

Is there any hope for England?

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Introduction

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Twenty years on

Does God look at a whole nation? And if he does, what might he say to England? These were questions which, twenty years ago, I would not have even considered. I was happily working as an evangelist, and had no intention of looking beyond what I was doing. But the Lord had other plans, and as the years went by, he began to direct my thinking into wider streams and wider issues. I prayed, studied and visited many nations, and God continued to speak to me. Slowly, I found the courage to begin to share what I thought he was saying. Then one day, he turned my thoughts to England. I wrote down what he was saying, and published “Is there any hope for England?” A few people read it, and I assume it was absorbed into their thinking. The years passed, and my ministry moved to Africa. I forgot all about England, leaving others to speak to the situation here.

One day, I was sorting out my files and I found a copy of “Is there any hope for England?” I was about to throw it away, but then God said to me, “U eit again.” So I began to reflect and write, and here it is, again! Twenty years on, and our land has changed, and slipped further from God. Twenty years on, I am faced with the same God, and the same questions about England, basically is there any hope for us? And if there is, can we manage some kind of national response which will satisfy a loving but just God? Can we avoid his judgment, or is judgment the only way through to a more pure and spiritually powerful nation? These questions have to be faced. It is not too late –yet.

The background

In 1984, I was happily working as an evangelist for the Anglican Church. I had been an Anglican pastor for 13 years, and this new job as an evangelist was just what I felt God wanted me to do. I was drifting off to sleep one night, when I felt very strongly that God was speaking to me. “I have a job for you” he said. “But I already have a job” I replied, in somewhat of a panic. This was a new experience for me, and

thinking about Moses at the burning bush, I was apprehensive. “I want you to be a prophet to the Nations” he said. I had planned to use the excuses Moses used, but I knew there was no point. If God wanted this, then he must have it, whatever “it” was, so I said “O.K.” and went to sleep. But the next morning the panic struck. I didn’t know what a prophet was or did. We are New testament people weren’t we? I had seen one or two who claimed this calling, but they seemed to spend their time shouting and attacking the church, with no oversight or compassion. This was definitely not for me. “Lord” I said, “you know last night I said ‘yes’, well I meant ‘no.’” After a pause the Lord replied, “You said “yes.” You had your chance to say “no”, but you said “yes”, so “yes” it is.”

Saying “no” was a waste of time

I decided that the best solution was to refuse to do whatever it was he was asking me to do, and for a year this worked well. I did have some unusual experiences, but I was able to ignore them! Then I went to the south of England to lead an evangelistic outreach. I got up early to pray, and into my mind came a picture of a very large city. This had never happened to me before, and I was puzzled. “What is this Lord” I asked. He replied “This is Tokyo, in Japan, and I want you to deliver this message for me.” I wrote down what he said, but I was furious. “This is exactly why I didn’t want this job in the first place” I shouted. “This is foolish. I will just look a complete fool, and anyway, I don’t have the money!” All this shouting proved a waste of time, and I duly went to Japan. There I learnt the basic lessons of my calling – always go to leaders, always ask them to listen and pray, never preach unless asked, and always make it clear that I wasn’t on holiday!

I got more and more drawn into this prophetic calling, even though I still thought it was extremely odd! But to my surprise, I found that, when exercised carefully, under the authority of the Church, it could have a part to play in understanding God’s purposes for his people. After three years, I left my work as an evangelist, and my wife and I decided that we would step out into this calling, asking no one for anything. We launched out into a life of faith. We made certain decisions from the start, influenced by what I had learnt in Japan. We would never exercise this ministry outside of the authority of God’s people, we would never try to justify our work, and we would never ask for money. Twenty years on, we are still here, so I think we must have in some way justified God’s call to us. We now work in Africa, where we have established “The Serving Africa Mission”, committed to the development and practice of good biblical prophecy. My wife trains and equips women in biblical ministry. I am developing the prophetic material in Europe.

When I started, the word “prophet” was less understood in England than it is now, although our developing world brothers and sisters are ahead of us in the use and development of this gift. Over twenty years, I have got a better hold of what this word and calling mean. I don’t want to go into all that teaching here. Readers can learn more about prophetic ministry from the download pages on our website at www.VisionWorld27.org

The beginning - 20 years ago

About 20 years ago, when all this thinking started, I was in Bourton on the Water on a beautiful Cotswolds afternoon. Like me, thousands of people had come to this town to enjoy its beauty in the summer sunshine. Walking across the Green, listening to the bubbling of the river, enjoying my family – it seemed such an idyllic setting. I began to look forward to the remaining days of my holiday, and the state of England was far from my mind. However, it obviously wasn't far from God's mind, because as I walked, a conversation began to develop between us:-

“Lots of people here Lord. Are many of these people your people?”

“No – very few.”

“So they are all pagans?”

“Well, not quite, but most of them know me very little, and are not really interested in getting to know me better.”

“So they have no idea of the state of their land then?”

“Well, many of them are aware that things are not exactly good, but they do not understand the spiritual disaster that is developing around them.”

“Then someone ought to tell them. They have a right to know don't they?”

There was a long pause, and as I began to get uncomfortable, the Lord said,

“Yes, someone ought to tell them didn't they?”

It wasn't a job I relished, but since being called into the prophetic ministry, I knew that choosing what I did and did not want to do was not an issue. But where was I to start? It's hard to see where, on the surface anyway, there can be much hope for England, which is clearly in decline. Morality has become whatever we want it to be, and moral absolutes are now largely rejected. Violence and fear are ever present, and selfishness is becoming our hallmark. Our political leaders display weakness and uncertainty at every turn, waiting to see which way the wind blows before they act. Other philosophies are growing, other Faiths advancing, and what is happening in the soap operas on T.V. have become more a topic of conversation than anything God might be saying. The nation is unable to help itself, and many, even in the churches, are blind to the situation, have given up in despair at the situation, or even welcome its chaos and anti nominalism.

A once great nation now finds itself a small island off the coast of Europe, just as spiritually, Europe is a very small island off the coast of Africa. Those to whom we were once a light now look on us with astonishment, asking with biblical perception, “why has the Lord done such a thing to this great nation?” We have passed into the spiritual lower divisions of God's plans and actions.

Where is the voice of the Church?

In the middle of all this malaise, the voice of the church has become that of a mouse. Religion has not only abandoned the high ground, it has frequently abandoned the battle altogether, apparently believing that if it causes no waves, it will not sink. What should have been salt and light has often become a cosy club for the faithful. When the once mighty trumpet sounds, it bleats about interfaith worship, doctrinal flexibility and multi cultural sensitivity. When we finally get round to answering the nation's questions, the nation has stopped listening. No one answered the phone when the nation called. Now it has stopped calling us. To the wounded land we offer pious and ineffective medicine. We have all the trappings of religion, but none of the power. The real players in the life and destiny of the nation have left us far behind.

Not that all members of the church subscribe to what is happening. There are some, possibly many who do see the decline of the land, and long for the church to speak into the situation. Not all have bowed down to baal, and there are those who still remember that God's right arm is powerful, if seldom seen these days. But these few are overwhelmed by the size of the problem, and are often stifled by the ineffectiveness of the church bureaucracy.

Some have abandoned institutional religion, forming new churches where they believe God can be experienced in a new way. Good though this has been for a vibrant experience of God, many of these churches have foundered on the same rocks as those churches which they have left - the developing of church bureaucracy, the tendency to split and splinter, the difficulty of speaking with one voice, the awkward relations between those who differ violently. Many of these new churches have struggled in the face of a nation which, having lost its way, doesn't now seem interested in hearing from those who should have spoken many years earlier.

