through deception by appearing to serve a God he did not accommodate. From chapters 22 to 24 of Numbers, which tell this story, "the LORD" was mentioned thirty times by Balaam or in direct connection to him. Also, "God" was mentioned eighteen times. That's a considerable number within three consecutive chapters! That means God wasn't scarce on his lips but very far separated from his actions.

A demon spirit known as the spirit of error gives birth to error. It's this spirit that causes the mutation. It will make one appear in charge and feel he is doing the right thing. It can also delude you into thinking you are in the position of correcting others.

An error can spread like cancer. That's why what started in the Book of Numbers has now reached the Book of Jude.

The Way of Balaam

Balaam's way and similar ways all begin with error. Error is the name of the port where every journey in the way that leads to destruction and death begins. On the other hand, the way that leads to everlasting life starts at the

port of truth. In one way, the vehicle is a spirit of error; in the other, it is the spirit of truth. Balaam's way, as it started, is also littered with errors.

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error⁶ - 1 John 4.

So, here we see both spirits and how to diagnose their presence. In this scripture, we shall use the simple diagnostic test kit known as "Hearth us." "If you hear us," beloved John says, certainly two things are in you. They are 'knowledge of God' and 'being of God'. You will not listen to us if you are not of God but claiming to know God. The 'us' is the preaching of the word by the apostles, and Jesus is the word. God also told all to hear Him when introducing Jesus to the world. If you do not listen to us or hear Him, then the spirit of error is in operation in and around your life. He must be chased away! It must not cause mutation of the word of God you hear! You can listen to an error and jettison it. When you hear and believe it, you are in error. When you begin to live by and pattern your life by it, you are in the way. But when you start to teach and propagate error, you hold a strange doctrine.

The Doctrine of Balaam

Doctrine is what one believes in, patterns one's life by, and teaches others to do likewise. If these three are not met, it could still be a doctrine but not yours. Here, we are looking at Balaam's doctrine. Please notice that it is personalised. In Jesus's case, those things He began to do and teach formed His doctrine. What started as an error progressed into a way and is now communicated to many as a doctrine. It first started as a teaching Balaam gave to Balak.

But I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication¹⁴ - Revelation 2.

As we can see from the above verse, some people hold and teach doctrine. Sometimes, some hold but do not teach. However, to lecture on any doctrine, you must be a holder of it. Let's consider the word "hold". It

means two things: those who believe in it and those who practise it. Balaam's doctrine is known for the three dimensions it communicates: the *casting of a stumbling block, eating things sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication.*

Anything that is put in the way to cause a child of God to fall is a stumbling block. It could be a trap of giving and receiving a bribe, lying to pass through a difficult situation, or seduction into sexual sin, like sex with a partner in a bogus marriage to obtain a residence permit and, after that, have a divorce. It must be in the way of the children of Israel who are believers for it to be a stumbling block. You don't place such a block before one already on the ground and reeling.

The children of Israel began to eat and play before Baalpoer. They ate food that received enchantments and incantations before this idol. They defiled their bodies with sexual play, which in our time may be called having fun. Many have fallen for fun! The block that was cast, which caused the stumbling, was seduction by the Midianite ladies. This was the first module in the teaching of Balaam. The other two modules in the coursework will follow easily once this first course is, unfortunately, completed. Eating food sacrificed to idols may be physical food that received enchantments upon it. It could also occur through eating in the dream. It is a tool of witchcraft to bring defilement. The caterers are intentional in preparing and serving the dream meals.

Here, we shall classify doctrine into two major groups based on the details we see in the scriptures:

- **Sound doctrine** - This is also called the good, pure, or new doctrine. Being called new doesn't mean different teaching has just emerged. The term new is relative to how those who uphold strange doctrines view it. Those who are in the company of the spirit of error reason it as new. Also, we should know that the spirit of truth is what powers sound doctrine. The following are sound doctrines: the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Jesus, the apostles' doctrine, and the personalised doctrines of any of God's apostles.

- **Wind of doctrine** - This is also called the doctrine of vanity, other doctrines, and strange doctrine. It is seen as strange because those with the spirit of truth perceive it as not aligning with God. The spirit of error fuels it. The doctrine of men, the doctrine of Balaam, the doctrine of Nicolaitans, and the doctrine of devils are all winds.

*For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**, but after their lust shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears³ - 2 Timothy 4.*

The Sound doctrine: Here, sound means being healthy, wholesome, uncorrupt, and safe. A sound doctrine appeared four times and was used in Timothy and Titus. This wholesome teaching makes a believer healthy and without corruption in all areas of life, including marriage, relationships, business, politics, and service delivery in both the secular world and God's house. Paul exhorted both ministers to continue dishing out healthy spiritual meals. He noted that a time will come when people will no longer endure sound doctrine. They will develop itching ears and turn their ears to hearing fables. The teachers they heaped unto themselves were expected to cure the itching ears. So, the diagnosis of the problem here is an itching ear.

It is not insufficiency or a lack of nutrients that causes itching of the ears. A sound doctrine has adequate spiritual nutrients to ensure a believer's growth. Paul always encouraged Timothy to be up to speed on the quality and quantity of doctrine that is made available. There is a connection between lust and itching ears, like heart and ear infections—people with sore throats can develop ear and heart infections later. On the other hand, those who have eaten abnormal spiritual food can come down with lust in the heart and itching in the ears. Naturally, we know that sound worsens tingling or itching ears. That's why they will avoid 'sound,' even when associated with doctrine. They will resort to self-help with an eardrop called fables. Unfortunately, this doesn't produce a cure. To treat the itch others have caused, it takes sound teaching.

Good doctrine is also sound doctrine. God is good, and from Him proceeds every good thing. If the cover is good but the core is not, then be sure it's not from God. If it's from Him, it must be good through and through.

For I give you good doctrine forsake ye, not my law² - Proverb 4.

Sound doctrine is a package that contains a myriad of good things. When one engages with God's teachings and applies them in his life, it releases all the good and perfect gifts that proceed from Him.

*If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the word of faith and of **good doctrine**, whereunto thou has attained⁶ - 1 Timothy 4.*

Using the good doctrine tool wherever you serve makes you a good servant of Christ. Use it in your business, office, street, and every other place to deliver your service. Never put a barrier on where and where not to use the tool. Most of Jesus' doctrines were not demonstrated in the synagogue. People learned from His doctrine at the poolside, on the riverbank, along the roads, at weddings and family celebrations, and on every occasion where He was invited. No one leaves what works and produces results for something else. People gathered to Jesus because He was generating results. Good doctrine is good news. It nourishes, refreshes, puts fat on bones, strengthens bones, and impacts good health.

*Light in a messenger's eyes brings joy to the heart, and **good news** gives health to the bones³⁰ - Proverb 15 (NIV).*

*For you say, '**My doctrine is pure**, and I am clean in God's eyes.'⁴ - Job 11.*

Soon, we would see that the efficient use of doctrine is when it is personalised. Zophar, one of Job's friends, is here to discover issues in Job's life that could be responsible for his predicament. He has here referenced Job's claim in the past that his doctrine is pure. If that were the case, Zophar would suggest, why should all these problems befall him? In truth, Job revealed what made him the upright man he was. The pure doctrine produced such a man that God could boast of before Satan. A man prepared, nourished, and furnished by pure doctrine makes God proud.

Pure doctrine produces a good, melodious sound that purifies the heart. The sound of some people's lives is not in harmony because it is not pure. The wisdom from above is, first of all, pure and shows other good things. So, it makes for sound teaching. Purity is what makes sound doctrine what it is. Was Job clean before God? Yes. Satan even was aware. He demonstrated

that you can be pure and wealthy when applying sound teachings to your daily life. No one who immerses his life in pure teachings that translate to pure living loses his soul to the devil. Satan could not gain access to Job's soul. Even when his wife advised him to curse God and die, he was not blown away by this strange teaching of the spouse. Do you seek to have integrity? Then, seek to be fed by pure teachings. If it is pure, then you will stand upright. Some are bowed to several directions by different teachings.

One would wonder how people coped under the Pharisees' doctrine. Sabbath after Sabbath, and daily, people come into the synagogues with all manner of afflictions, operations, and harassment by devils. They will return the same or even with more pain because of words that open up wounds rather than applying a dressing and cure. Suppose you are under a preacher who tells and explains your problems but does not offer supernatural scriptural solutions that bring you out; in that case, you are facing a similar challenge. When Jesus came, the story changed under His teachings. The Pharisees confessed that Jesus came with a new doctrine when they saw His authority over demons and the obedience of unclean spirits to Him.

*And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, what thing is this? What **new doctrine** is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.²⁷*
Mark 1.

Two things caused them to submit that a new doctrine had come. They are the authority of Jesus and the obedience of devils. Remember that these are rebellious spirits, but there is a teaching they all submit to. They called it new! It is called a sound doctrine. It brings seasons of refreshing to the hearers.

People are primarily afraid of accepting something new. They believe that God is rigid and must be predicted by religiously laid-down principles. But it is advised to vet everything, which means testing every spirit. Therefore, a new doctrine must pass the test of purity and goodness; that is, it must be sound.

In the ladder of sound doctrine, an individual apostle's teachings glorify that of the apostles. The apostles' doctrine glorifies Jesus, and the doctrine

of Jesus exalts God. They all take their root from God.

The doctrine of wind: Doctrines that can disarm a believer of his faith and ultimately destroy him were described as ‘wind’ in the Bible. The wind is the forceful blowing of air. In contrast to a refreshing and soothing breeze, when the wind blows, it can take down buildings and roofs of houses, uproot trees, and, in fact, anything that is of less weight on its way would be taken down. Some of such winds we have come to know as hurricanes. They often take their names after the people who first observed them. We have some of them, such as Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Maria, Hurricane Matthew, etc. In different regions of the world, they have caused notable devastation. A doctrinal wind can cause similar things in the spiritual life of a Christian. They also derive their names after the persons who produced them. For instance, Balaam, Nicolaitans, Pharisees, and Sadducees have doctrines attached to them. Let’s look at the scriptures on this issue.

That we henceforth are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive¹⁴ - Ephesians 4.

Note from this verse that this wind can do two things to a child believer. It can toss him. When it throws a believer, the direction it will take him is known as ‘to and fro.’ This is a directionless or non-definite destination. This is a worrisome situation for one who initially embarked on a journey to heaven. ‘To and fro’ is a pendulous movement that has no location. This means that such a believer has no background, even in Christ. He has been dislocated from the faith, but whose movement simulates this pattern from the Scripture? I know you will remember that when Satan was about to tempt Job, God asked him, “*Where are you coming from?*” He didn’t conceal his movement. He said he was moving to and fro in the earth and walking up and down. There is usually confusion where wind causes destruction. For instance, you will notice this confusion from the ground to the roof of a building. Up and down movement in a believer signifies chaos left behind by doctrinal winds.

Every wind of doctrine originates from Satan and can take one along on a journey aimed at inflicting injury to the Body of Christ. God is everywhere and, therefore, does not need to move to and fro. The only thing that moves

in this way is the eyes of the Lord. It shows how big God is that He does not need to move His whole body to cover the entire earth. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro the whole earth to strengthen those who are committed to Him⁹ - 2 Chronicles 16. Apart from tossing a believer, the second thing a doctrine of wind can do is to carry. When it takes a believer, the direction of movement here is known as 'about.' First, will you trust the wind enough to carry you? Do you know where it will drop you? It's my prayer that the wind should not come your way. Apart from Satan's to-and-fro movement that attacked Job, the wind from Satan also carried the building and collapsed it upon his children.

And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee¹⁹ - Job 1.

Being carried about is also a movement without a destination. Anyone who wants a promising future should not be a victim of wind. If you are already being driven by this wind, you are receiving help now because the windbreaker is here. The one who speaks to the wind to stop is talking you out of that teaching you have received, which is about to destroy you.

Personalisation of doctrine - From the Scripture, you must have observed that doctrines are self-appropriated. It is owned and personalised. It doesn't matter if it is a sound or wind of doctrine. This is key because it helps to know which doctrine one holds. Suppose you cannot confidently ascertain the principles and teachings that guide your living and all you do, then that means another doctrine is finding expression through you without your knowledge. Doctrine is an experience one consistently comes into and sustains. It becomes a pattern of living and not a one-off expression. Generally speaking, what we hear shapes our lives, and we either consciously or unconsciously model ourselves after it. Therefore, one who desires to live a good life should intentionally begin to examine and edit the teachings that have moulded and are currently influencing them. These teachings may have come through graphics, written or spoken words.

The Foolishness of Balaam

In this event between Balaam, God, the donkey, and Balak, we see the fool's footprints tracking Balaam almost everywhere he goes. To begin this

review of his foolishness, we must look at the basic definition of a fool.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works, and none doeth good¹ - Psalm 14.

This is the first declaration in this chapter by David, who is vastly experienced with God and people of all sorts. This definition is a classic representation of who a fool is. Let's look at the four things a fool said here. First, there is no God; secondly, people are corrupt. Thirdly, people have done abominable works; finally, none does good. A fool sees everyone as being involved in corruption and does vile things. Are there corrupt people? Of course, yes! But a fool sees everyone as the same. The first thing the fool said in that verse is the root of his foolishness. Everyone says things in their heart, but the content of what you say is what matters. In his heart, a fool says there is no God.

You see, sometimes, people speak carelessly in idle talks that there is no God. But they are not the ones the Scripture referred to as fools. The speaking of the heart is weighty because it goes with much contemplation, reasoning, and conclusion. How would David have known that such a speaking exists if not by the Spirit? People will behave as they like whenever they believe God doesn't exist. The final thing the fool said is that no one does a good thing. Can you now see why fools behave as they do? They put themselves under this umbrella of false perception and act as they like without considering any consequences. Now, back to the man, Balaam. We have noted that when you look at how freely the name of God and the LORD comes out of the mouth of Balaam, you will mark him as being good and godly. Did God not say that there are people who call him with their mouths but whose hearts are far from Him? We have noted that the assessment of a fool is based on heart talk and not necessarily mouth talk.

*Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" ²⁸ Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a **fool** of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." ²⁹ The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have always ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said³⁰ - Numbers 22.*

The man who claims to see with his eyes open didn't see the angel. The angel stopped the donkey. The donkey stopped Balaam. What was he supposed to stop? The journey! If Balaam had asked himself the three questions the donkey asked him, he would have exempted himself from being a fool or at least concealed his foolishness. He would have asked the following questions: "What is wrong with my donkey?" "Is this not the donkey I have been riding all this while?" "What's the cause of this unusual habit of my donkey?" He neglected this self-interrogation. If he had done this, most likely, the angel would have revealed himself to him, and he would not have beaten his donkey. These questions would have shown that he seeks answers. "Seek, you will find," says the Scripture. However, he did not! Since he left his senses and adopted foolishness, it pleased God to bestow upon the donkey what he had neglected.

Another time God almost did a similar thing was when Jesus rode on a donkey to Jerusalem. They wanted sensibility taken away from the people praising the king by recommending that they be shut up. Jesus said He would quickly give the stones the sense to carry on the praises. We know from the parable of the ten talents to take away from a person and give to another person. But to take from man to give to the beast, as in this case of Balaam, or to take from the beast and give to man, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, is bad enough. While the former is due to foolishness, the latter is due to pride. Then, to take away from a man and give to stone is worse. Thank God it didn't happen!

Usually, one is judged to be a fool by other people. A fool does not recognise that he is one through personal assessment alone. Sometimes, when a man lacks certain vital qualities, God can refer him to go and learn from other creatures. When one is lazy, he would be directed to the ants for learning. If he lacks certain wisdom, God can ask the serpent to tutor him. The dove will be introduced as a teacher when there is a lack of gentleness. Then, if his problem is a lack of leadership or self-governance, the locusts that advance together in ranks and strip the field like an army regiment without a commander will be his course advisor. However, the case of Balaam was not to learn from the donkey.

The tool for learning and intelligence was not with him but rather with the animal because he was ready to continue the journey on foot without the ass. The salvation of the donkey was found in the absence of a sword in the hand of Balaam. When it complained of being beaten thrice, he responded that he would have killed him if he had a sword. Yet the angel with the sword endured his foolishness and spared his life. Balaam was willing to kill anyone who stood in his way for the financial reward. Anyone who can stop the life of anything for money is riding on Balaam's donkey.

Two of his servants were on this journey with him. They observed all these dramas as they unfolded. But none could say anything, whether in the form of suggestion, counsel, advice, or even a comment. They would have made inputs in any of these ways. I don't expect them to reproof him since it's not appropriate to do so to an elder. Their silence has a lot to say about who this man was. Whether it's a counsel, a reproof, or any of the ways of correction, it does not work for a fool, especially an advanced fool. The fact is that they understood their master.

Pain is a defence mechanism that helps us withdraw from harmful and injurious sources. It will trigger a flight-defence response rather than a fight. It may also initiate a fight-defence reaction if it facilitates a flee. So, it is essential for living and survival. When the pain sensation is lost, an individual will persist in the presence of danger as if he's daring the consequence. In some medical conditions like leprosy, syphilis of the central nervous system, or even long-lasting uncontrolled diabetes, the patient may painlessly lose some digits or have injuries unnoticed. The reason he didn't give attention to his wound may be due to any of these. It's a possibility, anyway.

But because of the things he set before himself, he could endure even a crush injury. What you put ahead as a goal can drive your pain threshold up so that you will scarcely notice discomfort. The objects Balaam set before himself were Balak's honour, promotion, silver, gold, and open check of whatsoever he desired. These are enough strong analgesics to abolish pain! For Jesus, the joy ahead of Him helped manage His pain. Check if your painkiller has no adverse effects. Do you realise that unavoidable circumstances that serve as a warning to others don't do so to a fool? They

often would persist in the face of apparent destruction until they were engulfed. Let's look at Balaam's attitude towards a painful situation again.

And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again²⁵ - Number 22.

His immediate response was to smite the donkey. I have not seen anyone involved in a road accident, and he would first beat the driver or vehicle. If you think the trauma was minor, first, you must understand the mechanism and the type of injury he sustained. The agency was a thrust. That force is a result of propulsion, such as in a jet engine. Then, there was a head-on collision with a static wall. The injury was not a bruise, a laceration, or a contusion but a crush injury on the foot. This has many medical implications. I wonder how he would have limped his way to his invitation if he killed the ass as he had desired.

Balaam continued with the crush wound until he began to suffocate even as he was on the go.

Seeing the angel, Balaam's donkey sat down under him. Balaam lost his temper; he beat the donkey with his stick²⁷ - Numbers 22 (MSG).

The donkey now sat as he adamantly continued the journey. You may think that he would turn back, but he didn't! "What kind of journey is this that wants to take away my life?" I expected him to ask. He lost his temper and beat his helper for the third time. It's not wise to recycle pain when you know that God's approval is not with what you are doing.

As a dog returns to its vomit, a fool repeats his foolishness¹¹ - Proverb 26.

You can return to Him with that pain. Don't say it's too late, that you have gone far. Persisting until you are suffocating is already late. But as long as you still have some breath, you can make a U-turn. The balm of Gilead can heal you even now. The Breath of Life, Jesus, can supply you with resuscitative oxygen and stop your bleeding wound. The way of the fool is characterised by pain, restlessness, and suffocation, and finally ends in destruction. This was where Balaam remained.

We shall continue by considering the exact type of fool Balaam subscribed his life to.

The Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP) classifies fools into five basic types. These are simple, silly, sensual, scorning, and steadfast fools. In the Old Testament, the word *fool* is a translation of five different Hebrew words that reflect subtle differences in “types” of fools. Unfortunately, the English translation makes it more challenging to identify the characteristics of the five types of fools. Still, these differences can be distinguished with a careful search of Scripture.

We need to **understand the progression of rebellion reflected in the Bible’s description of fools**. Suppose you learn to perceive the characteristics of a simple, silly, sensual, scorning, and steadfast fool. In that case, you will be equipped to identify and respond to such fools with wisdom and discernment.

The Simple Fool

The Hebrew word for “simple fool” is *pethîy* (peth-EE). The root word from which it is derived, *pâthâh*, implies extreme vulnerability, literally meaning “to be opened up.” **The simple fool opens his mind to any passing thought** and opens his arms to any passing stranger. In other words, he lacks discernment. He has an oversimplified view of life and fails to recognise the cause-and-effect sequences that affect every area of life.³ - Proverbs 22.

Because the simple fool is not discerning, he is quickly captivated by all kinds of enticements and deceptions. **He is dangerously immature, extremely gullible, and intensely curious**. In the absence of instruction and consistent discipline, the simple fool will naturally become more foolish. A simple fool is especially vulnerable to seduction, lacking an understanding of the irreversible consequences of moral failure.⁶⁻⁷ - Proverbs 7.

The Proverbs provide instruction for the simple fool: *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel ... give subtlety to the simple [pethîy], to the young man knowledge and discretion*⁴ - Proverbs 1.

Scorning fools will seek out simple fools and try to become their heroes. Therefore, to protect simple fools from the destructive influence of the scorning fool, it is critical to bring swift correction to scorning fools. *Smite a scorner, and the simple [pethîy] will beware ...*²⁵ - Proverbs 19.

The Silly Fool

The Hebrew word that refers to a “silly fool” is ‘*eviyl* (ev-EEL). Its definition is “to be perverse, silly.” **The mouth of a silly fool often gets him in trouble.** *Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish [‘eviyl] is near destruction*¹⁴ - Proverbs 10. See also Proverbs 20:3. **When things go wrong for a silly fool, he becomes angry**, resulting in more damage. *A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty, but a fool’s [‘eviyl] wrath is heavier than them both*³ - Proverbs 27.

A silly fool believes that his way of thinking is right.¹⁵ - Proverbs 12, so much so that **he reacts to instruction when it is offered:** *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools [‘eviyl] despise wisdom and instruction*⁷ - Proverbs 1. Arguments, persuasion, and advice from well-meaning friends fail to convince silly fools of error. Proper correction by authorities, which publicly shames the silly fool, will more often be effective in helping him change his ways.⁹ - Proverbs 29.

The Sensual Fool

One who rejects the correction of parents or other authorities will become a sensual fool. This type of fool is identified in Scripture with the Hebrew word *kecîyl* (kess-EEL), which means “fat, i.e., stupid or silly.” The word denotes a person who seems determined to make wrong choices. **He does not have a mental deficiency but instead rejects the wisdom of God.**

The sensual fool’s focus is on that which brings him immediate pleasure. **He glories in that of which he should be ashamed.** *It is as a sport to a fool [kecîyl] to do mischief ...*¹⁹⁻²⁰ - Proverbs 13.

A sensual fool is unreasonable. As a silly fool, his mouth gets him into trouble. Now, as a sensual fool, his mouth gets him into more trouble. *A fool’s [kecîyl] lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes [blows]. A fool’s [kecîyl] mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul*⁶⁻⁷ - Proverbs 18.

Scripture warns more about the sensual fool than any other type of fool. **His motives and methods are subtle.** He should be avoided because those who follow him will be led astray...*A companion of fools [keciyl] shall be destroyed*²⁰ - Proverbs 13. **Severe punishment is prescribed for the sensual fool:** *A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's [keciyl] back*³ - Proverbs 26.

The Scorning Fool

The Hebrew word for “scorning fool” is *lûwts* (LOOTS). It means “to make mouths at, i.e., to scoff.” The scorning fool’s **facial expressions communicate his disdain and contempt for his authorities**, including his parents, civil authorities, and God.

This type of fool not only has rejected truth; **he has also embraced that which is abominable to God.**¹ - Psalm 1 describes the progression of foolishness, referring to a man who first walks “*in the counsel of the ungodly,*” then stands “*in the way of sinners,*” and finally sits “*in the seat of the scornful [lûwts].*” The scorning fool utterly detests people and ideas contradicting his false thinking, expressing **his scorn through derisive attitudes, behaviour, and speech.**

The scorning fool turns a deaf ear to rebuke: “*A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner [lûwts] heareth not rebuke*”⁶ - Proverbs 14. Those who attempt to lead the scorning fool away from the path of destruction that he seems determined to follow will suffer his wrath. *A scorner loveth, not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise*¹² - Proverbs 15. *He that reproveth a scorner [lûwts] getteth to himself shame: ... Reprove not a scorner [lûwts], lest he hates thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.*⁷⁻⁸ - Proverbs 9.

A scorner must be punished—for his own sake and for the sake of those whom he can potentially influence. *Smite a scorner [lûwts], and the simple [pethîy] will beware ...*²⁵ - Proverbs 19. *When the scorner [lûwts] is punished, the simple [pethîy] is made wise...*¹¹ - Proverbs 21.

The Steadfast Fool

The most dangerous type of fool is a steadfast fool. The Hebrew word *nâbâl* (naw-BAWL), which means “stupid, wicked,” identifies this type of

person. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, *nâbâl* also translated as *a vile person*.

A steadfast fool completely rejects God and His ways. “*The fool [nâbâl] hath said in his heart; There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*”¹ - Psalm 14. This type of fool is self-confident and close-minded. He is god on his own, freely gratifying his lower nature. **He aims to draw as many others as possible into his evil ways.** Attempts to reprove him will be futile and bring frustration to the one who tries to influence him. Only God can successfully reprove a steadfast fool.

The Madness of Balaam

As the Scripture has diagnosed Balaam with madness, we would not attempt to alter it. However, we would follow the rigorous process of arriving at such a diagnosis to see if he met the diagnostic criteria.

*But he was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbade the madness of the prophet*¹⁶ - 2 Peter 2.

Some of us must have seen mad people talking to animals and inanimate things as if conversing with them. They hear voices that others around them cannot hear. This is called auditory hallucination. Mad people often see and listen to what others cannot—that which they see and hear are demons. By talking with an animal, he was switched into mad mode. However, the spirit that spoke through the ass when the diagnosis was made is God. This was not when the sickness started. It was the apostle Peter who, by the Spirit, gathered the criteria to make the diagnosis. Balaam was adamant in obeying as God spoke directly to him. God handed him over into a conversation with an animal. He was made mad!

*That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and **maketh diviners mad**; that turneth wise men backwards, and maketh their knowledge foolish;*²⁵ - Isaiah 44.

It is God who does all of these. Anyone who saw this man conversing with an animal will reckon him mad. That God communicated His purpose through the donkey does not exempt Balaam from madness. Such mad

people are destructive, and God was stopping him from destroying his children.

I remember one giant, fierce madman as I was growing up. His look reflects the extent of damage and injury he can inflict. One day, my friend was carrying me on his bicycle as we were going to school. He was walking down the same narrow road we must pass through. If we say, "Let's ride slow until he has gone through," we would be late to school. We summoned the courage and rode past him. As we did, he used the big stick in his hand and smote me. It became clear to me that he had in mind whom to smite.

I had in the past ridiculed him from a distance. He kept this in mind and acted at the right time. But an exciting thing happened when we reached the end of that road, where it connected a broader path. We met a man to whom we explained our ordeal. First, he was furious about why a madman should attack students on their way to school. He cut out a heavy stick from the bush with his machete to retaliate. On seeing the intimidating, fierce-looking lunatic making his appearance out of the road, in a snap, he threw his stick into the bush, made a quick turn, and disappeared without further comment. But this was not the case with God when Balaam made headway to Moab. He withstood him several times along the way. He hindered him when erecting altars of sacrifice to unleash mayhem on Israel until he was turned back. The advice that Balaam left Balaak with that killed thousands of people in Israel pertains to issues of life. Such an issue concerns will and choice: choose between life and death, blessing and cursing.

The Greek word translated as madness in 2 Peter 2:16 is "paraphronia". It means insanity, foolhardiness, unthinking recklessness with disregard for danger, boldness, rashness, and hotheadedness.

