

Are You Ready?

Considering an end-time revival

*A spiritual guide for the remnant Bride
preparing for the return of the Bridegroom*

*A practical guide for how to survive and thrive
when the voice of the church is officially silenced*

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Appendix 1: When God Came Down by Tom Lennie. Used by permission.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2022 the leader of Issachar Ministries, Nick Szkiler, and I co-wrote the booklet *Crossing Over*. This was originally intended to be the final chapter in the book *Becoming an Issachar People* by Clifford and Monica Hill. Subsequently, the Issachar trustees felt the chapter contained sufficient vision and inspiration outlining a way forward not only for Issachar Ministries itself but also for the wider Bible-believing remnant of the Body of Christ, that it should become a standalone publication.

In the booklet, Nick and I outlined our sense that the season for individual ministries was drawing to a close, and that instead God would bring together various differing aspects of His wider Body, in order to form a world-wide movement of His people; an end-time move of God using a people who not only understand the times and the seasons but also know what God's people should be and do in very practical ways. We called this movement an Issachar People.

Having said that, this movement is something far bigger than Issachar will ever be, because it is a message God is speaking to His children all over the world today. It represents a monumental shift from the organisational 'temple' model of being church to a return to a much simpler, organic, Spirit-led model; like that which constituted the early church in the book of Acts, and perhaps not dissimilar to that which was once incarnated in the four nations of the British Isles by the early Celtic believers.

The Issachar trustees have implemented this transition by bringing together three distinct ministries – Issachar Ministries, Prophecy Today and New Beginnings Discipleship – into one Issachar People. It is hoped this will also lead to a greater degree of partnership and co-operation with other like-minded Christian ministries in the future.

Discipleship in small groups and the intentional building of localised prayer and fellowship groups spread across the British Isles was discerned as being a key element not only in building a vital trusted network of like-minded believers, but also in preparing the Body to stand strong in Christ

through the increasingly dark and uncertain times in which we are living. Using systematic biblical teaching and practice, our hope is that members of these groups will each seek to put down deeper roots into their relationship with God, understanding more of what it means to be in a covenant relationship with Him, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. It is not only by understanding but also by acting upon these truths that we are equipped to live as overcomers.

Discipleship must also include identifying and applying God's kingdom values to challenge and change our lives, so that the allure of the world, our own fleshly desires and instincts, and any spiritual footholds the enemy may have gained within us are weeded out, so that we can truly become the individuals God created us to be in the beginning; wholly set apart to Him, His will and purposes for our lives. We are each surrounded by those who have yet to come to faith in Jesus, many of whom are fearful and most without any form of hope, so confidence in witnessing and discipling people into faith is also a key element of discipleship.

Prayer and intercession must be another vital element in this new movement. In many ways we are reaping the harvest, both in the church and in our nation, of years of prayerlessness or ineffective selfish 'bless me and bless what I'm doing' style of praying in the Body of Christ. If we wish to see and partner with God in His end-time harvest then the church must be equipped in how to enter more deeply into His presence, to intentionally listen for His voice – for Him to reveal the things that are on His heart for our towns and villages - and then pray effectively.

So, in this follow up booklet my aim is to give some very practical challenges for how we are to become an Issachar People. It is all about the preparation of the bride of Christ because as the days draw on it is for a bride who is wholly prepared, single-mindedly set apart, radically obedient and who has made herself ready to meet Him, that He is returning. This is only a booklet, so if in reading it you feel drawn to go deeper into any of the aspects of preparation outlined, either spiritual or practical, then please contact me or Nick Szkiler through the Issachar People office or website www.issacharpeople.org.

CONTEXT

The problem with the context in which we are living is that it is constantly and rapidly changing. There are many scenarios being implemented across the world stage today that my core group of intercessors saw prophetically in our Cumbrian prayer house twenty years ago.

At that time, we came to understand that in the days leading up to Jesus' return, those of us who remain alive will face a whole series of seemingly natural, yet devastating, ecological, economic, social and political circumstances. These events and outcomes will have considerable consequences, particularly for Christians, in how we are allowed by those in authority to live our daily lives, to practise and share our faith.