So we praise on, we signs and wonders on, we Alpha on, while the nation slips further and further away from God, without any awareness of the path it is on, and where it leads. We can ignore this truth. We can try to praise it away. We can pretend that it is not true. But there is one fact we cannot hide from – **God has and will place the responsibility for what has happened to our land at our feet.** If the nation falls, whatever that ultimately means, we will fall too, and we will be held to account for what has happened. If the hope of a cleansed and revived nation does not fire us to repentance and prayer, then this call to accountability may do so, but probably too late.

Chapter 1. What is God saying to England?

Any prophet can say anything! But it is the responsibility of God's people to test and examine what they read, to see whether it is in line with God's revealed word, in line with the situation in which we find ourselves, and whether it has any suggestions as to what the way ahead might be. A prophet has nothing to fear from such testing, The Bible commands it:-

“ Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ” (1 John 4:1)

I accept that everything which follows must be subject to this process. I have written a commentary on this word, not to prejudge the testing, but to help those who want to test and pray.

Prophecy for England

**See I am going to do a great thing.
All power is mine. Heaven and earth are mine.**

I control all things. Nothing is outside my power, for I am the Lord.

As the rain falls from heaven and waters the earth, giving life, refreshing and cleansing – so I am going to pour out my cleansing power on you my people, so that you may be prepared vessels to show my glory.

For indeed you need cleansing.

You have so disappointed me.

I placed you as a light to the nations. I longed that you might shine like the stars, a sign of my glory.

Yet you have compromised yourselves.

You have been willing to lie down with the snake, saying “we will be safe in the den of the serpent.”

And so you have been robbed of your power.

The serpent has stolen your power. You have become tarnished, as blind as those you were meant to save.

You do not see the poor.

You do not hear the cry of the unloved.

You do not stand with the oppressed.

You do not speak out against injustice.

You side with the powerful, saying “these will protect us.”

Now my people, I demand that you turn from your ways of compromise. Open your eyes, lift up your heads, see what you have become and open your hearts to me afresh.

Be sorrowful, fast and pray, seek me with all your heart and I will purify you.

For you are my bride, my beloved.

I cannot abandon you.

I will cleanse you. It will be painful for you – great pain – but this will be a blessing, and I will revive you and bless your land.

What follows is an extended commentary on this word. This does not mean that this word is from God, nor am I implying that. God's people must make that judgment. But this is my reflection and thinking, and it may help gain an understanding of this word.

Word

See I am going to do a great thing.

All power is mine. Heaven and earth are mine.

I control all things – nothing is outside my power, for I am the Lord.

Bible background

Isaiah 42:9 “See the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

Col 1:17 “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Reflection

God begins by reminding us that he is at the heart of his creation. He always was, he still is, and he always will be. He has the right to say whatever he wants to us, and we have the privilege, as his children, his sons and daughters, as co heirs with Christ, to listen to him. It is not a punishment to be spoken to by God, but an honour and a joy. However hard the word may be, it is spoken within our unbreakable covenant relationship with and to him. This relationship is defined over and over again:-

It is permanent:- “The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’” (Jer. 31:3)

It is unbreakable:- “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.” (Hosea 11:8)

It is profoundly deep:- “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

This loving God is going to do a “great” thing. Great things can be frightening. Gideon was certainly alarmed at what the angel might ask of him (Judges 6:13), and

so was Mary (Luke 1:29). But we do not need to be afraid. Our God is a creative person, and he wants to bring new things into existence, and his new things are always great things, whether they are big or small. He has looked at England, and he is certainly sad and disheartened by what he has seen, but he has not given up. He has in mind a new thing, not a patching up. Jesus taught us that such patching up was impossible:- “Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matthew 9:17)

God is not planning to patch up England. He is planning to use his power to do a new thing, a great thing, an exciting thing. Whatever follows may be hard, but this is the prize - a new England, an England spoken of everywhere as place where God is profoundly and powerfully at work in the life of the Church and in the life of the Nation.

Does it seem an impossible dream? Certainly, looking at the current situation, I am reminded of the travellers who stopped to ask for directions, and was told by a local person, “If I was trying to get there, I certainly wouldn’t start from here!” Is the mess and tangle beyond redemption? Not with the God of the Bible. With Him, there is always hope. I saw this sign outside a church recently - “Miracles we can do. The impossible takes us a little bit longer!” These are the eyes with which we have to look at the situation in England.

God’s prophetic words and works usually start with this kind of positive encouragement. Abraham’s experience began with a very positive statement - “I will make you into a great nation.” (Gen 12:2) Joshua was told “I will be with you.” (Joshua 1:5) Isaiah was forgiven (Isaiah 6:7), and Ezekiel was encouraged not to be afraid. (Ezekiel 2:6) Each of these men had to move on into hard and difficult experiences. But at the beginning, God encouraged them. So it is with this tough word for England. Before the hard stuff comes warmth from a God who loves us.

Word

As the rain falls from heaven and waters the earth, giving life, refreshing and cleansing – so I am going to pour out my cleansing power on you my people, so that you may be prepared vessels to show my glory.

Bible background

Isaiah 55:10-11 “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the Sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Hebrews 9:13-14 “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so

that we may serve the living God!"

Reflection

Who is going to do the great things? Where will the Lord turn for the fulfilment of his plans? Wonderfully, he turns to us! But surely we have put ourselves out of the running for this position by our failure? Peter must have thought that, as he wept bitter tears in the courtyard of the High Priest. Yet a few weeks later, Jesus was saying to him, "Feed my sheep." The Christian Faith is a faith of new beginnings, where those who have failed are not rejected, but forgiven, re equipped and told to get on with the task. This is pure grace on God's part. This is his nature. We have a God who will cleanse us so that we can be used by him again.

But wonderful though this is, we have to stretch our understanding further, and see the communal aspect of God's blessing. He is going to pour out his cleansing on "you my people." He is going to cleanse and bless us as a community, so that as a community we can respond to his challenge, and his desire to restore England. Since the period of the enlightenment, we in the West have found communal things difficult to grasp. Our focus on the individual has lowered our understanding of the communal. We still catch glimpses of community response, as we did when the Princess of Wales died, but these glimpses are rare.

The developing world has not lost this sense of the communal. In Africa, where I have worked, the feeling of community is very strong. We live in extended groups, and the action of the one powerfully touches the lives of many. In the African cities this communal feel is beginning to decline, but in the rural communities it is still very powerful. It enables the whole community to respond to opportunities, challenges and problems. One of our biggest difficulties in the days ahead will be to make a Christian community wide response to God's opportunity.

Time of preparation?

But all is not lost. He is going to "prepare us". The possibilities here are endless, and we must seek God in prayer to get an understanding of what he intends. But it seems clear that there is a period of preparation which has to take place, and perhaps is already taking place. God has his time. Part of the preparation is to learn, like the sons of Issachar, to know the times (kairos) of God. (1 Chron 12:32)

Times of preparation can be very frustrating. Nothing seems to be happening, and we long for action. But long ago, the Lord taught me that being able to wait is as powerful a spiritual weapon as is tearing down strongholds. I have had to learn to be like Habakkuk:- "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay." (2:3)

show his glory

We are being prepared to "show his glory." This is a powerful biblical theme, as Solomon discovered:- "When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven

and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” (2 Chron 7:1-2) The disciples were also exposed to the same power:- “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” (John 2:11)

I remember once seeing the glory of the Lord. I had a vision of the land of Panama. In the centre of the land, I saw the Lord, standing in all his glory, and all the people were falling down before him. I also fell down, and I found that there was nothing I could say. The power, the authority, the beauty, and the absolute limitless reach of his power reduced me to speechlessness. I was so overwhelmed that I was dumb. Ezekiel would have understood. (Ezekiel 2:2)

When the Lord shows his glory, we can be sure that things will change, and this, for me, is what makes this word so exciting. The Lord really does want to turn the page for England. He really does want to reveal himself, so that we can move on to deeper and better things. But he is going to do it through us, his frail broken human vessels. I suspect the same thought must have been in the mind of Apostle Paul, when he wrote:- “ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor 4:7) It seems that the Lord does not mind using broken vessels. In fact he seems to prefer them, because then, when anything happens, we know that it is him at work, and not our abilities which have produced the victory.