Madness is a layman's name for a medical condition that belongs to psychiatry. It describes a state of disease of the mind. The term is broad and can mean any psychiatric condition. For instance, a person labelled mad by society may suffer from psychotic disorders like schizophrenia or a bipolar mood disorder like mania. It could even be used for major depression, personality disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, impulse disorder, etc. The obvious ones people can diagnose from afar are psychosis and mania. Balaam did not have a psychotic problem, as thought problems like thought

insertion, thought broadcast, and thought withdrawal would have been some of the symptoms. Depression will take away one's ability to perform tasks he is used to and put him into a withdrawn mood. So he was not depressed. Balaam was moving with high energy, which made him appear unstoppable. God had to intervene several times to halt him. He was heading to perform the task he signed up for in a contract, disregarding the danger. Therefore, Balaam most likely had a bipolar disorder, which presents with excessive energy, flight of ideas, grandiosity, increased activity, less need for sleep, and being talkative.

The Ungranted Desire of Balaam

This is another litmus test of who Balaam was. Let's briefly look at what the Scripture says about expectation. When an unrighteous person engages against the righteous, his expectation must be cut off. But the reverse is the case for the righteous. Also, when the wicked desires what is exclusively reserved for the righteous, he will not get it!

The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish²⁸ - Proverbs 10.

For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off⁸ - Proverbs 23.

When we solve the simultaneous equation of these two Bible verses, we will conclude that the constant here is "expectation," and the two variables are "wicked" and "righteous." The outcomes or results are 'shall perish' and 'shall not be cut off' depending on the variable introduced in the equation. Therefore, the expectation of the wicked shall perish. On the other hand, the expectation of the righteous shall not be cut off. Now, let's consider his desire:

...Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!¹⁰ - Numbers 23.

The first thing we must note here is that Balaam understood that there was an end, agreeing with the previous verse that says, 'for surely there is an end...' In many other scriptures, this truth is also apparent. He desired to die the death of the righteous and have the last end that looked like that of the righteous.

Balaam desired the death of the righteous, but he had an aversion to the life of the same. Some people lived and are living to experience the death of the righteous. Let's look at Paul's view of this end and death.

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*¹⁰ - Philippians 3.

A person must undergo a conformable change to be a partaker in Jesus, even unto death. Conformable means having the same shape or form, similar, suitable, or compliant. Paul saw this glorious thing and vowed to streamline his life. To beat it into shape to conform to that death. For Balaam, he abandoned the responsibility part of that death. Which is "...being made conformable unto..." You can't jump the process and the responsibility and get the outcome, no matter how strong your desire is.

In life and death, it was testified that Jesus was the righteous man.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

*Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man*⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ - Luke 23.

Many years before the arrival of the Lord, Balaam saw and knew this but refused to conform to it. Now, the Roman officer, seeing it, glorified God. There is an end that leads to this death.

It is expected that one like Balaam, who knows there is an end, should have conducted his life to lead to the desired end. If you are in New York and desire to be in New Delhi but enter a flight to New Zealand, will you land in New Delhi? No. You won't reach your desired place because you travelled a different route. Even though both are 'New Zealand and Delhi are different. Even when your flight is delayed, you are in a place called 'New,' but it is York and still not Delhi.

There is an end that comes before death and an end that takes place after death. The end before decides what the one after will look like. God allowed him to see the people of Israel and their positioning in the spirit, which is different from that of other nations.

But he also referenced a person whom he saw as the righteous and referred to the person as 'his.' What he saw produced a desire that made him exclaim: "...let my last end be like his!" Balaam saw a glimpse of the Lord Jesus, the righteous whose life and death were a wonder. When salvageable people see the Lord, it will trigger a turnaround.

They persist in their way after seeing the way for them that is perishing. Remember, he was pioneering **a way** when he saw Jesus **the way**. He was not ready to abandon his career path. If you are in a way that you can't forsake to have the way of the righteous, don't desire its outcome of righteousness. Everyone alive looks forward to an end. There are three reactions when people gaze upon and think about the end. Some would be filled with joy that they are ending well, while others would be troubled about the awaiting doom or unsure what will happen. Yet, others will sweep the thought off quickly with "it doesn't matter" and say that you only need to live in the reality of now. The last two will only end well if there is a switch. Some scriptures only accrue to the righteous. These are some of them:

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit⁸ - Ecclesiastes 7.

The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day¹⁸ - Proverbs 4.

It only gets and ends better for the righteous because the way he walks in is a shining light.

The righteous had no better yesterday! He moves from one degree of glory to another because he is on a path called righteous living. Balaam was not found on this path at any time. This is a problem that is present in our time. People want the product rather than the process. They want the fruit but not the germination and growth. Many wish to partake in all things. Can one work for Dick and be paid in Harry's company? This was what Balaam was requesting.

There was one righteous who envied the lifestyle and the way he perceived things happening for the wicked. He was troubled and felt that living in righteousness wasn't worth it. Because of how he felt, he almost removed

his garment and ornaments of righteousness. The next place he was to find himself was becoming like the wicked. He was helped when he inquired from the sanctuary and saw the end of the wicked. He turned back quickly and was restored. Balaam, the wicked saw the end of the righteous and desired it but did not pursue it. The righteous saw the end of the wicked and hated it, then turned his back on it. The thing you see, does it challenge you to change your direction in life?

*Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.*¹⁷ - Psalm 73.

The problem with this righteous man was that he left the sanctuary. It is a place of safety. It is a place to dwell. When you depart from this secret place, you won't have access to classified and unclassified information. In medicine, there are places in the body called sanctuary sites. Cancer cells metastasising to those regions would not be destroyed by chemotherapy. They are hidden and safe there. When we remain in the sanctuary, we are safe from attacks on our minds, spirits, and bodies.

CHAPTER 3

Justice Jair And Donkey

The judges that judged Israel were from different tribes, chosen by God to rescue them from their enemies and to establish justice in the land. Twelve leaders judged Israel in the time of the Judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, **Jair**, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. Justice Jair was the seventh in the series and ruled for 23 years. Some had longer tenure, while others had fewer years than him. The issues to be considered are not necessarily the longevity of the leadership position but the impact and delivery of the desired goals. Choosing a judge was not rotational but based on God's need for the task at the moment. God started this system of governance because of lawlessness, which made them prone to enemies' invasion.

In those days, there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes⁶ - Judges 17.

They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?⁸ - Judges 5.

When a child of God chooses other gods, they subtly remove his shield and spear, making him vulnerable. The enemy, most times, will only strike once you appear defenceless.

The main task of the judges was the deliverance of Israel and the maintenance of law and peace. The expectation would be that every judge comes on board with skills and abilities acquired over time as he grew up among his tribe's men. When he deploys such qualities that God put in and found in him, the people will be freed and serve the Lord.

And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in Mount Ephraim.¹ And he judged Israel twenty and three years and died, and was buried in Shamir.² And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.³ And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which

*are in the land of Gilead.*⁴ *And Jair died and was buried in Camon*⁵ - Judges 10.

Tola, the judge before Jair, inherited a lawless state after the death of Gideon that ruled for forty years with peace. It was so bad that the people showed no kindness to the house of their former leader. For instance, Abimelech arrogated himself and became a king to a particular sect of vain and light people who eventually slaughtered the household of Gideon's father. Tola defended Israel and restored law and order. He was a man of Issachar, the people who understood the times. Being trained at the University of Understanding (UoU) in Issachar, he knew what to do. He was at his command to do them and eventually did everything to restore the people.

*And of the children of Issachar which were men that had the understanding of the time, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were to hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment*³² - 1 Chronicles 12.

These are people trained in understanding the times and possessing the requisite knowledge that translates to actions. They have a knack for actionable knowledge. You won't see a man from the University of Understanding and not hire him. They don't devalue but add value. If you want your company, business, or nation to prosper, these are the people to hire. They know what God says about time and seasons and how to position themselves and others to actualise the set goal. They will consistently deliver. Graduates from Issachar are more than head knowledge filled. Their intelligence is unparalleled in producing notable results. They are the ones who are not only hearers but also doers of God's word. These are connected to God, the originator of times and the source of infinite understanding. These were the things God knew about when he appointed Tola. This judge delivered as anticipated and handed over a stable government to Jair.

Justice Jair, 'JJ,' as he might have been fondly called, had a smooth transition to power. He inherited a system that was working. It was expected that he would consolidate the gains of the previous administration and then move Israel to the next level of prosperity. Jair was a man from Gilead. God had in mind the complete healing of His people. Deliverance

goes side by side with healing. Even when demons are cast out of people, the next thing that follows is their healing. The health of a person or a nation is a strong index for measuring their prosperity. Jair came at the time of need. He was a man who trained at the renowned Institute of Pharmaceutical and Health Sciences in Gilead.

*Is there no **balm** in Gilead; is there no **physician** there? Why then is not the **health** of the daughter of my people recovered?*²² - Jeremiah 8.

*Go up to Gilead to get **medicine**, O virgin daughter of Egypt! But your many treatments will bring you no healing*¹¹ - Jeremiah 46 (NLT).

The two scriptures show how internationally acclaimed the school of medicine in Gilead is. Apart from this, which Gilead is known for, it also hosts a military academy.

*There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph, namely for Machir, the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a **man of war**; he was given Gilead and Bashan*¹ - Joshua 17.

The father of Gilead was a man of war, and the allotment of the territory was given to him because he distinguished himself as a man of war. When Jair was appointed a judge, there were hopes and high expectations. Sooner than he assumed office, the unexpected started unfolding.

Let's see how his life was summarised.

*"His **thirty sons** rode around on **thirty donkeys**, and they owned **thirty towns** in the land of Gilead, which is still called the Towns of Jair"*⁴ - Judges 10.

This was the summary of one called to defend and bring justice and healing to the land. It does not look like he accomplished the work. We were not told that Jair was a rich man in Gilead when he was appointed.

This scale of donkey acquisition was unprecedented. Another thing Jair did was to build thirty towns in Gilead, one for each son. He maintained a similar trend: "do for one son what you did for another." Rich men who work hard to make wealth can't even do this. This is one clear sign of a waste of public funds. It is a sure way of destroying the destinies of your

children. All they will do in life is ride around. Life is not a roller coaster. He enjoyed the peace that came from Justice Tola, who defended Israel.

People like this make God continue to ask, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” Even while they are in their seat, it remains vacant. Do not let your position be advertised when you are in “active service.” Jair, the physician-judge, was supposed to be with the balm the people needed for their healing. However, he was with architectural designs for new cities and quotations for the supplies of the latest automobiles. The principle he adopted was a 30:30:30 ratio. That is to have thirty sons, share thirty donkeys, and build thirty towns for them. This principle that is based on greed, covetousness, and lust is strong enough to deviate anyone from God’s purpose. It has ruined certain nations and the families of the political class that govern them. Check the principle that guides you.

It is unlikely that one wife gave birth to all thirty sons. A judge appointed to defend Israel multiplied children—what a burden! It means increased household responsibilities because he must be faithful in providing for his house. Before Jair completes settling quarrels and misunderstandings among his household, would time remain to judge Israel? The task of raising and maintaining thirty sons would be highly demanding. Aside from this number, he had an unmentioned number of daughters and wives who gave birth to this company.

Jair came into governance with a family agenda. He could divert funds from the office of the Judge of Israel for personal use. He might have created needless ministries, departments, agencies, and several parastatals that would cause capital flight and fund leakage points.

Jair was busy ensuring his children remained “comfortable.” One donkey for each son. They were known for driving around the cities. What these sons do for a living was not stated, but everyone knows they drive around showing forth wealth. They are found in the “happening places” of the cities. You see them in the latest model of black, white, or mixed-coloured donkeys. They schedule and travel for holidays at will. They ride around. Are you or your children riding around on public funds? People who ride around lazy around.

His sons were riding the best donkeys. I was privileged to see a white donkey in the Middle East some time ago. It was sparkling white and moved majestically as it took the lead among the flock of sheep. The atmosphere I saw was that of royalty. Most likely, this was the kind of donkey Jesus used in His royal ride to Jerusalem. Jair's sons most likely have a freak for this kind of donkey. His children were spending from public funds while fueling their transport system and paying other associated bills. They could ride anywhere in the world.

Who are the riders on Jair's donkeys? They were thirty young, inexperienced sons. They were not officeholders, but they owned the most expensive cars in the city. The purpose of the ride is for pleasure. Self is the trademark of Jair's leadership. You can envisage the kind of association his children kept. Who else, aside from his sons, did he buy a donkey? Donkeys are means to accomplish specific missions. Kings, prophets, and priests used them in their duties. Business people used them to move goods, but here, we see abuse.

Many have cried to God for financial means: *"If you bless me, I shall support the gospel and care for the needy."* Now that the money has come, what have you done? Some have invested the money in systems that fight God: beer parlours, clubs, gambling businesses, and other hidden works of darkness that are not worth mentioning. They lavish the resources on glory-stripping adventures, establishing ungodly relationships. Some have prayed, *"God promote me, help me get a political appointment, and make me a director."* Still, when they got there, they became more ungodly than the ungodly. Almost immediately upon getting to the position, they cut themselves off from the Christian community. They may still be coming to church but have cut themselves off from the principle and practice of our faith in Christ. Before the promotion came, it was "pray for me," but now, it is "pay for it." Pay for it with your body or cash to be assisted.

It's for you to profess Jesus now that He has given you the means as a professor in that institution. Vice-chancellors do not 'chance' people and create more vices than you met. Director, where are you directing those funds? Judge, how many 'whites' have you labelled 'black'? Check what you are doing on or with your donkey. You or the donkey you are riding

now may not be again by tomorrow. Some, on the other hand, ended suddenly with their donkeys. Any of these could happen.

Abdon, the eleventh Judge of Israel, followed in the corruption of Jair. He had seventy asses for his forty sons and nephews. The carcasses of both rulers' donkeys were littered everywhere after they died.