If there is any hope for England, then it will be because of God’s grace, not because of our efforts. We may be called on to act as the heralds and messengers of his plans, purposes, love and will, but it is his work, and it is his glory we have to show.

Word

For indeed you need cleansing.

You have so disappointed me.

I placed you as a light to the nations. I longed that you might shine like the stars, a sign of my glory.

Bible background

Isaiah 64:6-7 “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No-one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.”

Mark 7:14-15 “Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean’.”

Reflection

Now we are coming to the central issues of this word. In heaven, we may be the pure bride, but here on earth, we are far from it. In God's eyes, we have become like Hosea's wife, Gomer. We have prostituted ourselves again and again to the world, and even though God keeps buying us back, we keep wandering off again. Our righteousness has become filthy rags.

At this point in the England prophecy, how does the Lord feel about us? "You have so disappointed me." If this doesn't break our hearts, then nothing ever will. I have shared in many places and many writings how I came to understand the pain of this kind of remark. I was praying in the spirit, and knew the Lord's presence very near me. When I saw him, sad, downcast, broken and bleeding, I was shocked beyond the ability to express my thoughts. I cried out "who has done this to you Lord?" After an agonising pause he said, "My creation crucifies me again and again. How many more times before they understand?" I was never the same again after this experience, and I committed myself to being one of the creation that tries not to do that to him. When he says we have disappointed him, it comes into this same category. Think of a wife disappointed by her husband, a parent disappointed by their child – this is just a small insight into the amount of pain this expression carries with it.

We have failed to shine, or at least our shining has grown very dim. Once we sent missionaries to every part of the world. We are grandparents to so many Christian works in so many countries, but now we have grown very weak. One African Pastor came to a Conference I was speaking at, and after the praise and worship, he came to me and said "I've been in England for 6 months, and this is the first time I have felt free to worship God. Everywhere I go seems so formal and so cold." You're probably thinking as I did - "If only he had come to my Church!" But the truth is that shining churches, wonderful though they may be, are the exception, not the rule. Your church may be O.K., and my church may be O.K., but thinking in this way is to totally miss the point of a communal experience. It may be O.K. with you, but take a look at the whole situation, and from God's point of view, and it is not O.K. at all. One African Pastor, who had a real passion for Jesus said to me, "I am looking forward to coming to the U.K. one day." I prayed, "Oh Lord, don't let him come and see our poverty and our shame."

This is God's opening challenge, and it doesn't make comfortable reading – we are filthy, we are failures, and we are dull. This seems to put us very much where the people were before Mizpah. Perhaps our very disgrace is our only hope.

This part of the word is intensely personal, and highlights yet another problem which the English culture must face. We do not handle feelings so well. We are quite formal in our approach to each other, and we rationalise and intellectualise a lot of our emotions. But prophecy is intensely emotional. It may also be rational, intellectual, theological and biblically correct, and it needs to be all these things. But underneath we are impacting on the real emotional centre of the heart of God. We have disappointed him. He feels that, and so must we, if we are going to get to the heart of all that follows.

Word

Yet you have compromised yourself.

Bible background

Rev 3: 7-8:“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no-one can shut, and what he shuts no-one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

Reflection

When I was receiving this word, and after I had spent many months thinking and praying about it, I was perplexed. I expected a long list of faults. Yet all God seemed to want to say was, “you have compromised yourself.” Yet, as I thought about it, I began to see the enormity of this fault. The story of Achan and the story of Ananias and Sapphira bear terrifying testimony to the danger of compromise, and how seriously God takes it. Here are the relevant references, to help further study.

Achan disobeys the Lord’s command:-

“But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel.” (Joshua 7:1)

Ananias disobeys the leading of the Holy Spirit:-

“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 5:1-2)

The consequences of Achan’s compromise:-

“Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there.” So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water.” (Joshua 7:2-5)

The consequence of Ananias and Sapphira’s compromise:-

“ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for

the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:3-4)

The serious action which followed for Achan:-

"Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them." (Joshua 7:24-25)

The serious action which followed for Ananias:-

"When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him." (Acts 5:5-6)

This made very disturbing reading for me, and underlined the significance of the statement "you have compromised yourself." The book of Revelation seems to bear out the significance of non compromise. The only Church in the Revelation which does not get criticised is Philadelphia, and the reason for it is simple - "you have kept my word and not denied my name." Compromise is the act of denying his name. Of course, we don't see it as such. We in England are every good at compromise. We call it "negotiation" and it is a very useful skill, enabling us to find our way round difficult issues. But there can be no negotiation with God's word, God's morality and God's standards. Yet we have "compromised ourselves." In our attempt to accommodate every point of view, we have sold out the Biblical position. This has many consequences:-

1. We lose our position as salt and light. (Matthew 5:13)

When the nation sees that we are "flexible", then we can no longer challenge wrong thinking, and point out the better path. When we do this, the world replies, "Oh don't worry. They will come round to our way of thinking. They always do."

2. The nation loses it's beacon. (Philippians 2:15)

When we compromise, we are not the only losers. How is a godless nation to know when it is straying from God's path, if God's people are straying as well? How is the nation to know right from wrong, if we abandon our position of moral absolutes, in the name of better relationships with the world?

3. God is denied by his people. (Revelation 3:7-8)

This is the real heart of the issue. The church is Philadelphia was commended for "not denying my name." The Church in England is getting the opposite - we are being

judged for denying his name. And if we deny his name, not only do we lose all the good things he has stored up for us, but we are putting ourselves in a position where he will have to judge us, and that will be particularly painful. Perhaps the judgment has already begun. One million Muslims in the nation, and the number is set to rise. Muslim schools, restrictions on Christian teaching in schools, disregard for Christian teaching on the sanctity of life, blasphemy of the name of Jesus everywhere, weak moral leadership, millions of babies murdered, power and wealth ruling – if this isn't a sign of imminent judgment, we might wonder what is.

God calls for a radical stand to be taken by his people. There is no room for compromise, no flexibility on principles of purity, holiness, justice or morality. Do we think that this position is too harsh? Jesus pushed these principles to radical limits in the Sermon on the Mount. There we see the high demands of non compromise:-

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Matt 5:21-22)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matt 5:27-28)

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matt 5: 31-32)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” (Matt 5:38-41)

This is what it means not to compromise, and there is plenty more where that came from! I'm not saying that it is easy to live to this standard, nor am I saying that we have to go around shouting our position, ignoring the feelings or sincerely held beliefs of others. But when it comes down to it, we have a choice. Compromise to make the nation happy, or stay in the right with God. It seems that because there is no clear voice from our leaders, we are sliding by default down the first path.

As we proceed into this prophecy, we need a clear grasp of the theology of the judgment of God. The key principle is that God's judgment is always for our good. In 586 B.C. God allowed Babylon to capture Israel and destroy Jerusalem. But this was out of a desire to purify the nation - to set it free from past sins, and through the exile experience, help it to become a stronger and purer nation. He loves his people so much, that he cannot allow us to drift into sin, because that spoils our relationship with him. To keep things right he warns, encourages, rebukes, and as a last resort

judges. All this is part of his passion for us. He loves us so deeply, that he will stop at nothing to keep us right with him.

The most powerful proof of this is the death of Jesus. If God just wanted to judge and condemn, he would never have provided the means for bringing us back to himself. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24) In his epistle, John writes “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

Word

You have been willing to lie down with the snake, saying “we will be safe in the den of the serpent.”

And so you have been robbed of your power.

The serpent has stolen your power. You have become tarnished, as blind as those you were meant to save.

Bible background

Gen 3:1 “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made”

John 8:44 “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Rev 3: 17-18 “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see.”

Reflection

We have had problems with the serpent from the beginning. His plan is simple – to destroy God by first destroying his people. One of his strategies has been to rob us of our power, and this has been done in such a subtle way. Over the last decades, the collective voice of the church has spoken with a divided tongue. Where do we stand on abortion, on single sex marriage, on pornography, on freedom of expression, or on morality, on cloning, on stem cell research, on euthanasia? For every leader who

points in one direction, there is a leader who points in another.

We have allowed the media to ridicule us and blaspheme Jesus to such an extent that any protest about morality is derided as folly. It's interesting to note that it is mostly Christianity which bears the brunt of this negativity. Seldom do the media direct ridicule against Islam, and no one dares to speak against Muhammad. Attacks on Islam are not something which I want to be part of, but the same principles ought to apply to Christian things. The difference is surely that Muslims speak powerfully against that which derides and mocks. We have just sat back and let it happen.

We have managed to lose at least one generation, possibly two. The precious idealism of youth has not fastened itself on Jesus, but on sex, drugs and possessions. We have been powerless to stop this loss, but if the power which raised Jesus from the dead is in us, how can we possibly believe that we are powerless? The thief has been at work, stealing our youth from under our noses.

We have allowed ourselves to be divorced from the world. We have turned our eyes to the things of the church, and often that means just our local church, while the world has got on with its business. It's God's world, and we have a right to speak into all its doings, yet so often we have just got on with our own church things, ignoring the wider commission. This has left the field wide open for the enemy.

We have allowed ourselves to be distracted by wanting to build big churches, big ministries, by being prosperous, successful and strong in the eyes of the world. The Church at Laodicea had it absolutely right in the world's eyes. They were rich, which always makes God's people attractive to the world. What a good civic church they must have been. "Cosying up" to those around them, they had everything they needed - respect, position, and wealth. Can't you just see their Pastor appearing on TV, while his Mercedes or BMW waits outside?

But they get such a powerful judgment from the Lord. Where they saw wealth and influence, he saw poverty. Where they saw themselves as strong, he saw them as blind and naked. They had laid down with the snake, and now they were paying the price, but here is the real sorrow and cause for mourning - they did not know it. This is the mark of the serpent's success. We are so blind, that we can't see ourselves for what we really are. We are full of the Pharisee, but the Tax collector is far from our mind. (Luke 18:10-13) The true nature of the robbery is this - we did not know it was happening. But this is no defence. We have deliberately or otherwise, made an alliance with the serpent. Now he is coming to collect the rent. He has blinded, robbed, and now he is moving in to destroy.

This is a scathing criticism. It signifies a fundamental betrayal by us of his trust and commitment to us, and through us to the nation. It is also a betrayal of those we were supposed to help. If we become as blind as they, we will all fall into the pit. (Matthew 15:14) This is yet another powerful warning to us that we are one nation. If the nation is going into the pit, then we are going to fall into it with them. I get tired of explaining this simple truth. God sees the nation as one - believers and unbelievers. He takes the spiritual temperature of the whole body. We cannot do a Jonah - sit under a tree and wait to see God's judgment on Nineveh. (Jonah 4:5) We are in the

city. Our salvation will be its salvation. Our failure will be its judgment, and ours.

We are going to have to take a serious look at the quality of our love for him, because this is where things have gone wrong. The quality of our love has diminished, and as a consequence, so has our commitment. I said this in one meeting, and a number of women came and complained to me, telling me that I was not valuing the love they had for Jesus. I said to them “Look around at the nation. Do you see a godly society?” They didn’t like it, but they had to admit that England was not godly. I asked them, “Whose love has failed - theirs or ours?” Like the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, one by one they walked away. The proof of the failure of our love for Jesus is all around us, if only we will look and see.

We are going to have to go the Ephesian way - “Repent and do the things you did at first.” We are going to have to return to our first love. The Old Testament tells us again and again that God wants the first fruits of our love and lives: “ ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’” (Exodus 20:2-3)

John pointed to the Father’s first love for us:- “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) We are going to have to get back to being a “first love” church, and a “first love” nation, but before we can do that, we are going to have to repent. We can wriggle as much as we like, but we always come back to this door. It is the way forward. It is the only way forward.

Word

You do not see the poor.

You do not hear the cry of the unloved.

You do not stand with the oppressed.

You do not speak out against injustice.

You side with the powerful, saying “these will protect us.”

Bible background

Exodus 3:7 “The Lord said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.’”

Reflection

I expect that different people will see this part of the word in different ways. An evangelist might see one thing, and say “I’m challenged to go out and preach with even more passion”. A Pastor might say, “I must instruct and care for my people

more carefully, especially if this word is right.” An intercessor might be moved to deep meditation and prayer, and a Christian with a deep social conscience might feel moved to enter politics. I am a prophet, and so for me, this section of the word allows me to feel the pain in God’s heart. For I believe that it isn’t the individual things which are so sad in themselves, although of course they are. But I believe that it is the cumulative pain which our failure has caused to God which is so sad, and which has such devastating consequences.

We fail to see, or if we see, we fail to act in the face of the injustices of our society. Of course many of us do see and do act, but God is looking at the collective effort, and that is what he finds inadequate. Failure at this level is the price we pay for siding with the powerful, and for seeking after influence and power. The price isn’t the corruption of our standards, nor the theft of our power, great though these things are. The real price is much deeper – we no longer feel God’s heart. We have isolated him, and left him alone with his compassion and sorrow for his hurt and bleeding creation. We were to be the channels of his love, expressing that love in a deep compassion for injustice. We were to be the beacons of hope in a lost and dying world.

We were to show the nation a better way, a more fruitful way, a more hopeful way, a more just way. But our star has grown dim. Our failure to appreciate his heart has denied us and our nation the privilege of hearing his voice, and being his light, his sign, his message of restoration, hope and healing.

The implications of this failure are devastating on both sides. For God, it just means yet more sorrow and suffering. For us, we are robbed of our power, we are helpless and heading for judgement – if indeed it has not already begun. The nation does not see the better way and walk in it, and other nations which look to us for guidance and leadership do not see the better way either.

Failure on one side, and disappointment on the other - that’s where we are as God’s people today. Not very exciting is it?

Word

Now my people, I demand that you turn from your easy life of compromise.

Open your eyes, lift up your heads, see what you have become and open your hearts to me afresh.

Be sorrowful, fast and pray, seek me with all your heart and I will purify you.

Bible background

2 Chronicles 7:14 “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Joel 2:12-18 “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” Then the Lord will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people.”

1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; one you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Rev 2:4-5 “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place.”

Reflection

We have had the opening blessings, and we have had the statement of the issues which God has with us. Now comes the challenge, and to be honest, there is nothing new here. To save England, we do not have to invent a new theology or a new process. Many have trod this path before us. The Lord has grown used to apostate nations, and long ago he devised the pattern for restoration. This in itself should begin to generate hope in us. God does have a pattern of restoration for his people. Unlike the gods of all other Faiths, he works hard to get his people back when they have strayed from him. Why?

He is the original prodigal father, longing for his son to repent and return. He is forever waiting at the gate with loving arms and a celebratory feast. Repentance does not bring us a long lecture from him. It is the lesson in itself. It is complete. (Luke 15:22-23)

He is the compassionate parent, unwilling to let his children go forever. The struggle in his heart is between judgment and mercy, and over and over again we see that mercy seems to get the upper hand, or wants to. (Hosea 11:8)

He is the one who pays the price, so that we can return, if only we will turn back from our folly. “Look the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), is not just a theological statement. It is an expression of love almost beyond our understanding.