Samson slew the enemies with a single jawbone of one of these dead donkeys. What an amazing thing that only one jawbone of a donkey slaughtered their enemies. Donkeys procured to serve the will and desires of the flesh could not give victory until they had died. One ass has the potential to deliver but in a good hand. The flesh has to die for the spirit to be glorified. No flesh is glorified before God. The donkeys acquired by the desire of the flesh have to give way.

And Samson said, with the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men¹⁶ - Judges 15.

That which you keep alive unto self will neither save you nor the people. Until the thing that you keep alive dies, God will not use it. He uses that which has died to the service of the flesh. Leaders who will serve the purpose of God have died unto themselves. It abides alone until a grain of seed falls to the ground and dies. Christ died and multiplied Himself in all of us who believed.

Locating your direction in life is critical for consistent victory. The extent of the battle Samson won couldn't guide his life. To slay a thousand men is not enough to provide guidance. You must bring down ten thousand to find your GPS to navigate.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not nigh thee.⁷ - Psalm 91.

Slaying a thousand will not differentiate your left side from your right side. "A thousand shall fall at thy side..." It could be they fell to the right or left, but you will not know until ten thousand have fallen. The fall of ten thousand gives direction to where your right side is. Only then will you know which direction one thousand has fallen. People who have not seen a ten thousand fall may lose battles and die in war. The same thing that kills others may come near you if you don't know your left from your right.

*In playful frolic, the women sang, Saul kills by the thousand, David by the ten thousand!*⁷ - 1 Samuel 18 (MSG).

Here again, we see Saul, who kills but in a thousand. He never found his bearing in life; hence, he died in a battle. It's also not strange that Samson died alongside his enemies. You must persist in killing your ten thousand, and then you will find direction in life. I know you have had victories in life's battles, but is it strong enough to direct you? David slaughtered ten thousand, which gave him direction. In all the battles he fought, he had victory.

As for Jair, he built thirty towns as a monument to himself, as mentioned earlier. They were named 'Havothjair,' meaning Towns of Jair. It was possible that the sons collected toll gates and taxes for those towns. Do you know what it takes to build a town? It's not a house, hostel, or hotel he built for each of his sons. Not even an estate or a resort. But thirty private towns! All of these are located in Gilead, yet other regions exist in Israel. When thirty cities belong to Jair and household, how many remain for the rest of the people? Jair was not in the real estate business when God called him. He also did not study estate management.

Nothing was said about whether he carried out his duty as a judge. All that was told about a man ordained to serve God and defend his people was that he had thirty sons, thirty donkeys (which they rode on), and thirty cities named after them. Where is God's portion? Where is the portion of the entire Israel? He had no divine impact on the people's lives; instead, he built a name for himself. It was said, "he arose a judge". This simply means he became a judge, for such is how a new judge is introduced. After 'he arose,' he did not become a leader in Israel. He arose unto himself to serve his purpose using the office God provided. When the Scripture says, "*Arise and shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon thee*"¹¹ - Isaiah 60, it means you must first arise before going forth to shine. For Jair, he arose but did not shine. Materialism obscured the work he was assigned to do. Personal ambition defiled it. Subsequent events in the next administration show he did not guard Israel against surrounding enemies. He never guided them into obedience to God's command, but he laid a foundation for corrupt future leaders.

CHAPTER 4

Saul And Donkeys

The shaking at Kish's organisation: Sometimes, an establishment or a company may experience turmoil that would affect staff in different ways. The company may need to downsize, dwindle, and later experience a bounce back or fold completely. While some could be positively affected, others would be negatively affected or maintain a status quo. Such crises often expose the strengths and weaknesses of staff and the organisation. The company of Kish, a known powerful man, was passing through such a moment. Saul was a key player in his father's business. Some factors affect the existence of a company. They are often implicated in failing businesses. Most of the time, behind each of these variables is a spirit.

The circumstance that resulted in Kish's donkeys getting lost was an orchestration of God. It is not every adverse situation that has its root and route from Satan. Sometimes, because of one person, God can cause or allow destabilisation. This happened to Jonah, the prophet of God, when a mighty storm came against merchants sailing from Joppa to Tarshish. The aim was to stop him because he switched the life purpose that God didn't approve for him. We saw the inconveniences just one man caused those businessmen who lost a great fortune in that tragedy. Another instance of a change that occurred, at this time on a global scale, was when Mary was near her expected delivery date. Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be conducted. This meant people should go back to their respective cities to be numbered. The sole purpose was to ensure the parents of Jesus went back to Bethlehem to fulfil a prophecy of His birthplace there.

Now, Kish's missing donkeys are targeted at Saul. It was a moment of promotion in his life. It was time for him to switch from his father's donkey to the palace donkey. It was time to move from his father's business to God's. It was a dislocation that led to relocation. Certain striking qualities of Saul have to be noted. He was not hesitant to go and search for the donkeys at his father's instruction. He was not a lazy son who stayed at home to be served by servants. His father had several servants, but he did

not shift this tasking responsibility to any of them. He would have requested that his father send the servants, but he didn't.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.¹ And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was goodlier than any of the people.² And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul, his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.³ - 1 Samuel 9.

Saul never placed his reputation on his outstanding physical characteristics. Many young men with a similar physical advantage will be at the gym, baseball court, bouncers at nightclubs, or any other place in demand of such quality. He did not succumb to the pressures of talent hunters who would have hunted him out of the journey to the throne, but he was a calm young man serving his father. They have to pass through Mount Ephraim, the land of Shalisha, the land of Shalim, the land of the Benjamites, and the land of Zuph.

We will not explore the geography of these areas, but we will know that the territories they traversed were vast. He defied the shame of searching for donkeys all over the hills, wilderness, streets, and villages. He was Mr. Israel, owing to his physique if it were in a beauty pageant. But he didn't walk the way of a celebrity. He was a man in the service of his father. Despite his size, he was bendable by his father. He did not use his advantage for personal gain. He contrasts the young man Absalom, whom the Scripture describes as beautiful but an epitome of deception, as he lured all of Israel to take over David's stool in a coup d'etat.

Another positive characteristic of Saul is his feelings for another. He was touched by the possible emotional state of his father. Being absent for a prolonged time in search of the animals, he felt that his father's level of worry could progress from donkeys to that of persons.

Finally, they entered the region of Zuph, and Saul said to his servant, Let's go home. By now, my father will be more worried about us than about the donkeys!"⁵ - Samuel 9 (NLT).

Some people talk, act, and behave without consideration of how it might negatively affect others. Now, he has decided to return, but without result. Decisions to return or quit are rife on the verge of a breakthrough. Sometimes, people will quit for “genuine” reasons on the brink of success. At the break of light, some will give up to darkness. When we end our efforts, intelligence, and calculations, just know that God is ready to take over.

And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.⁶

Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?⁷

And the servant answered Saul again and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.⁸ - Samuel 9.

These happened at the land of Zuph, the point of Saul’s return. They have exhausted all possible ideas for the whereabouts of the donkeys. Bread has also finished in their vessel. At a time when your strength is exhausted or has failed, may you have someone beside you with positive energy. He was with a trusted servant. You may call him a servant, yet he was a destiny locator. If you call him a destiny helper, you are not wrong. He was a Google map to Saul. You would realise how easily Saul would have missed out on destiny without him. Despite his admirable qualities, he lacked essential things for his lifting. Firstly, Saul did not know the man of God, Samuel, whose word reached all of Israel. Secondly, he had no backing for his bread in case it was finished. You can liken it to the five virgins without support oil for their lamps in the story of Jesus. Perhaps he assumed it would be an easy, short journey. He left with some bread without money to replenish. This reserve would have served as a prophet’s gift to create access for him to the man of God. Remember, those virgins with extra oil were allowed to receive the bridegroom. The remaining five were ushered out of destiny, notwithstanding their long waiting. Good to Saul that he was

not alone! We must be nice to all we meet in life. Anyone may hold the key to your next level.

Saul's relationship with his servant was not just master-servant but friendly. The young man had the information and was willing to share it. He was with the resources and was also ready to give them up. All to ensure they go home with the result they seek. In life, we need those with the knowledge required for our advancement. They may not necessarily need the knowledge in their possession for their rising. One of the weapons of the devil is to keep you away from such helpers. Character flaws can also keep you away from such help, though the custodians may be around you. You noticed that Saul's good relationship with the young man encouraged him to participate actively.

The servant would have agreed to go home with a big sigh of relief when his master said, "Let us return." After all, he has justified his wage. He will not also be willing to bring out his money if the working environment is hostile to him. Such a gesture would have raised suspicion and accusations that he was stealing money. The working environment was cordial to allow participation. People bring out their best when they are allowed to have a sense of ownership in their job.

Saul accepted all his suggestions, and they went ahead to meet the man of God. God had told Samuel He was sending a man to him. This man he is to anoint a captain, not a king, over Israel.

Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people because their cry has come unto me.¹⁶ And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold, the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people¹⁷ - 1 Samuel 9.

The anointing was to be a captain. Captains are commanders at the forefront of a military combatant. They lead a troop. They are not primarily called to reign. Should a captain win wars, then he can reign. So, the oil that came upon him was to enable him to fight and save Israel from the Philistines. At this same time, Israel was yearning for a king to be like other nations. By

selection and God's permission, Saul was as well chosen. Instead of multiplying leaders, he was allowed to take up the kingship seat.¹⁷⁻²¹ - 1 Samuel 10.

Your donkey has found you: Here is a man looking for his father's donkeys, but his donkey found him. He never knew his donkey was the one that was missing. The longing in his heart betrays the fact that something is missing. He will soon find out, as the prophet will tell him everything in his heart. The lost animals were a means to bring him to Samuel, the man of God. At this point, he was to be moved to his divine placement. Without meeting Samuel, he will remain with his father. He would have continued as a nice, handsome young man who served his father faithfully. Meanwhile, his heart has been yearning and designing a beautiful future—perhaps how he can be used to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. He may have been nursing such thoughts in his heart but had no idea how they could be accomplished.

God deals with us according to the issues in our hearts. He goes beyond our lips. When our heart state is in sync with His will, we see the manifestation of His will in our lives. It is likely that Saul never thought of becoming Israel's king. After all, they have never had one. So, the idea of kingship wouldn't have been conceived. However, his life purpose collided with the will of God. Making him a king was a means to getting the job done. There is one encounter that changes one's destiny permanently. May such an opportunity come your way. The royal donkey of the Palace of Israel is about to locate a young man. It was not said that the Benjamites would wield the sceptre, for the sceptre of rulership was willed to Judah. But what was in a man's heart was strong enough to call the sceptre unto him. Another man who dragged to himself, by desire, what was meant for others was Elisha. He was not among the scholastic prophets enrolled in Elijah's School of the Prophets. But by desire and separation, he laid hold on the prophetic mantle of Elijah.

We know that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Sometimes, the heart may refuse to talk, even in its abundance. At other times, the mouth may speak as a cover-up for what is in the heart. Because of these, God deals with us directly from our hearts.

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;²⁵ With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward.²⁶ - Psalm 18.

Now, Saul and his servant have approached Samuel to inquire about the asses. Let's look at the Scripture and consider the response.

*And Samuel answered Saul and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today and tomorrow, I will let thee go, and will tell thee **all that is in thine heart.**¹⁹ And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, **set not thy mind on them;** for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not thee, and on all thy father's house?²⁰ - 1 Samuel 9.*

There are two things we must quickly observe from this scripture. They are the heart and the mind. His mind was occupied with donkey matters, which led to worry and anxiety. At the same time, his heart was stuffed with destiny issues, leading to an encounter. See how the prophet dismissed his mind's concerns. His response shows that he is here because destiny matters in his heart. Friend, what is in your heart? God wants to do business with us, but His focus is the heart. The state of the heart is liable to change. That is why the Scripture says we must guard it with all diligence. As we shall see later, this man's heart sooner than later shifted, and God began to look for a man after His own heart.

Samuel brought Saul and the servant to the high place. He ate with them alongside the other thirty invitees to the evening sacrifice. There are three levels of bread or meal you must eat to confirm you have entered your purpose. The scriptures below will show us how Saul took part in these three. Even though the servant was together with him, he did not take part in all of the bread. It is because destiny is customised, and individuals enter into it personally. You need human assistance to enter into it, yet it is not a group adventure.

*Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? **For the bread is spent in our vessels,** and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?⁷ [KJV] The chef brought it and placed it before Saul with a flourish, saying, "**This meal was kept aside just for you.** Eat! it was specially prepared for this time and occasion with these*

guests." Saul ate with Samuel - a memorable day!²⁴ [MSB] And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, **that I may show thee the word of God.**²⁷ - 1 Samuel 9.

*Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:³ And they will salute thee, and **give thee two loaves of bread;** which thou shalt receive of their hands⁴ - I Samuel 10.*

When Saul left home searching for the donkeys, they continued the journey as long as their bread remained. This particular bread was of their effort. Most people depend on this bread all through life. It is a bread that arises from personal sweat and energy expenditure. This bread is supplied by intellect, handiwork, hard labour, and hard work. While hard work is encouraged, there is a limit to the supply. Many people remain under this limited supply unless circumstances change, warranting them to seek a better source. Bread from this source is prone to fluctuation. It is an unstable and unreliable supply. You can run short of it even without warning. When it finishes, people can go back to square one. All who knew them before would wonder if they had tasted bread before. Level one bread is a starting point, but you should not end life with it.

Saul decided to return when this bread finished. But as they resolved to go ahead, they encountered a higher source. You will meet your source when you persist and move forward. It usually manifests when known solutions don't work again. When people begin to look for God, the production site of all bread, they will find this bread.

CHAPTER 5

The Prophets That Shouldn't Have Met Each Other.

The Prophet from Judah

God sent His prophet from Judah to go and judge an altar in Bethel. This prophet was called a man of God 16 times in 1 Kings 13, where the entire account of him was given. What a number! Apart from Elisha, who was lavishly addressed as a man of God 28 times, no other is called a man of God this number of times in the Bible. Yet, this man's name is unknown. Man of God is a designation for the prophets of God. The expression "a man of God" appeared 78 times in applications for up to 13 persons. This man's identity was not yet fully defined. Possibly, there are things God was working out in his life with the expectation that when done, it should bring clarity to his identity. An undefined person will produce undefined hazy results. No one can locate a man whose only designation is "a man of God." Through genealogies, many prophets were able to trace their clan by their names. Even when this prophet died, no one as a relative claimed him. At moments of ovation, check what God has not yet helped you solve in your life that can bring you down. This prophet, whom everyone cheers, "*MOG! MOG!*" shortly died like a chicken. What killed him was a collaboration of what was inside of him and satanic forces.

He has just had a great demonstration of the power of God. As he was declaring the prophecies, there were instant manifestations. Jeroboam challenged him instantly, and the finger he pointed at the prophet mortified. His servants don't need to be told to disobey their master's directive to arrest the man of God, seeing the sign demonstrated. At the same time, the altar ripped apart. Ashes from the altar, which the servicing priests carefully removed, were poured out violently. It was a clear statement that the priesthood is judged. The king, Jeroboam, was brought to his knees, pleading for a restoration of his hand. By his prayer, the king's hand was restored. Who will not fear, respect, and honour the prophet on seeing these? The king made him an offer that usually destroys many upcoming

servants: reward and refreshment. He declined both; however, the manner in which he refused suggests that he will go for the food if persuaded a little more. It was a reward that terminated Gehazi's prophetic journey. When this prophet started explaining to the king the personal instruction God gave him, it gave it away that his appetite was alive. God gives his servants instructions for their guidance, restrictions, and boundaries so that they will be preserved. Such is not for public consumption. When you divulge them, it creates a weak point in accessing your life.

And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD and said, 'O altar, altar thus saith the LORD, behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priest of the high places that burn incense upon thee and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee...'² And it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up so that he could not pull it in again to him.⁴ The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.⁵ And the king answered and said unto the man of God, entreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God beseeched the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again and became as it was before.⁶ And the king said unto the man of God, come home with me and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.⁷ And the man of God said unto the king, if thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:⁸ For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.⁹ - 1 Kings 13.

God gave him explicit instructions on how to do the assignment: “Do not return to Judah through the same route. Do not eat in that place,” and “Do not drink in that place.”

The man of God rejected the reward from unrighteous Jeroboam. A reward that may destroy a man can be gifts such as houses, lands, cars, money, appointments, promotions, or leverage. They are things that pertain to life, but if God is not there, you must ensure that you are not there, too. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, went for it and did not recover. The unrighteous Balaam worked for it, and he was no more.

The man of God also refused the invitation to refresh himself. Always be bold and vocal when refusing anything God has not sanctioned and you don't want. It is God who called you and made you His servant. Also, you are the one who submitted to him to be His usable servant. Your assignment, if you have found it, must have one master. As you serve him, men benefit. Hence, you must not grant the people's desires that contradict your assignment, even when it comes from a sincere and well-meaning person.

There are two refreshments you must reject in life. If God doesn't want it, but you want it, reject it! If God doesn't want it, but another man wants it, reject it! The common denominator for these rejectable is "God does not want it." Do not be cajoled to accept anything. That which refreshes one often comes as an appetite. It could be an appetite for food or sex. Eating with discretion is the way of kings. It brings dignity and keeps you from meddling with food offered to idols by witchcraft before they are presented to you. Sex outside marriage is a refreshment to demons and maybe a service to altars of darkness. Other refreshments that may link to the appetite for food and sex are unguarded sightseeing, tourism, and travel. Remember, it was sight-seeing that took Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob, out of history. It appears that other Dinahs have suffered a similar fate since then. Here, Jeroboam invited the man of God from Judah to be rewarded and refreshed. What a moment that would have destroyed the man of God! What would have happened had the king persuaded him to come for this 'honour'? What happened next may give us an insight.

The Prophet that Dwells in Bethel

Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they also told to their father.¹¹ And

their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons have seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.¹² And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,¹³ And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And, he said, I am.¹⁴ Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.¹⁵ And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place.¹⁶ For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.¹⁷ He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.¹⁸ So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drank water¹⁹ - 1 Kings 13.

The Bible tells us, “*Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel...*” At this point, Jeroboam has left the scene, but another man shows up. He is called an old prophet. The name of this man, like that of the man of God, was not given. The only clue given was that he is regarded as “an old prophet,” not “A prophet who is old or aged.” What made this man earn this peculiar title? What made him old? Something must have caused this man’s condition. He is the only prophet in the Bible who has this strange title. Many prophets of God lived long, but none was addressed this way. This address of “old” suggests that he started his prophetic with God but was swayed into darkness. He was no more in tune with God. That is why God did not send him to confront that altar, though he was dwelling in Bethel. The altar has influenced his ministry. In fact, he may have been drawing prophetic insight through the spirit of the altar. Another prophet was to take a long journey from Judah to Bethel, where he lived. The way the old prophet acted suggests his name made the list of those who would be slaughtered at that altar when Josiah began to rule as King.

And upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee² - 1 Kings 13.

So, he was one of the men whose bones would be burnt there.

The way of the old prophet was evil, and he was aware of the judgment that the man of God brought. His children returned home and told him about all the signs and wonders that happened. As the news was the ‘talk of the town,’ they brought it home to their father. He was to act fast to avert the judgment. But being a man operating in darkness, he acted subtly by dark powers to bring down the man of God. At this moment, the man of God has seemingly obeyed God. He didn’t eat or drink in that place. He had also commenced his return to Judah following another route. Many who saw him may have waved him, “Goodbye, MOG” and “Safe journey back home,” hoping he would reach his destination.

But here comes this old prophet who rode his donkey after a man who left some time ago on a donkey. What informed him that he would catch up with the man? Being able to ride a donkey after a man on a highway shows he is not old in terms of chronological age. Aside from speed, something else must have given him the confidence to bring back the man of God.

And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon.¹³ And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak:..¹⁴ - 1 Kings 13.

His sons brought his ass and put the seat upon the animal. Then he rode after the servant of God.

A tragedy has occurred! The man of God who left for Judah is now sitting under an oak. Who told him to sit there? Anything you say and do, someone or something spoke to you first. Remember that in the Garden of Eden, when Adam said I heard your voice and hid because I was naked? God said, “Who told you?” What voice did this man of God hear that made him sit under an oak tree? He was on a long journey; maybe he was tired and needed to rest.

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification¹⁰ - 1 Corinthians 14.

The man heard a voice within him, “Go and sit under that oak,” probably to rest. You know that a voice Jesus identified as Satan’s told Him to convert stones to bread at the time He needed food. Among the many voices that speak, this man of God may have heard God, himself, or the devil. Every

voice you hear is of significance. The significance manifests after you've obeyed the voice. You can choose not to follow some things you hear in your spirit by testing the spirit that spoke. Some people use common sense to test. By rational thought, they will assess if it is worthwhile to take a particular action. In this case, it would be reasonable to sit under the oak while returning from the king's business would be rationalised thought. The result may be "Take some rest because you are tired." Common sense produces a limited result as it cannot adequately process voices from the spirit realm. Discernment would tell you without reason, "Rush home; don't go there!" Or with scriptural reason, "Rush home, for the king's business requires urgency."

Spiritual discernment is essential to avert "arrow voices." Spiritual testing involves spiritual inner communication. It may include praying and speaking in tongues, which will help to unravel a mystery and what God says. If the man of God had utilised the facilities of the Holy Spirit in his faculties, he would have continued on the journey. One may say that people were not speaking in tongues at that time. Anyone or a combination of these tools would uncover a mystery. For example, if his inward being were in a deep spiritual state, he would have discerned the voice that asked him to go and sit down under the oak. If he had appropriated the word of God, he would have known that the king's business requires haste.

...for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's business required haste⁸ - 1 Samuel 21.

David explains to the priest, Ahimelech, and tells him why he left without his sword, which was the king's errand that has urgency attached to it. When Jesus sent His disciples, He told them that in any city they were not accepted, they should dust their feet and leave. There is no reason to be meddling around that city. While growing up in the village, we're often sent to the market or shop to buy stuff. Sometimes, it could be another errand within the village. One thing that usually happened was we would be distracted along the road. It may be playing with our mates, football, or watching masquerades. The point is that we were often distracted while coming back. Most times, I received strokes of a cane for this.

Unfortunately, when the man of God returned to Judah, his action brought out a lion from the bush onto the way.

There are voices that I call “arrow voices.” They are shot into your spirit, ear, and mind. It could come in either of two ways: as a command or a subtle deposit. When given a command, you may quickly make a sudden, rash decision. You will not like to tell or discuss such a decision with anyone. It acts as a push until it is carried out, and the negative result is seen or awaited. Sometimes, such arrows come in a subtle voice that shortly becomes a conceived idea. It matures as the mind ponders upon it and is subsequently housed in the heart. This one, which is stored in the heart, has a longer life span than the “command voice.” The conceived idea can patiently wait until the right time for its execution. Depending on the aim and instruction of the voice, it can begin to show up in your personality. However, those who have acted upon a commanding voice often say, “*I don't know what came over me.*”

*And Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.*¹ - 1 Chronicles 21 (NIV).

Some versions will say provoked or stirred up David. This is a case of commanding voice, which David heeded. Another scene is when Peter rebuked Jesus, saying that He was not going to die, and Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “*Get thee behind me, Satan...*” The voice that Judas obeyed to betray Jesus was a subtle one. It put him on the pathway of a betrayer. The way to victory is to die daily in the flesh. You must live as “not I but Christ” consciousness.

An oak orchestrated the fall of the man of God. I don't know the oak that has stopped you. You can stand up and go forward.

*Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction*¹⁰ - Micah 2.

Your direction is forward-upward and not downwards-backwards. The man of God reversed his gear back to Bethel from the oak. The oak trapped him down!

What is an oak? The oak is a tree with characteristics that attract both good and bad. It is known for its durability, stability, and strength. Hundreds of

insects and invertebrates feed on its foliage. These insects, in turn, attract insectivorous birds, reptiles, frogs, and mammals. Most of these creatures make their habitats as holes in the trunk and nests. Both clean and unclean creatures can make their way to an oak tree.

The word oak(s) occurred 20 times in the King James version of the Bible. We shall look at the possible occurrences around an oak tree by looking at five main occasions.

*And they gave Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the **oak which was by Shechem.**⁴ But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath **Bethel under an oak:** and the name of it was called *Allonbachuth*⁸ - Genesis 35.*

Jacob had left the house of Laban with his household to return home. Two oaks were of significance along their journey. He had buried all the strange gods of his house under an oak in Shechem to embrace God fully. Someone who travelled with them died on the way. She is Deborah, Rebekah's nurse. She was buried under an oak in Bethel. This was the nurse who accompanied Rebekah, Jacob's mother when she was taken as a wife for Isaac by Eliezer⁵⁹ - Genesis 24. Perhaps she returned to her country after a while of service to Rebekah. Jacob has finished his service under Laban. She probably joined him to visit Rebekah, but she didn't make it on the journey. Just after she was buried, God proclaimed the blessings upon Jacob and changed his name to Israel. It was this route, from Bethel through Shechem to Judah, that the man of God took while returning. So, it was either of the oaks that he sat under. The first oak represents an altar of strange gods, while the other represents a grave. Hence, I perceived that the man subsequently died, suggesting he was sitting under the "oak of grave." The spirit that cut off people's lives before they reached their destination was calling him from that grave.

At Shechem, Joshua agreed with the children of Israel to serve the LORD. He erected a monument around an oak.

*And the people said unto Joshua, the LORD our God will we serve, and **his voice** will we obey.²⁴ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and set them a statute and an ordinance in **Shechem.**²⁵ And Joshua wrote*

these words in the book of the law of God and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD²⁶ - Joshua 24.

Remember that this happened in Shechem. After hundreds of years have passed, Israel has to come to this oak. It was the oak Jacob had buried the gods and amulets his household left with from Mesopotamia. By the side of this tree, they have erected the sanctuary of the LORD. Except for the voice of God, they covenanted that no other voice would they hear, not even any voice emanating from that oak. By the speakings from the sanctuary, they nullified that from the oak. It may look like a coincidence, but this is the move of the Spirit of God. Was it not how Jacob moved to lay down on an altar his grandfather, Abraham, erected years ago? There, he had encounters twice, and his life changed for good.

Since the evil voices of the gods in the oak of Shechem were shut down, it again suggests that the oak the man of God sat under was that at Bethel.

Another man whose issues with an oak harmed his glorious future was Gideon. He was a mighty man of valour in his destiny map, but the result he was getting did not attest to that.

And there came an angel of the LORD and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash, the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.¹¹...the LORD is with thee thou mighty man of valour.¹² And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of...but now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites¹³ - Judges 6.

Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress at a field in Ophrah, which belongs to his father. In this field was an oak that was close to the winepress. Considering the soggy nature of winepress surroundings and draining pits, it's unlikely to be located under the oak where people may come and sit. So, the oak where the angel sat under was close but not at the exact point where Gideon was threshing wheat. From there, the angel addressed him, "...the LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour". It confused Gideon because it didn't appear he was the one. If not that he was

alone, he would have turned around to see who the angel was addressing. Gideon's response was an explanation of how his situation contradicts the verdict of the angel: *"..my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house"*. Gideon continued to explain to the angel that this thing you're saying does not agree with the realities on the ground. The place where he was threshing wheat, as well, was speaking differently from the angel: threshing on marshy ground. What a difficult place to thresh grains! He was hiding from the enemies.

Are you in a situation where your life is hiding business, career, certificates, work, finance, or spirituality? They are not noticed and do not produce adequate results. It is like working under difficult and strenuous circumstances with little to show for it. Despite the high energy exertion of Gideon, his family is poor, as measured among the little tribe of Manasseh. Where would his family be classified when millionaires of Issachar, Zebulun, and other tribes are considered? Maybe extreme poverty. Then, as you come to his family, you will see that he is the least. His life's template from the spirit realm does not match the results he is getting. Something is wrong somewhere. That is what the angel primarily has come to solve for him to be unleashed into his glorious destiny. His future essentially was tied down.