God is looking for us to recognise what we have become. We are the post Exodus generation, failing to take our promise. We are the Israelites hiding in fear from Goliath. We are the disciples surrounded by despair in the upper room. We have lost our place, lost our direction, lost our hope, missed our calling, and we are drifting towards shipwreck. But God is waiting for our call. When Jonah was in trouble inside the big fish, he didn't waste any time thinking about his situation, or wondering if God was still there. He had radically lost his way, and he got down to business very quickly, and I quote the reference in full because in it is our way ahead, and our hope:-

“From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: ‘In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again towards your holy temple.’ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in for ever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.” (Jonah 2:1-9)

God longs for and wants nothing better than to hear our repentance. We often fail to grasp this point because we make him in our own image. We are slow to forgive, and so we think that he is the same - but he is not. Being slow to forgive belongs to our fallen nature. It is not part of his nature. He is waiting for our call, and we know the number well enough: “Call to me and I will answer you.” (Jeremiah 33:3) We have to take up again the old ways of being sorrowful for our state, fasting, prayer and the seeking heart. He promises to do the rest. The blood of Jesus will cleanse us from every sin.

How will we respond to this message? I've worked as a prophet for 25 years, and I have spoken in nearly 50 countries, so I have some sort of an idea:-

1. Total blank looks

Some people cannot grasp the concept of national responsibility, or a repentance which can change nations. Like the seed on the path, the message withers and dies, or is snatched away before it can make any impact. There is very little we can do with such people.

2. Bewilderment

Some people, perhaps many, genuinely think that everything is O.K. Their God is a God of love, and he would never do anything so terrible as to judge a nation. As I have already said, their God is not the God of love of the Old and New testament. His love is so radical, that he would judge a nation just to get things right again.

3. Shoot the messenger

This is the age old solution to difficult issues, which God's people have been using for at least three thousand years. Unfortunately it doesn't work. God takes a dim view of this method of testing prophecy, and it can only hasten that which we do not want to see. What's more, God has other messengers. They might be even worse than the one you are planning to shoot. If you are not sure of this, ask Jezebel! (2 Kings 9:10; and 2 Kings 9:36)

4. Those touched by the Spirit

Some are touched, repentance begins to burn in them, and things begin to happen. It is easy to feel that a few people cannot make a difference. But we can look at Abraham, God and the city of Sodom. (Genesis 18:23-33). It doesn't need a lot. It just needs a few who are totally committed.

There is no neutral position on the issue of national repentance. . Kingdom principles do not allow for fence sitting. If we sit on the fence, eventually the world will pull us off onto its side. God has set out the options. The rest depends on the openness, or otherwise, of those who read and listen.

Word

For you are my bride, my beloved.

I cannot abandon you.

I will cleanse you. It will be painful for you – great pain – but this will be a blessing, and I will revive you and bless your land.

Bible background

Rev 21:9 “One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

2 Chron 7:14 “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Reflection

Like all biblical prophecy, this one draws to its close with blessings. Any message of judgment is given to encourage repentance which leads to blessing. God judges to restore. There are 6 blessings on offer here:-

1. For you are my bride

God often stresses the intimate relationship we have with him. Sadly, we so often reduce this relationship to doctrine, dogma and ritual. We are his bride, with all the closeness, love and support which this word entails. We *are* his bride - a present tense. We will always be his bride - always in the present tense. He cannot let us go. Despite all that we have done, like Hosea's wife, we remain in an intimate relationship with him.

2. My beloved

When I was a child, I was fascinated by the disciple called "the beloved." (John 21:20) I always wanted to be him, and to my delight, when I matured in my faith, I found that I could be him. We can all be him - we are all the beloved, the one who leans close to Jesus. Our rebellion has not robbed us of this place. It is still reserved for us. The Lord is lonely because we are not there.

3. I cannot abandon you

In the whole of this prophecy, we have been forced to look again and again at ourselves and our position. But the Lord has a position in all of this as well. He misses us because his beloved is not leaning on his breast. He just can't bear to let us go.

4. I will cleanse you

I remember a young evangelist saying once: "Heaven is a pure place, and there is no place there for our muddy footprints. So God has provided a heavenly shower to cleanse us - the blood of Jesus!" While this may not be a very theological way of putting things, it certainly makes the point. God has provided the cleansing, and he will release it over us as soon as we ask. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin.

5. Painful - but a blessing

Having been with my wife through 6 childbirths, I know just how painful it can be. Yet the end result makes it all worth while. Repentance will be a painful process, but the blessings which will come will far outweigh the pain.

6. I will revive you and bless your land

What more could we hope and long for?

Here this long and complex prophecy ends. Does that mean that God has nothing else to say? Of course not, but he will say it through other prophets, through Pastors, teachers and circumstances. If this word is from God, we take it and add it to all that God is saying, and so find the way ahead.

Chapter 2: Visions

As I have thought about this word over many years, I have experienced what I think

are a number of visions which have helped me clarify what the Lord has been saying. They seem to highlight and elaborate different parts of the main word. I include them here for those who want to go a little further with this word.

We do not need to be put off by the word “vision.” I’m not describing a trance like state, where prophets hover three metres off the ground and speak in a strange voice! We leave all that to the spiritists and their heretical ways. A biblical vision is a visual experience of spiritual reality. It is often very fleeting. It needs to be grasped quickly, and it needs quite detailed testing and evaluation. Some visions come to us while we are awake, and some in our dreams. All need very thorough checking and testing against what God reveals in the Bible. The very transient nature of visions makes this essential.

1. The desert

I saw a huge desert as I was praying. Then the Lord spoke to me, and I wrote this down.

**“From the desert comes evil to crush and destroy my people.
A hard evil, unyielding and unloving, that even claims to speak in my name. Yet it does not bring freedom but bondage.**

Many, even among my people, will yield to this evil, because they are deceived or they are afraid.

Slowly the evil will invade and enslave.

Who will warn against it?

Who will stand against it?

Who among my people will love me enough to lay down their life for me and for my people?

I am looking for such people.

I will equip and empower them.

I will call them, and stand with them.

A biblical desert can be a good place, or a bad one. The good ones, hard though they may be, refine and strengthen us. Jesus spent forty days in such a place, and emerged stronger to take up his calling. The bad ones are places of harshness, shame and failure. The Israelites were consigned to forty years in one, after their failure to occupy the promised land.

Which kind of desert is being described here? There is nothing good in it, and from it comes bondage, deceit and enslavement. Anyone in their right mind would want to run away from such a place. God’s people seem to be content to surrender to its influence. The Lord is warning of the danger, and he is looking for people to sound the alarm.

2. Dream of the market place

I had a dream, and in it I saw a long line of people queuing up in front of a market stall. One by one they were going up to this stall, giving lots of money, and coming away with something which was making them very excited. When they showed me what was in their hands, I saw only cold ashes.

I realised that all the people in the queue were God's people. They were giving up all that they had, and were receiving ashes back in return. They were so excited about this transaction. I knew that what they were doing was wrong, and I went up to speak to them, but then I woke up! I was very frustrated, and I asked the Lord, "What was I going to say?" He replied "you were going to say:-

**"The earth is being shaken.
The people do not care.
They are selling the treasures of the Kingdom, and buying dross."**

I have tried hard to find something encouraging to say about this dream, but I have not had much success. It seems to highlight the blindness of people to the truth of what is happening. Why are they blind? Some people have no insight into spiritual things, and others will go with the crowd. But some are wilfully blind – they want a faith where they can control the content and the behaviour. Some leaders want power at any price, and compromise with the world brings power. Ultimately, this blindness has its roots in the kingdom of evil – "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The earth is being shaken but the people do not care - it seems almost unbelievable doesn't it? Yet millions of people on our planet live in known disaster areas, and refuse to heed warnings of possible danger. It seems that this physical attitude carries over into the spiritual world. May be if we had a more communal understanding, we would respond more passionately. We do tend to think in an isolationist way, both individually and as a nation. It appears that as long as my church is O.K., then everything is O.K. If only it were so.

But far worse is the selling of the treasures of the kingdom - integrity, love for justice, care for the poor, a passion for Jesus and the other things outlined in the main word. How are we ever going to explain ourselves to the Lord? How are we even going to face him? This last comment ought to cause us great concern. I was working in one town, and as I meditated on the Lord, I saw him hurt and broken, sad and bowed down. As I looked he said to me "My people do this to me. How many more times will they crucify me?" This vision shocked me very deeply. I don't want any part of those who do that to him. Yet as his people in the nation we are selling his treasures for rubbish. Is this not crucifying him again? How is the Lord ever going to wake us up?

3. The storm

I was sitting in my house on a very stormy day. Then the Lord spoke to me and said "Go into the garden." I went and stood among the weeds, which were being buffeted

by the wind and rain. Then this conversation took place:-

“Go down to the wasteland prophet. What do you see?”

I replied,

“I see your people withered by the storm.”

The Lord spoke again.

“Go down to the wasteland prophet. What do you see?”

I replied,

“I see your people withered by the storm.”

The Lord spoke a third time.

“Go down to the wasteland prophet. What do you see?”

I replied,

“I see death.”

I recall this vision very clearly. The storm was very powerful, and as it buffeted me, I was frightened. But what does this vision mean? The first thing which impressed itself on me was that it was “your people.” It’s one thing to go as a Pastor to visit many people in hospital. We all do it, and we do it to the best of our ability. But it’s quite a different thing when it is one of your own family who is ill in hospital. It’s one thing to talk about the struggles of “the Church.” But it’s quite another to talk about “your people.” The storm is battering God’s own – his very family, his loved ones, the apple of his eye. Again I had to switch my perspective from the theological to the personal. What is happening is not an intellectual game, but real pain for all of us, including Father.

The storm will kill, unless we take some radical action. Here is one of our biggest problems – and it’s the same problem which the Israelites experienced before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. We really can’t believe that it will happen. Surely God will intervene before it is too late? Will he? I personally see death invading the spiritual body at almost every point. Love is growing cold, the radical voice is muffled, interfaith is gaining ground, and the voice of God is growing more and more distant. Selecting what pieces of faith we want, and ignoring those which are a little hard or inconvenient, we are floating along on a cloud of affluence, indifference, and comfort. But whatever we say or think, the storm is coming. It’s dangerous, and it will do harm, unless we take precautions. But how can we take precautions when we don’t even recognise the danger we are in?

4. The corpses

In a vision I saw a church, and it was full of people. But when I looked closely, they were all dead people – corpses, sitting up and filling the seats. They were listening, talking and singing, but they were all dead. The Pastor was in the pulpit, and he also was dead, even though he was preaching. Then the Lord spoke to me:-

“The land has become a desolation, a place of death.

My church has become a mortuary, where dead corpses sit and hear death from the shepherds.

Men come for bread, but they receive nothing but stones.

My people have become a sepulchre, and have spread death into the land.”

This was not an easy vision to see, and I resisted speaking it for some time. I love the bride, and want her to be pure, so that the Lord may return. Like many others, I have devoted my life to the bride. So it is hard to see the bride as a dead thing. But I have tried to reach beyond the details of the vision, to take hold of the heart of what God is saying, and that is reasonably clear. If God’s people choose death, then that is what they will become. This has terrible consequences for God’s people, but even deeper consequences for the land in which we live. If we are dead, then we spread the stench of death everywhere, and even those who do not know the Lord begin to die. Our task is to be salt and light, bringing hope fullness and freedom. But we appear to have chosen a lesser path, and that leads to death.

If this vision is not to become a reality – and who can say that it is not already becoming one – repentance needs to begin soon, right across the land. It is a hard process, as we have already learnt, and will learn more fully in the next chapter. It calls for radical change in our personal lives, our spiritual lives, our church patterns and behaviour, and our attitudes to our community and society. We have much to apologise for, much ground to be reclaimed and many fences to rebuild. This process, whenever it begins, cannot take five minutes. The situation is not bad but desperate, and it will take many years to get things back onto the right track. But the beginning can be now, and once started, then we are in the hands of God’s spirit, and we can be confident that he who is beginning this good work in us will bring it to completion.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes on us, I don’t believe that all the churches in existence today will survive. Some have become so compromised, that there is no hope for them. Some have grown so big in their own strength that God will have to cut them down. This is sad, but it is the price we will inevitably have to pay for the situation in which we find ourselves.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes, I don’t believe that all the current leadership of God’s people will survive. In fact, I wonder whether any of us have the right to expect to be still in office. Leaders do pay a high price for failure, as Moses discovered. But if some are allowed to stay, some will certainly have to go. Some are too compromised, some have sold out to the world, some are snared in adultery, theft,

deceit and vain human ambition. These, and many others will have to step aside, so that a new generation of leadership, with a deep love for the nation and the church can emerge.

There can be no question of everyone staying on in the new and transformed church. Repentance burns like a fire, and the purified church will not be a comfortable place in which to take life easy. The old comfortable ways will be swept away, and with them those leaders who have adopted them, or allowed them to take root.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes, many of the groups and committees that control church life will be shown up for what they are – worldly, self seeking, small minded, compromised and engaged in works which have little or no relevance for the Kingdom. Principles of working will be exposed as non biblical and non faith based. The permeation of worldly thinking will be seen everywhere.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes, many marriages will be shown up for what they are - empty, formal, and a poor imitation of the intimacy that God intended. Many families will be shown up for what they are – unloving, uncaring and ungodly.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes, many businesses and commercial works will be shown up for what they are – based on principles which are far from those of the Kingdom. Much compromise, double dealing, small mindedness and the love of money will be shown up.

If and when the spirit of repentance comes, a new holiness must be given to us – a love for righteousness and the holy ways of God. This must touch us personally, as fellowships and as a nation. The secular ungodliness which is all around must be swept away by a new dedication to serve the nation. This is going to be a very costly process, perhaps the most costly of all. For clearly the pattern we have been following has failed, and a new pattern must be found.

The choice is ours. Suppose we decide not to make it? Through these visions I think I have been given a very small glimpse of how God sees our land. We are desperate, and in need of repentance, but we have not yet passed the point of no return. But God is well aware that if hearts are not changed, the road to great pain stretches ahead – pain for us and for him. Here is his view of that road, to which we have not as yet committed ourselves. But we are clearly leaning towards it:-

**“My people will become the poor of the land.
Denied power, denied access, denied recourse.
They will live like paupers, even though they have me as a father!
They will come down to the dust, yet still they will not see.**

**How can they see?
Their eyes have been blinded by pride, by the love of position, by unbelief, by a confidence in the things of this world in which they have put their trust.**

They should have trusted me.

Where has the power gone? It has gone to the false gods, who are robbing my people of their place in the land.

Yet still my people do not see, because they are blind and blinded.

Blind to what is happening, and blinded by the things of this world.

They have forced me to act, to protect my holy name.

How my heart grieves for my people.

Chapter 3: Repentance

The only hope for England is repentance. How do we begin this repentance process? Another nation can teach us this, as they came to Mizpah:-

“It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord. And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only. Then Samuel said, “Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the Lord for you.” When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, “We have sinned against the Lord.” And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah. When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. They said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. He cried out to the Lord on Israel’s behalf, and the Lord answered him. While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far has the Lord helped us.” So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again. Throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines. (1 Samuel 7:2-13)

The people of Israel had been very blessed by God over the centuries. They had the Ten Commandments to live by, prophets, teachers and leaders to help and guide them, and constant demonstrations of God’s love and protection. They knew his heart, and had many opportunities to serve him. Despite all this, here at Mizpah we see that they had fallen a long way from his path. Far from serving him, they were

worshipping the false gods of wood and stone, and the heavenly bodies. They seemed to be willing to worship everything except their Lord.