Why didn't the angel get to the winepress but sit under the oak? There are things to be sorted out under that oak. Gideon brought a sacrifice under the oak; the angel touched it with his staff, and then fire came down and consumed it. The angel waited for him to bring the sacrifice without moving an inch away from that location. He instructed him on how to arrange his offering under the oak. For Gideon, he was looking for a sign. After the angel finished, it dawned on him that an altar-sacrifice priesthood activity just took place. Then, he raised an altar immediately. This altar counteracted whatever was under the oak that limited his destiny for years. Are you noticing limitations, suffocation, and exertion of energy but fewer results in your life? It's time to break that yoke and oath under the oak.

The Philistines had killed King Saul and three of his sons in a fierce battle. They took his head and armour around the city and finally kept them before their idols. They hung their bodies on a wall in Bethshan.

*They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and **buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh**, and fasted seven days.¹² - 1 Chronicles 10.*

The brave men of Jabeshgilead came at night to take their bodies. To stop the caricature of the Philistines, they burnt their bodies and buried their bones under an oak. Possibly, should the Philistines come for the bodies, they will neither find them nor any burial ground. So, it was a rescue from further shame, though Israel does not practise cremation. King David exhumed their bones later and gave them a proper burial in the sepulchre of Kish, his father.

And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan, his son, and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.¹³ And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish, his father..¹⁴ - 2 Samuel 21.

The oak at Jabesh represents a memorial for judgment. Saul and his sons died of divine judgment. It is unusual for kings to pass away in such a manner, especially ones God has elected. His head was cut off, his body not buried, and there was no grave. Later, the oak of Jabesh was free of this bondage.

The death of Absalom, son of King David, demonstrates that your enemy shouldn't catch you under an oak that is working against your life. The enemy of the man of God from Judah caught him under the oak, so it was here. However, if an angel meets you there, your destiny will be gloriously aligned. The speakings and actions of prophets like Joshua and David nullify the negative effects of oaks.

Absalom ran into David's men but was out in front of them riding his mule when the mule ran under the branches of a huge oak tree. Absalom's head was caught in the oak, and he was left dangling between heaven and earth, the mule running right out from under him.⁹ Joab said, 'I can't waste my time with you.' He then grabbed three knives and stabbed Absalom in the heart while he was still alive in the tree;¹⁴ - 2 Samuel 18 (MSG).

Who would say the oak did not participate in this battle? When a major spirit fights a man, virtually everything turns against him. It could be God

or a demon. The oak trapped and hung him. The mule that carried and gave him speed continued running away from him. It didn't turn back to give him support. His long hair, which made him 'beautiful' as a woman, became the rope that tied him to the oak. The person who came to him was his enemy, who said, "...*I can't waste my time with you.*"

Do you know there are classes of enemies? There are ones who can't waste their time to see you dead. They kill at the slightest opportunity in a split second. They are the embodiment of terror and carry all their ammunition along. You can see Joab was with three knives. Three of them cannot fail at the same time. But if God is with you, who can be against you? Nothing! When God is against a man, his life dangles between heaven and earth. But if He is with you, your life will be heaven on earth.

In this coup d'état to topple the government of David, he instructed his army commander not to kill Absalom, who was forcing him out to take over. But in the past, David had done a selfish, dirty deal with Joab when he killed Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, with a "letter bomb." Now, Joab has a selfish desire to accomplish. He has been in a silent feud with Absalom, and now is the ripe opportunity to destroy him. *Therefore, he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he had barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire*³⁰ - 2 Samuel 14. This was where their enmity began. In all, the oak stopped Absalom so that his enemy could destroy him.

Some devil-inspired practices take place in certain cultures. Most give evil spirits the open doors to oppress and afflict people. For instance, when our son was delivered, I had a sister who visited. She advised my wife to send the placenta to the village for burial. Usually, they bury it under a tree. In the future, one of the implications is that wherever the person goes, he must return. That place will be calling him home. They can also summon people in a medium through it to either afflict or kill. Remember, the Bible likened us to trees. There was a man Jesus healed by touching his eyes. He did a visual acuity test afterwards to assess his capacity for sight. The man said, "I see men as trees moving. It is an insight into who men are. I am like a tree planted by the river. I am a tree planted in the courts of our God." All these Bible verses speak of man and trees. Any oak or planting that is not of

God must be rooted out and thrown out of your life. That which is of God must be planted!

This was one of the commissions God gave Jeremiah. Isaiah says, *To grant [consolation and joy] to those who mourn in Zion - to give them an ornament (a garland or diadem) of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment [expensive] of praise instead of a heavy, burdened, and failing spirit - that they may be called **oaks of righteousness** [lofty, strong and, magnificent, distinguished for uprightness, justice, and right standing with God], **the planting of the Lord**, that He may be glorified³ - Isaiah 61(AMP)*. For there to be oaks of righteousness, it means there are oaks of unrighteousness. So, it is clear that there is the planting of the Lord and the planting of the devil.

CHAPTER 6

Jesus, The Ideal Donkey Rider

Master of Donkeys

The art of mastery is essential for an efficient ride of a donkey. No one wakes up and sees himself cruising a donkey. There is a time of preparation and building up of stature and value. The duration or time frame is not one size that fits all but depends on your obedience and compliance to the maker of all masters. Ensure that you engage all aspects of your life with every tool needed to produce an ideal rider with purpose and productivity. The barber cannot blame his clipper for a bad job. Some people have cried for an opportunity for a leadership position only to flop on the matters they criticised others about when given a chance.

You will understand that Jesus did not rush to use a donkey. While it remained tied, he continued to prepare for his life and passionately do the available work at his hand. He passed through the teachings of temple scribes, the loyalty and training needed at home, the apprenticeship at Joseph's Carpentry Workshop, and submission to the ministry of John the Prophet. He took time to train His followers and, on foot, went through many villages and cities to preach the gospel. Even when he used a boat, it was to cross to the other side or as a platform to preach. Most of the time, he was doing all these things; the donkey was tied. It is not always good to jump the gun. Allow your time to naturally align as you do the little in your hand. Do you think Jesus did not know He would ride on an ass? He was aware because he had read the volume concerning Himself, which He came to fulfil.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass⁹ - Zechariah 9.

This is where it was written concerning Him on this matter. Surely, He was acquainted with this information because, at a young age, He challenged scholars with scriptures, and He used the written word to defend Himself from the attacks of Satan. Also, at one time, He asked a young lawyer:

“What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” All these and many other scriptures demonstrate that He was privy to the information about Him and the donkey. A glaring quality of the rider of this ass is being lowly, that is gentleness, meekness, and humility. Jesus, in Matthew 11:29, described Himself as being meek and lowly in heart. He possessed and met the published criterion of humility. This shows that He is the master that will ride on that ass. Though He has the basic requirements, He does not go looking for the animal. If He went looking for it from the beginning, He would have lost the vision and mission of His life. He did not put His energy into searching for what He found written in the book concerning Himself. Why He never wandered in the bush searching for what was not lost is because He found the light in the written word that will locate the ass at the right time. This was unlike Saul, who was wandering from bush to bush and from place to place searching for a donkey until the light of the word of God came to him from Samuel. Knowledge will give you purpose and direction, but lacking it will make you a wanderer.

Even though every young man would desire to ride a donkey early in life, that was not his preoccupation. The donkey tied for you would not run away, and no one would go and free him. It is just waiting for you! There should be no anxiety about whether it will be missing. Just get yourself ready!

It was two donkeys that were tied there—a young one and a newborn that was less than one year old. A donkey gets fertile at about two years of age, and the gestation period is about 12 months. It was a donkey with a colt, the foal of an ass. A colt is a young donkey, and a foal is a newly born one that is less than one year old. Putting these figures together, the approximate age of the donkey that carried Jesus will be around four years. This implies that from the beginning of the 3.5 years of the ministry of Jesus, this donkey was ready for Him.

Why didn't He ask His first-comers to go and bring the donkey? There is a process that must not be jumped. In your church, how could you be raising project funds from first-timers with financial prospects who may not have submitted to Jesus? The question for you will be, is it time? After doing the good works we were called to do, Elisha did not accept any gift from

Naaman in whatever guise, whether first fruit, seed, tithe, or prophetic offering. Even though this man has received a miracle, he has not submitted to the Lord. Here, you see Elisha, who would not receive what God has not accepted.

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: now, therefore, I pray thee take a blessing of thy servant¹⁵. But he said, as the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused¹⁶. And Naaman said, shall there not then be given to thy servants two mules' burden of earth? For thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods but unto the LORD¹⁷. In this thing, the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing¹⁸ - 2 Kings 5.

Here, you see a man who has multiple gods and decides to shelve others but one. The prophet had already seen what he had just confessed, so he rejected his gift. He wants to add the LORD to another god he shared with his master. I once met one high-profile member of a national force whose wife lived in the UK, and she refused to return home after he sent her for studies. The marriage soured. He began to have strange afflictions of seizures whenever he had sexual contact with women. He narrated his disappointment with many pastors who prayed and laid hold on his pocket. When I first met him, it was in a big Pentecostal church where he had seizures during a church service. After that, the overseer prayed and asked him to prepare for thanksgiving. The shocking thing was that no one walked him out of the unclean lifestyle that the devil preyed on to afflict him. Sadly, one early morning, I received a phone call with his number, but a lady's voice asked me to rush to the hotel immediately for an emergency. I arrived only to see myself confirming the young man to be clinically dead in his hotel room. Many things will go wrong when the donkey rider does not focus on the work but rather on the derivable benefits. It could be finance, opportunity, or any gain whatsoever. The necks of too many donkeys are being broken unnecessarily.

You need to know that not every advantage is usable. There is also a time to make use of any advantage that is usable. Discernment, self-control, understanding, and patience are keys to becoming a donkey don.

If Jesus had hurried to request and ride on the ass, He would have had problems like other riders. Remember, one of the purposes of the donkey is to serve a king's ride. There was a time when they wanted to crown Jesus king in a perceived coronation ceremony. This was after He fed the five thousand with twelve leftover baskets of bread. However, He rejected it and sneaked out. That was when the donkey would have been prematurely untied and deployed to service. If He had accepted the men's crown, He would have climbed the back of the animal still, but not with God's approval. The owner would have released it because it was kept for Him. The donkey would not have complained. He would have sat and comfortably rode on it. The glamour and shout would have been the celebration of a king simulating the jubilation entry from Bethphage to Jerusalem. However, the fact remains that the actual service of the donkey is lost. He would have missed His direction to Jerusalem and probably not have reached His journey to the cross. The aborted coronation and triumphant entry will have a resemblance, but the outcome would not have been the same.

It takes a master with mastery to proficiently move a donkey. It does not necessarily take a king to ride, but a king who is a master. If your primary qualification to climb a donkey is being a king, you will be shocked at the direction your life journey will take. King Saul can tell more about this matter. What happened to him was that, even though he had access to both his father's ass and that of the palace, he was not a master to any. People lose what they don't have control over. Even if he should have mastery of his father's donkey, both are not the same. That you did well in your previous job would only serve as a boost and motivation, and if lessons learned are well applied, it will be an advantage.

There is a continuous need to be in a default setting of humility.

*He leads the humble in what is right, and the humble He teaches his way.*⁹ - Psalm 25.

He was spiritually updated and equipped for the next donkey of his life, but he did not remain and was not refreshed in that atmosphere for efficiency in the task at hand.

Ownership or Mastery

I hope you know that the person who tied the donkey at a place was not the master. Yes, he was the owner. He knew that being an owner and a master was not the same. That was why when the disciples said, “*The master needs it,*” he did not question or argue with them. If they had claimed that the owner needed it, they would have landed themselves in nearby police custody.

You will find a donkey tethered there, her colt with her. Untie her and bring them to me.² If anyone asks what you are doing, say, The master needs them! He will send them with you.³ - Matthew 21 (MSB).

We know too well that one can own a car and yet be unable to use it if he does not know how to drive. He will need the services of a driver to move. The one who has mastered the act of driving is the master, while the one who purchased the car is the owner. Over time, the vehicle will best function in the hands of the driver, and he will know its state and how it functions better than any other. One who owns a company needs to hire people with different expertise. These experts are masters in their fields. While the organisation has ownership, some people drive the system to move it forward. The skills they got did not come overnight but over time. Both the driver and employees in these examples are masters. It is not necessarily having a master's degree but possessing the skill in the subject matter.

The ox knows his owner, the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.³ - Isaiah 1.

Here, we see the two related beasts again. For the ox, it knows the owner, that's all, and there is no further commitment. It has no master. But for the ass, it knows things about the master. If there is a master, there is, first of all, an owner. The double tragedy in that scripture above is that Israel did not consider ownership and mastery. For an effective and efficient service, you need to be a master. It takes a master to achieve. Master the job! Master

the assignment! When that is done, you bring glory to the owner. Whatever you are doing, be it ministry, business, civil service, or trade, it is a means to serve the purpose of God.

*Do it as unto the Lord*²³ - Colossians 3.

*Whatever your hand has found to do, do it with all thy might*¹⁰ - Ecclesiastes 9.

This is how to become a master that will open the opportunity for a donkey ride. When you are not an expert, you can cheaply miss your way and miss out on purpose. People are ready to celebrate the perfect rider as a king. Without mastery, that meant a kingly celebration may turn into a stoning event. The question would have been, “*Who is this arrogating himself as a king?*” Then we may have ‘*Stone him! Stone him! Not Hosannah! Not Hosannah!*’ It is common to find stones throughout the ground in the Middle East. That was why He said He could command the stones to praise Him. Satan tempted Him to convert stones to bread, and the people wanted to stone a woman caught in the very act of adultery because they had quick access to stones. You are aware that those in Jerusalem rejected the honour given to Jesus. They demanded that He command the people to keep silent. Perhaps they thought it was a rented crowd, but when they tried to silence the people in futility, they turned to Jesus to stop them. The reply of Jesus made it obvious that the matter was bigger than they could handle. They could not be shut up. They were fulfilling prophecy.