Have we in England fared any better? Two thousand years of Christian history has gone before us; we have had every opportunity to know God and to know Jesus; we have had every opportunity to serve him, and build a land to reflect his values. We have served him in the past, and many lands owe their Christian heritage to us. But now the people of God have been brought low, and the land is becoming apostate in the sight of God.

In this passage from 1 Samuel we read that the Holy Spirit moved. Nothing else can save a land but a move of the hand of God. We know this from our Bibles, yet we find it very hard to claim this experience, and live by it. We turn to other things which, while possibly godly in themselves, cannot save us. We have missionary crusades and outreaches, teaching courses, books and Cd's, internet and web sites. These are all good in themselves, but only tackle the symptoms of our sickness, not the cause.

It would be so easy to blame the situation on the established churches, weighted down as they are with their histories and their bureaucracies. But since the arrival of many new churches, have things really got any better? We may have new churches, and we may have new converts, new ways of worship, and new ways of teaching, but the slide has continued as remorselessly as ever.

Christians who live and worship in areas where there are many good and strong churches disagree with this analysis. They write and e mail me telling me of the many things their fellowships are doing. I get notes from "the largest church in the U.K." (A number of different churches make this claim!) But all this misses the point. It is not what is going on in the Churches which matters. It is the way the whole nation is going. The ship of state is on the rocks, even sinking, yet we seem to want to say "everything is fine in the galley!" God has a different perspective, and to summarise what I have already said:-

God looks at the whole scene. What makes us think that God has one eye for us and one for the nation? He looks at the whole picture, and makes his judgments on the totality of what he sees. So there are a few good churches? It's good that there are, but that isn't enough to avert disaster. Abraham tried the numbers game, but it didn't work. (Genesis 18:23-32)

If the ship goes down, we will go down with it. Why do we think that if the nation is slipping, we will be safe? The truth may be that the whole of Europe is sliding into the abyss. (I have already referred to my word for Europe. The full text, with comment and analysis can be found on our website – www.visionworld27.org). I believe that if the ship goes down, we will be held to account for its sinking, not the unbelievers or those of other Faiths. There is no escaping this truth from Nehemiah chapter 1.

Fortunately at Mizpah, the people had run out of ideas. They knew things were bad, but they didn't know what to do. They needed God to act, and they needed a prophet to help them. Miraculously, God moved. As the Spirit inspired the people to begin to

mourn and grieve over their fallen ways, God moved. We may be puzzled about why he moved at this point. Perhaps some people began to pray, perhaps it was the right time in his plan, or perhaps he was just merciful and compassionate, feeling that his people had drifted long enough in the vast ocean of loss. Perhaps it was their admission that they were stranded, without any idea about how to proceed. Perhaps it was because they had come to an end of their own ideas, their laws, and their religion. Perhaps it was because they had come to the end of themselves. Anyway, God moved, and the sign of that moving was the activity of the prophet Samuel. God moves through people. On this occasion the work was stimulated through the life and ministry of a prophet.

The people mourned. I don't see a lot of that in England. I see a lot of false optimism, a lot of talk about revival, and about this being God's time. I hear a lot of promises made by God's leaders to their people. But I do not see in the heart of the people of God grief and mourning for the state of the nation. Some is certainly going on, and perhaps there is lots of it happening, and I'm not seeing it. I accept that this might be true, but I do not feel it in my spirit. I fear the truth is that mourning and grief are out of fashion.

From mourning, they moved to repentance. It's vital that we know how to repent, so that, if and when God gives us the opportunity, we know what to do. What are the principles?

- 1. The state of the Nation is our responsibility**
- 2: Seek the Lord now**
- 3: Confess and repent**

The state of the Nation is our responsibility

This is the first principle of repentance. *The state of the nation of England is our responsibility.* It is not the responsibility of the unbelievers, it is not the responsibility of other Faiths, it is not the responsibility of the government, it is *our* responsibility. If the nation is drifting away into secularism or Islam, or new age, it is our responsibility.

It is particularly hard for us to understand and accept this principle. We want to hold others accountable, or at least equally judged, but spiritual principles do not work in this way. We, God's people have failed this nation. We are the ones God will call to account for the strong growth of other Faiths and philosophies. We are ones God will call to account for the corruption, the moral confusion, and the disregard for life which is so apparent in our land. We are the ones God will call to account for the tide of darkness which is sweeping our nation - we are to blame. God is not going to point the finger at the pagans. He is going to point it at us. We are his people. We should have known better.

2: Seek the Lord now

The people of Israel began to mourn for the state of their nation, and they quickly came on the second principle of repentance – **they sought the Lord with a broken heart**. How I wish I could say the same for God’s people in our land. But, and I know this is a generalisation, we do not seek him in this way. When we lose this ability, a series of events begin to unfold:-

* **We forget that faith is a relationship with God, not a series of rules and regulations.** We forget that we have hurt God, and that this pain, which is his, is ours also. There is a lot of talk about revival prayer, but it is the wrong starting point. The first step is to *feel* the pain we have inflicted on God. I preached in one church, and as I gave the message, the people began to cry. I was shocked, and turned to the Lord to protest, but I saw that he too was crying. I had to share the message with both sides in tears! It hurt me deeply, but also taught me a powerful lesson about feeling the message, not just delivering it.

* **A quick prayer will solve the problem.** It’s quite clear that God doesn’t measure prayer by quantity, but he also teaches us that some things can only be overcome by much prayer. (Mark 9:29).

The Moravians prayed for a hundred years. In our instant age, we have fallen into the belief that the instant prayer will bring an instant result. We should spend some time reflecting on the length of the captivity in Egypt, before God finally moved. (Exodus 3:7) Some things take a heart rending amount of prayer and intercession before they change.

* **When things don’t change, we give up far too easily.** I am constantly surprised at how easily many of God’s people do give up when the going gets tough. I wonder how much of English Christianity has already given up the struggle?

God is looking for men and women who will cry out to him without ceasing, and do it with broken hearts. He is not finding it easy to find such people. But he keeps looking, and he keeps calling. Calling people who will have their hearts broken by what is happening, and for the shame which is coming on the name of Jesus Christ. He is calling people who will be broken by the obvious spiritual poverty of much of what passes for faith, and for the powerlessness of the Church. God is calling people who will be broken and stay broken for days, weeks, months, years - sharing the pain of the nation and the pain of God. It’s an awesome calling, but if we do not see a response, we are lost. It isn’t going to be easy.

3. Confess and repent

When Samuel saw that the people were beginning to confess, (v 4) he didn’t let them stop there. He called for a much bigger step, and as he did, he showed us the third principle of repentance – **confession leads to repentance**. At Mizpah, the people had to learn the difference between confession and repentance. Perhaps it would be better to say that they had to learn that although confession is vital, it is not, in itself,

repentance. We can say that confession is the pathway to repentance, the preparation for it, even the beginning of it. But confession on its own is not repentance. Confession is our daily experience. (1 John 1:8-9) Repentance goes further:-

*** The realisation of the enormity of our sin.**

David expressed this in Psalm 51, as he moved into his own confession and repentance:-

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Ps 51: 1-4)

We have to grasp the enormity of what has happened to our land. We are a ruined building, a wrecked ship, a burnt out forest, a crashed plane, a storm blasted tree. All our goodness and beauty has been torn away, and only a wreck remains. We have to see and feel this wreckage.