Bethlehem-Bethany-Bethphage Axis

Jesus, born in Bethlehem, had His friends at Bethany and His donkey waiting for Him at Bethphage. There is a distance in life to cover from birth to making friends and to being honoured.

He had covered longer mileage on foot to many places, but at this time, everything suddenly changed at a village, Bethphage. Jesus is well-travelled between Bethlehem and Bethany, amongst other places. Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus hosted him in many revival meetings. In one of which, a spectacular, undeniable proof of the power of resurrection was demonstrated. He has gone to Jerusalem on many occasions. His parents took Him there, but not on a donkey. Every year, they go with Him for the

Passover feast, one of which they lost Him, but no donkey was available for them to saddle to make their search easier. The donkey never showed up in all these and most of His ministry. Of course, He was not also looking for it. None of the big cities and towns where He did good works released His celebration. It was a village that kept what He would have been looking for. A village where he had never travelled to was where the glory was hidden. Before now, Jesus has given people many things: joy, healing, and food, and attended celebrations of others but has not received any from them. Where you are looking to be blessed may not be the source.

Sometimes, your blessings will come from those who have not benefited much, so to speak, from you. There is one favour that, when it comes, opens up streams of multiple favours. After the donkey was given, the people started bringing their clothes, palm fronds, and voices of praise, sacrificing their time and energy as they marched from Bethphage to Jerusalem. Although it appears that the journey from Bethphage to Jerusalem is close, Jesus needs a transportation system. Many things happened before, but this one thing at Bethphage turned around His life. As you walk with God, you will come to a point where you will experience a sudden dramatic help that will change your life for good. You may have given a lot, but not much has come to you. My advice is for you to continue and don't look for your donkey, for it is not lost! You will walk into it with divine precision. It is at Bethphage. It is not even in Bethany, where you are just hosted as the chief guest of honour.

There are three discernible seasons of Jesus here. Firstly, all His services and events that happened in Bethlehem and Bethany. Secondly, what occurred between Bethany and Bethphage, and thirdly, from Bethphage to Jerusalem. Looking at these three components, we observe that He knows how to operate in His seasons and when to enter His time. This is important for us if we are not to miss out on our prophetic timing. Sometimes, the details of how to fulfil a prophecy are not captured in the prophetic word. When received, the spirit of the word searches for them. The name of the birthplace of Jesus was stated as a component of the prophecy. We see the scribes search it out from the scroll when Herod instructs them during the courtesy call of the magi to him. But the location of his donkey was not known by the prophetic word. How, then, will He know? He followed the

Spirit. Don't only capture a prophecy for your life but also receive the spirit to accomplish what was said or written.

Compliance

For the donkey to remain tied for such a long time without being climbed upon, some forces kept it in that state of equilibrium. What is it that made it not to move out of the place? I am sure some other donkeys passed through that area returning from a plough, carrying loads and people, or moving freely with other animals. However, seeing all these, it chose to remain in limited freedom. Two principal things kept it there. It was tied down by its own will and by the power of the master. Let's look at where it was tied, and we shall see how these two forces kept it unmovable.

The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come, and the obedience of the nations shall be his.¹⁰ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch...¹¹ - Genesis 49 (NIV).

This is Jacob prophesying unto Judah, declaring what his descendants will accomplish. In the history of Judah and his lineage, some things happened that pushed away the royalty or prevented it from remaining in Judah. When the one to whom the sceptre and staff of dominion belonged came, the people's obedience was commanded unto Him. Jesus is that king from the tribe of Judah to whom all nations are commanded to obey. Shiloh has come! Now, where was His donkey tied when He came? It was written that He would tether it to a vine. So, it was Jesus, the Master, who instructed the owner to tie His donkey to the vine. We remember that Jesus said I am the vine; you are the branch.

The one who remains in me and I in him bears much fruit for [otherwise] apart from me [that is, cut off from vital union with me] you can do nothing⁵ - John 15.

It is instructive that it was on a vine that the donkey and its foal were bound. You know that vine could not have been the only tree in Bethphage. This is a village at the foot of Mount Olive. The Tree of Olives could as

well be there. Bethphage is a village, which means the place of young figs. Also, fig trees are meant to abound there. The vine is planted alongside other trees that support it, most often the fig tree, which it climbs on. The animal was not tied to whichever tree was also there with the vine. Everything the donkey needed for existence was supplied there. It was provided with shade and leaves for food and drank from the wine of the vine grapes.

The Rider and His Power

The donkey moves not only because of its power but also because of the rider's power. The power of the rider overrides that of the donkey. A rider must have his power under meaningful and goal-oriented control. To achieve desirable set goals, his ability to control, direct, and use the ass must be strictly managed.

A couple of things could have gone wrong if Jesus did not manage the donkey well. The cheers and praises of those who followed could threaten His purse if He didn't fix His gaze on duty. It was this purpose that provided the donkey first of all. It would be abnormal to exchange the purpose for the donkey. The joy of the ride and those showers of accolade, approval, and celebration can entreat anyone to continue and never climb down. He would have gone through and beyond Jerusalem to make all see Him. For those who have insulted Him for a long time, this would have been a time to show them that God can lift a man. He would let them know that all donkeys are not the same. He would have told them they ride theirs without glamour, but He can enter and leave Jerusalem with grand style. He would have utilised this opportunity to go around all the big cities, including Capernaum. He had the leverage to ride to His village in Bethlehem so they would know He had arrived. They need to know that though He was born in a manger and once trekked around villages, levels have now changed. All these are available options and routes His life would have gone, but He chose to climb down the donkey immediately after it had served its purpose.

To also know that His purpose of climbing down the donkey was to climb the cross could have been unthinkable. If He confided in anyone about this, would the person encourage that it's the right destiny decision? How will a

career counsellor approach a counselee on matters like this? Everyone will ask why a young man in his prime makes this kind of rash decision. You remember that Peter rebuked Him when He previously suggested such a thing. Someone who has trekked for years is now on a donkey, but He is about to go down again. However, this time, He is about to go to the cross. It was the mission He came to accomplish. That is why He said I laid down my life willingly. His life path was His career path. He was aware of it. Your career should find its expression through your life path. When you follow your life purpose, every career path will lead to exaltation. Also, there is no other purpose bigger than God's purpose. There is no need to guess your purpose in life. Jesus has already found the purpose for us. That is why the Scripture says, "*Let every one that lives live for he who died for him...*"

Jesus focused on His mission even when His decisions were unpopular and unpalatable. He was looking at the bigger coronation. But to get there, He must first come down from the donkey. Looking at it through human eyes, it's not just a step down but a nosedive in life. He was not demoted within a short period of riding on a donkey. Rather, He was destroyed on a cross. He was not looking at the cross as a final destination but as the route to His destination. The Lord didn't lose sight of the coronation that awaited Him in heaven. For the joy set before Him, He endured even the death on the cross. In our time, many will say and agree that "*...a bird at hand is worth more than two in the bush.*" Some have sacrificed an enviable future for a present gain they refused to relinquish. A good number would remain tightly on that donkey and ask you to keep your cross. "*Don't bother about the throne and celebration in heaven.*" They will use theology to explain why they should sit on the donkey. Can you drop something big for a derogatory one to finally have that which is unquantifiable?

You must have seen people elected by the majority or unanimously adopted to be leaders over the people. The crowd clapped for them upon the donkey, hoping that things would turn out for the good of all. Such leaders destroy the system itself or deal with the people as inconsequential. Some have learned all manner of laws and principles that damage the institution and the people. Jesus preserved the donkey He used and did not abuse those who honoured Him with their votes, resources, time, and otherwise.

Remember that Balaam was about killing the donkey when his selfish goals were unmet? There are laws guiding the existence of the animal, but he's ready to break them. When you ride a donkey, even when you are the first to do so, remember that others will climb it. Keep it healthier than you met it. When it's time to come down, honourably do so without coercion. Honestly, I have realised that people don't expect too much, but they expect basic things from their leaders. But it will still take sacrifice and selfless service to release those basic things they desire.

We have seen possible impacts sitting on the donkey can have. What about the stones of distraction? I would like you to know that at several points in the ministry of Jesus, stones tried to intercept and truncate His mission. This time, there was no exemption. Those stones still exist and have the potential to stop anyone. They told Him to command the people to keep silent, but Jesus replied that if He did that, He would make the stones begin to praise Him. Does He have the power to do it? Yes. But to what end will that be? The people did not directly ask Him to command stones to praise Him. But remotely, they did that. They don't want any praise from the people around them. If He desperately needs it, He should sort for it elsewhere. This is how stones presented themselves as an option. In the scriptures, it was not written that stones should praise the Lord. So, what would be the basis for raising a mass choir of stones? What is written is out of babes; you have perfected praise. It was expedient that He allowed babes to sing out their hearts unto Him. Be careful who or what is singing your praise. I hope you know that it was women who got David into trouble, and that stirred Saul to start pursuing him to kill at all costs. Psalm 148 gives us a detailed list of the things commanded to praise the Lord: angels, hosts, sun, moon, shining stars, the highest heaven, waters above the heaven, great sea creatures, ocean depths, mountains, hills, fruitful trees, cedars, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and flying fowls.

Stones are conspicuously absent from the list! Then, in the broader category where the Scripture says everything that has breath praise the Lord, the stones were not conscripted again. How will they now emerge and start praising the Lord at this time? Jesus had no intention of recruiting them at all. He only demonstrated to the people the impossibility of halting the praise. Imagine that the people stayed silent and the stones started singing;

there is no doubt their voices would be exceptionally angelic because Jesus commanded them. But the people's reactions will likely be "...to your tents, oh Israel... let him go ahead with stones; we are done!" But He came for the people and not for stones. Let's go further into the influence of stones. In the three temptations of Jesus, stones appeared twice. That's more than an occurrence by chance.

*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterwards hungered.² And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these **stones** be made bread.³ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.⁴ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,⁵ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands, they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a **stone**.⁶ - Matthew 4.*

Jesus again has the power to convert stones to bread, and the reasons for doing it would easily be justified. He was hungry; there was no restaurant or kitchen nearby. However, He restrained Himself. The matter is, who will be glorified in this? And who is being obeyed? It's not every bread that is from cereal grains like wheat flour. Read the product components well to see if they are made of "stone flour." If Jesus finished baking that bread, wouldn't it look like every other bread in the shopping mall? It will! But His purpose on earth would be shifted by veering from God's will. He would have damaged His relationship with His Father. The way God asked the first Adam, *where are you?* He would have asked Jesus, "*Who gave you the bread in your hand?*" The last Adam Jesus wouldn't have been a reality. Maybe we will be waiting for the arrival of another Adam at this time. Thank God that Jesus closed this case once and for all.

God gave a verdict on the river Jordan that Jesus is the son of God. Satan has now come to Jesus, requesting Him to experiment and prove the verdict. In Psalm 91:11, a provision was made to keep Him in all His ways (...to keep thee in all thy ways). Unfortunately for Satan, Jesus casting down Himself from a pinnacle was never part of His ways. When men are cast down, one should be talking about lifting up. The vicissitudes of life may

throw men down, but when one decides to cast himself down for a show if he rises, he should thank God when he comes back to his senses. He is not meant to join those who are cast down. You know that he was cast down from heaven, and he wants us to experience all manner of casting down. Whenever you are on a pinnacle, it doesn't matter whether it's that of a temple in a holy city. First, ask, "*Who took me to this place?*" The devil took Jesus to a strategically high and well-located pinnacle. Jesus came down from that pinnacle, but not the route the devil wanted. It is not only that the route was not the way of Jesus; there are stones littered all over. In life, we can avoid unnecessary injuries by going the way of Jesus. When Satan was cast down from heaven, despite all his knowledge of the scriptures, no angel was there to bear him up in his hand. Something made it so. Rebellion! What Satan arrayed on the ground for the fall are stones. It was not sand, iron, and wood. The ministry of the devil with stones will not kill you!

Another time stones attempted to implicate and stop Jesus, by the way, was when they caught a woman in adultery.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,³ they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.⁴ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?⁵ This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and, with his finger, wrote on the ground as though he heard them not.⁶ So, when they continued asking him, he lifted himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.⁷ And again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground.⁸ And they which heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.⁹ When Jesus had lifted himself and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath, no man condemned thee?¹⁰ She said, 'No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.'¹¹ - John 8.

This event was all a trap set for Jesus. May God help you not to fall into the trap of men. This was all about role play to bring out a case to accuse Jesus.

They accused the woman of accusing Jesus. The woman was innocent of their plot and was about to fall victim. Note the word innocent, not sinless. For this scene to be made ready with such ease, it has to involve a harlot paid for a sexual affair with one of the men intended to accuse Him or a paid actor. They caught the woman in the very act but not the man. They never claimed that the man ran away. They shielded him! A way must have been created for the man to sneak out through the crowd.