*** The recognition that only the mercy of God and the action of God can save us.**

Many passages in the bible encourage us in this principle:-

David :-“Cleanse me with Hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Ps 51:7)

John the Baptist, speaking about Jesus:-“behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

Nehemiah:- “Then I said: ‘O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. (Nehemiah 1:5-11)

Apostle Paul: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Cor 5:17-19)

*** The willingness to lead a new life, in the light of the repentance which God has made possible.**

Repentance is a work of the Spirit, a work of grace, but it must result in visible changes in our behaviour and lifestyle. John the Baptist said “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8), and then went on to give some suggestions about how this might work out in practice. John’s point was clear, and remains a key

principle today – repentance must bring us to a new way of life, or as David put it “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10)

Chapter 4. The way ahead

Is there any hope for England? Of course there is, because that is the nature of our God. How much longer he will be patient it is hard to know, but while we have the light, let us continue to work to reverse the decline, and bring things back to the right path. I must admit that it does seem impossible, but I am encouraged by a couple of biblical principles.

*** The impossible is possible**

The angel Gabriel said to Mary – “For nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37) God specialises in the impossible. He probably has had to, because of the folly of his people over the centuries. He has rescued them from impossible situations before, and he can do it again.

*** Prayer changes things**

God’s heart can be moved by the prayers of his people. Nehemiah knew this, when he prayed, “let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel.”(Nehemiah 1:6) The Church in Acts knew it as well, and when faced with Peter’s imprisonment, “the church was earnestly praying to God for him.” (Acts 12:5) God answers prayer, and, as Abraham learned as he pleaded for Sodom, (Genesis 18:20ff) he doesn’t measure that prayer by quantity, but by quality. Against this encouraging background, what might the way ahead look like?

National repentance

How do we repent, and how do we teach and explain the process to others? A good biblical starting point is King Hezekiah. He was not the finest example of kingship in the Bible, but he at least got one thing right – he knew that desperate situations can only be resolved by a repentant heart. Hezekiah’s situation was desperate – as desperate as the situation in our land. He was at the point of death when the prophet came to him with the message, “Put your house in order because you are going to die; you will not recover.” This was a hard message, but the truth, however hard, is better than any lie. It might be that the Lord is saying the same to England today. When the situation demands it, the Lord does not hold back with the truth, however painful. Hezekiah did not try to shoot the messenger, but recognising the truth of his situation, and the rightness of the prophet’s word, wept bitterly before the Lord. It was enough. The broken heart of repentance was enough to move God’s compassionate heart. “Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.’” (v 4-5)

Does God acting nationally?

If we are going to see national repentance, then we are going to have to re-establish the biblical principles of nation. We seem to have lost this, and consequently, we have drifted far from the biblical and theological principles which have guided us for centuries. Where do we make a starting point in our rediscovery of this teaching?

*** It is clear that God does see things in a wide national context.**

It is easy to argue that this principle belongs to the Old testament, when Israel was first an unruly and casual group, then an anphictony, then a Kingdom, then a diaspora, then a returned law-centred kingdom in Jerusalem, a developing presence in Egypt and undoubtedly a remnant in Babylon. But through the biblical material we have, we see that fleetingly through Jeremiah in Egypt, through Ezekiel in exile, and then Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, God continued to speak collectively. Through prophets and leaders, he spoke, and his principles remained the same. The actions of the few – Achan (Joshua 7:1), the spies (Numbers 13:29 onwards), the rebuilding programme (Haggai chapter 1), the community behaviour (Ezra 7 onwards; Malachi) - affected his dealings with the whole. (Numbers 21:1-9) The Bible is a continuity, and the God who was dealing with Israel described himself as “I am”, the great continuing present tense.

*** Jesus linked himself in with the Old Testament teaching, in these ways;-**

He accepted John’s baptism as a national event, and identified with it.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.” Then John consented.” (Matthew 3:13-15)

He used the term “I am” to express that ‘God in Christ’ was a continuum.

“I am the bread of life.” (John 6:35) “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58)

He taught us to regard the Old testament in the continuous present.

“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:18)

He saw his salvation work as an expression of God’s concern with the whole world.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”
(2 Corinthians 5:19)

He saw his salvation work as an expression of God’s concern with the whole city.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” (Matthew 23:37-38)

He saw his salvation work as an expression of God’s concern with the whole body.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23)

Within the Christian community, the principle of whole salvation and whole action is identified in Acts 19. The sin of the few obstructed the growth of the kingdom. The eradication of the sin of the few blessed the whole body. (Acts 19:18-20) Peter was also well aware of the danger of individual action affecting the whole body, as he dealt with Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts 5:1-11)

*** This God, with a nation- wide view, loves us, and does not want to punish or hurt us.**

Judgment is his last resort - a very hard way to get our attention. The cry from Hosea, which we have seen a number of times already stands for all time:- “How can I give you up?”(Hosea 11:8) The cross says exactly the same:- “This is what love is, not that we loved God, but he loved us, and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) All theology brings us back to Calvary, and it is from the cross that all hope flows.

Everything for our nation becomes possible in the light of the completed work of Jesus on the cross, and the galvanising power of the Holy Spirit. At Calvary, the ‘hesed’ love of Yahweh and the ‘agape’ of Jesus combine for our hope. Other religions speak of judgment, and this is especially true of Islam. But there, Allah judges to punish the unbelievers (Sura 6:48-49) in a harsh and revengeful way. Yahweh in Christ judges only to bless.

*** This God has the power to turn every situation round.**

Spiritual pessimism has no place in a theology of nation. God can, if he is so moved, turn every situation from disaster to blessing. “Let there be light” could result in nothing less than light. (Genesis 1:3) “Peace be still”, (Mark 4:39) brought the same instant response. “It is finished.” (John 19:30), really did bring an end to separation, and the dawn of a new age of resurrection hope and power. We have to believe that with God, nothing is impossible. Our ship of state may be badly holed and sinking

fast, but it does not have to sink. God has the power, and he can redeem every situation - he has had many millennia to practice!

I believe very passionately that this is as much a theological issue as a personal one. One of the dangers we face today is that we are quick to abandon theology, seeing it as dry and dusty, in favour of experience. I love experiential faith – I couldn't be a prophet without it. But weak or bad theology always results in bad practice. Experience does not make for good theology. Theologically, God is Saviour (Greek 'sotar') and Lord (Greek 'kurios'). He holds the world in his hands.(Hebrews 1:9-12) From him comes all power and authority. (Matthew 28:18) When he speaks, it is very definitely done, whether we see it or not.(John 19:30) I am fully aware of the place of free will in this position. We do have the potential to mess up God's plans by not responding, (Numbers 13:26ff: Acts 27:2ff) and God allows us that freedom. But when we call out to him (Jeremiah 33:3; John 14:13), he will respond (Matthew 7:11), and situations, however desperate (Peter in prison Acts 12:5ff), will change. On this solid theological ground rests our optimism, not on our personal feelings. This is why I believe there is still hope for England, both now, and even if we have to pass through a period of judgment. Unlike Allah, our God does not write us off.

*** The issue rests with us.**

Our decisions will affect the way God uses his power - to judge or to redeem. Ahaz, King of Judah, (2 Kings 16) put his trust in the King of Assyria to save him. The prophet Isaiah warned him against this course, but he would not listen. The consequence was an invasion of false gods into the Temple. (2 Kings 16:11-13) Hezekiah inherited the problem of Assyria, but instead of turning to men, he turned to God - "Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord". (2 Kings 19:14) As a result of this, God spoke prophetically about the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army, and that duly happened. It is down to us. Our decisions have to be God centred. We have to trust him, even when it seems that the trust can never bring its desired effect.

My grand children have just left. Before they arrived, I had a tidy office. Now I have a heap of toys burying my in tray! I don't care – I can quickly tidy up. Can we quickly tidy up England? I don't think so, but if we don't make the effort, what will my grand children grow up into? It's an issue which worries me. Is it now worrying you?