The issue we are trying to observe here is what stones can do in someone's life, both as a victim and one who approves of stoning another. The command of Moses, "...*such should be stoned*", referred to the stones in their hands. At the core of their intention, they planned to stage a clash between Moses and Jesus, the law and the Word. In the staged scene to have Jesus support murder, stones appeared. Because there are stones in their hearts, they started by holding stones in their hands. If Jesus hadn't argued that woman's cause with heaven, she would have perished unfairly. You can probably guess how many individuals these men have murdered. Jesus avoided being guilty of homicide in addition to saving a life. Jesus asked anyone among them without sin to cast the first stone. Since there was a first stone, other stones are also on various hands. I don't know the number of this mob. But each of them was given an equal opportunity to cast a stone, provided there was no sin in such a person. From the eldest to the youngest, they all left with no argument being convicted in their conscience. When the outcome did not support what they believed, what happened within them made them the accused rather than the accusers. They neither quarrelled with Moses nor with Jesus. It was clear that the problem was theirs. Whenever there is a stone in the heart, it will always translate to stones in the hands. **What is in your heart will determine what's in your hand and where your feet will go.**

"And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

As Jesus **stooped down**, interceding her course with heaven, wisdom for her release came. One notable thing is that the woman who would have been on the ground with heaps of stones upon her is now standing. Sometimes, we need to be on our knees to help people stand. To stoop means bending the body's upper part forward and downward to a squatting

position. It also means to do something below one's standards and morals. A woman who stooped low in all moral standards and bent down by shame was brought to a man who took away from her shame and reproach for her to stand. A woman who was supposed to stoop and Jesus stood; the Lord took her place.

There are different postures Jesus can take for individuals and the believer for our benefit. These include stretching at the cross, stooping, sitting, standing, and lying supine. We need to know the implications of each to maximise the benefits. When Jesus stooped and told her to go and sin no more if she had argued with Him: "*Am I the only sinner!*" or "*How would you command me in such a manner?*" the stones would have caught up with her. No matter where you find yourself in life, these **supine, stoop, sit, stand,** and **stretch** postures of Jesus will answer your needs.

Jesus was **stretched** at the cross to embrace all who came. This brings salvation from the dominion of sin, Satan, hell, and the grave. It is marked by a flow of joy from the inside through the outside of the recipient. It is a landmark event for an individual that determines the direction of his life here and hereafter. It's a costly thing to lose out on this gift. **He was stretched so that life would not stretch us beyond the elasticity His stretch provided.** Not everyone who stretches his arms for you will help you. Some would even do so in deception to destroy you. Others may be helplessly stretched unto destruction and death. There were two thieves whose arms were helplessly spread on a cross alongside Jesus. But one realised that the arm of Jesus could reposition his life, and it did. You must take a position to accept the posture He brings for you. Never take the position of religion, rebellion, or "*I have heard of this Jesus many times.*" Let's assume you are yet to receive Jesus into your life. In that case, you can repent, confess your sins, accept His forgiveness, and move on with Him in the newness of living.

We have seen how Jesus **stooped** to give a woman the right to stand before God and men. Jesus came down from heaven to earth. Then, from the earth to Hades, so that we might be raised to where He is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Following His ascension to heaven and coronation as King, He **sits** on the throne and administers rulership.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. ⁶ Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows⁷ - Psalm 45.

The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.¹ The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou among thine enemies² - Psalm 110.

From these scriptures, we see where Jesus is. He brought us unto this posture to partake with Him in dominion as a chosen generation of royalty. *And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁶ - Ephesians 2.*

We must come to this full realisation of who we are in Christ. Never sit on a seat the enemy has placed for you. If you are already sitting on one, rise and walk away. The devil is not in charge! Remember the four lepers in 2 Kings 7:3, who could not trade with anyone because they were banished? It came to a point when they said to themselves, “*Why sit here until we die?*” They went forward, and this was how they had a massive wealth transfer into their hands. Money does not complain that a leper has touched it. Doctors can recommend to patients with contagious diseases not to share objects with others but not money. Such patients can pay their bills with their hand-held cash. Will they reject it? Needless to say, all manner of people touch money with no prohibition. During the COVID-19 pandemic upheaval, some felt their money had been contaminated. They put the cash in a microwave for sterilisation. Unfortunately, what came out didn’t look like money but ash. You can sit and rule in your health, wealth, and every aspect of your destiny.

While on earth, Jesus could **stand** as a shepherd to care for His sheep. It could be to feed them with physical or spiritual food. But if Jesus, who is sitting in heaven, stands up, it will be a game changer. We need to understand this so that we do not make the mistake of Stephen. In the early church, he was a man who grew in ranks in the realm of Spirit, faith, and power. He chaired the committee constituted to resolve the first problem in

the church. With him, many signs and wonders were done. He was not numbered amongst the twelve apostles, but he was the disciple trending in spiritual dimensions. Stephen was well aligned with Jesus! However, something happened that we need to examine.

*But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into the heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus **standing** on the right hand of God,⁵⁵ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man **standing** at the right hand of God.⁵⁶ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,⁵⁷ And cast him out of the city, and **stoned** him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.⁵⁸ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.⁵⁹ And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep⁶⁰ - Acts 7.*

An overview of this passage says everything looks good. He saw Jesus and said the exact things Jesus said at His death and departed as a saint: “*he fell asleep.*” Such a man could traverse the whole heavens to get to the throne by looking, “*...I see the heavens opened*”. When your heavens are opened, utilise them to your benefit and that of the Church. He saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Note that at this exact location is the seat of Jesus on the throne. So, it wasn't as if Jesus was walking around heaven at the time Stephen looked and saw Him. Therefore, He stood up for the disciple. You observe that He was the only one who saw the Lord. It was a personal revelation to him. What he makes out of this vision and his response will determine the outcome we would see.

The first mistake, though correctable, was the immediate reporting of what he saw to the people. The information was not for the consumption of his foes. If it were, Jesus would have appeared to them all. The divulging of this detail produced a swift reaction against him. “*Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears...*” Information handling is important in our lives, both spiritual and secular. Some have gone into higher learning to study information management technology. This highlights its importance.

What is the implication of Jesus' standing? I don't think it's to welcome Stephen home. There is an innumerable number of angels that would have

done that and ushered him to the king as a triumphed saint. It is unlikely that Jesus would like to lose a key disciple at this moment. They are yet to begin the execution of His mandate. Remember that Jesus faced this same scenario while on Earth. He knows the escape in moments like this. What happened was that Jesus wanted to act, but Stephen's reaction was, "*There is no need; I'm coming back home.*" "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" When Jesus was crucified, He said the same thing: "*Lord, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" This route that Stephen took was needless. Jesus, after passing through it, proclaimed that it was finished. The work the Lord gave was to go and preach—let them hear, repent, and be forgiven.

The legend disciple had all at his disposal to effect an immediate turnaround to the challenging situation: the spirit, the faith, and the power, for the kingdom of God is a demonstration of spirit and power. A spectacular supernatural thing would have happened here. It was a supernatural demonstration when Jesus walked through those who picked stones against Him. It was another demonstration of power when those who came to arrest Him fell backwards. God works with maximum efficiency in obvious death situations. Where the word of the king is, there is power. Let's look at the word that was waiting for Stephen to deploy:

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him¹ - Psalm 68.

Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight¹⁹ - Psalm 9.

Jesus fulfilled the first phrases of these two verses for Stephen. He is now standing. What should have followed is the completion of the scriptures. He was waiting for Stephen to speak the word. If he had done this, they would have scattered and fled. He would also have prevailed over them with the judgment of God. When the Lord stands for you, He wants to act. Stephen wanted to sound harmless as a dove in the face of the destruction of his life and a threat to the work of God. Jesus used the word of God profusely to defeat the devil when he came with stones against Him.

What could be the meaning when Jesus is resting while lying supine in our circumstances?

*And the same day when the event came, he saith unto them, let us pass over unto the other side.³⁵ And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.³⁶ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full.³⁷ And he was in the hinder part of the ship, **asleep on a pillow**: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?³⁸ And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm³⁹ - Mark 4.*

Supine is a position of rest and where you sleep in a bed. In this chaotic situation, they found Jesus in this posture and using a pillow therein. Pillows add to the comfort of lying down. Certain people with medical conditions that cause breathlessness at night use more pillows to achieve comfort. Many other versions say He was lying on a cushion. This amplifies the degree of comfort He was enjoying amid troubled water. Imagine that! It shows the level of mastery over winds and waters. The posture that the Jesus in us would want to take in situations that will agitate or make us run helter-skelter is lying down.

The Stones

A woman who would have gone down, not just to the ground, but below to the grave, Jesus helped her to rise. Will one who helps others rise above stones go down by tone? The stone can come to anyone. The hearts of men not in sync with God are replete with stones, as we shall see soon. Do you know that the stones that came for the woman in the same chapter also looked for Jesus? Don't be surprised when you see forces sent against people who you stopped coming against you. But be assured you have what it takes to stop it over and over, and you will not be thrown down.

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."⁵⁸ Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by⁵⁹ - John 8.

Jesus has fractured their theology, and their response was to stone Him. These are men who claim to obey Moses. Did Moses tell them to stone anyone who disagrees with their beliefs? They use the law as far as it can achieve their private gain. Religion has always been a tool of war, but what

Jesus is presenting is life. Please note how Jesus averted dying by stones. He hid and left the scene of mob action. Remember, He is God, but He ran away from them. Know when to utilise your power and when to run; otherwise, you may die prematurely.

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh¹⁹ - Ezekiel 11.

This is the surgical transplant procedure they were yet to undergo. That is, to have a heart of flesh replace a heart of stones. With this new heart and new spirit, the word of God can now be engraved in the heart. This is the beginning of being law-abiding. Otherwise, no one can obey the word of God. The surface on which it is written and who wrote it are all important. During the time Jesus was about to die, I hope you're aware that it was easier for them to have killed Him by stoning rather than crucifixion. They have to get wood, nails, and a carpenter and measure a cross that will accommodate Him. They did all these not only to fulfil the scriptures but also because Jesus had defeated all the available stones.

The Builders:

Stones play essential roles in building. The Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and teachers of the law were all building before Jesus arrived. These builders rejected Jesus, but we have seen the kind of stones they used in building. They build with stones that pull people down, kill, and destroy lives and destinies. The lives of people who attend synagogue meetings reflect the quality of what they build. Those who escaped death by stones were pulled down by demons and maimed by diseases under their watch. If you observe the fury and rage from them when Jesus heals in the synagogue, you will conclude that they don't want the structures they built to collapse. Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in a synagogue, and they were greatly annoyed. On another occasion, a woman bent over for eighteen bad years was healed at a synagogue. They warned the people when and when not to come to the synagogue. Instead of first thanking God for removing pain and bringing joy to people, it never happened with these builders. If there were any issues regarding the proceedings of the synagogue, of course, they could be resolved later. People acted in faith to

continue coming to see how their lives would change. They were responsible for the way people looked. They had with them injurious and death stones that produced all these. They rejected Him because Jesus didn't represent and support what they built. Little did they know that the stone they were rejecting at the building site would turn out to be that pillar stone:

The stone which the builders rejected had become the chief cornerstone²² - Psalm 118.

All who believe are living stones in the structure Jesus is building. We are both stones and builders! For Jesus to become the main pillar, He first rejected every stone that would impede the spiritual edifice. For a man to build quality lives that excel, He must first be built. Have you, and are you rejecting all the stones that want to stop what God intends to build with your life? When you have rejected all, you will become a trained builder who shall build and not destroy lives.

CHAPTER 7

The Horse Is Coming

This chapter intends to discuss the horse in a manageable amount of detail. Just remember that if the donkey has arrived, the horse will follow. Both animals share several characteristics and are members of the same equine family. In specific instances when it is appropriate for each to be ridden, kings use them. Jesus is returning, but He will ride a horse rather than the same donkey this time. If you possess a donkey, you must also make an effort to own a horse. The conflict is a straightforward cause!

You won't get any applause when you ride your donkey. Not everyone will consent to your rule. Also, remember that some people in Jerusalem demanded that Jesus dismount from the donkey. They wanted to put an end to the revelry right now. Your throne will be challenged by several factions. Do not let anything or anybody mislead you. Kings fight wars. They do not just send troops. You have to struggle to stay on your donkey. David, the king, was responsible for the Beersheba gate when he chose not to go to war.

You are aware that Pharaoh pursued Israel with his army before they perished at the Red Sea. As I mentioned earlier, when you have a donkey, don't go for a monkey. Otherwise, no banana will remain in your orchard after you have ploughed and planted. Simply put, it is not a member of the crew. As a result, stay away from anything that could ruin your crop and waste your labour. You must have the spiritual energy to battle, as well as the necessary fighting horsepower.

Let it not be said that you fainted on the day of adversity. It shows your strength *is* small¹⁰ - Proverbs 24.

Anyone who tells you that you are not engaged in battle as a Christian is not doing you any favours. You must actively participate in the war's alertness and acts. Do not only rely on God or angels to fight your fights for you. It's also unprofessional to assign this duty to the Church or another individual, who will then complete it on your behalf. There is always an appreciable role that God, angels, the Church, and other people will act on our behalf. It

is when we engage in our priesthood that we invoke the hand of God and angels to fight for us. Otherwise, we will be living only on providence.

Always know that He who rides on a donkey must ride on a horse. It is detrimental to shift your battle forward or think it will be at the second coming of Christ. If you do not consider yourself riding a donkey, or you are planning to come down from the one you are riding, this can be allowed. But if you want to remain relevant, keep your successes and maintain your celebrations. Your war mode must be set to the default setting. Have you realised that nations that depend on others for donations, assistance, relief support, and debt cancellation do not have much to be celebrated for? They are also consistently seen to have weak military defences that will secure their borders. This is the situation in third-world nations. However, the world powers who ride on the donkeys of economic prosperity and world politics are often seen parading their military hardware on the ground, the sea, and in the air, demonstrating their horses, horsemen, and chariots. They do this to message all nations that they will go to any length to keep on with all the donkeys they are riding. They are not ready to trade their status by remaining silent. Some may even go provocative by stationing and launching their military equipment outside their borders. Apparently, by what looks like support to other nations, they intentionally and gradually extend their territorial influences. You cannot trifle with their relevance because of their intentions and readiness to fight. The kingdom's children must learn from the world's wisdom in this regard.

...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light⁸ - Luke 16.

Wisdom truly is a tool of warfare. Jesus overcame His numerous battles with wisdom. In the challenging milieu of the confrontations by Satan, the Pharisees, scribes, and rulers, He could pull through to get to His donkey. Also, we must know that spiritual battle is unavoidable, but you may choose not to fight and harvest the consequences. The spiritual rules the physical, as we know.