There was an urgency to this message when we received it in 2005. It was underlined for us three years later when we felt God gave more detail. At that point we travelled widely throughout England sharing the message and calling the bride to prepare herself both spiritually and practically. At that time, we were largely met with blank faces covered in unbelief! Even some of those who did embrace the message at the time emptied the storehouses they had carefully prepared, and retreated into organised religion. The passage of time diluted the urgency and power of the word they had originally heard and accepted.

It is now time to wake up! Increasingly, we are living in the practical reality of what we saw in the Spirit back then: every aspect of modern society is being severely tested and shaken, which is actually the outworking of God's judgement on generations who have turned their backs on Him, driven Him out of schools, forgotten His word, removed His model for family life and legislated Him out of the laws of our land.

The established denominational church is, to a considerable extent, an apostate bride. But for those who continue to hold to biblical truth, persecution is no longer something that happens to people elsewhere; it is already beginning here. Our civil liberties to speak and live out our faith are already undermined in the laws of our land. And in the wake of the

atrocities meted out on the Jewish people during World War II, when humanity pledged never to allow it to be repeated, today's rise in anti-Semitism, could well lead to a new, hideous global holocaust.

As believers in Jesus, we are not like those Paul spoke of “...*who are without hope and without God in the world.*” [Ephesians 2:12]. Rather, our context should be defined by the constant hope and expectation of His return. In his end-time discourse [Matthew 24], Jesus outlined a relatively short but fiercely intense time of sifting in the nations that must precede His coming.

The apostles expected His imminent return, and this expectation has been repeated throughout history: for example, during the Crusades and the Reformation, during the reign of severe persecution of Protestants under Catholic Queen ‘Bloody’ Mary and during Cromwell's Commonwealth of England. Persecution of God-fearing believers has always been a sign for those living in this expectation.

Jesus said, ‘*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*’ [Luke 21:28]. Hallelujah!

END-TIME REVIVAL?

The 'end times' began with the start of the Church - the period between Christ's first and second coming. While this leaves room for interpretation regarding where precisely we are currently, many believe that the signs show that we are living in the 'very last days.'

Surely, by reading and seeking to understand the signs of the times alongside scripture and the unfolding of events in our daily news, we can observe that the enemy is advancing the building of his end-time global platform ready for the emergence of the anti-Christ, false prophet, and the events outlined in scripture for this season.

The other side to this is that we can also see that God is at work. In the language of Narnia, *'Aslan is on the move.'* He will move in power in our nation and around the world again before His great and glorious Second Coming.

"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's Temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it." [Isaiah 2:2].

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." [Joel 3: 14].

We are the living stones that comprise God's 'temple' today and individuals from all nations will stream to His people seeking help, support, and an explanation of all that they see happening and experiencing. As the great and dreadful Day of the Lord approaches – when Jesus judges the sin of nations – the Bible says there will be multitudes considering their eternal destiny before God.

*"...the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And **this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony** [i.e. witness, demonstration, proof] to all nations, and then the end will come."* [Matthew 24:13].

There is a harvest to be gathered in and He means you and I to be involved. So, we need to partner with Him and get ourselves ready to host whatever He does.

True Revival

Though few in number, there are some who have reservations over the very notion of revival. It is dismissed as fanaticism, escapism, or romanticism, even unbiblical, because the Bible does not use the noun 'revival' specifically. However, it uses the word as a verb - Psalm 85:6 "*Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*" - and the Scriptures very much allude to the concept of revival throughout both Old and New Testaments.

Before we consider the nature of an end-time revival, we must first pause to burst a few bubbles in popular church thinking about what this might look like or involve.

True revival is not just having a good meeting, repeatedly singing songs implying 'revival is here now' or even taking a worship group out to a small rural chapel to encourage those there with a 'revival' meeting. These perceptions limit God to something we can do for Him – a bit like the new cart David built to bring up the Ark (1Chronicles 13:7). Neither constitutes true revival or even renewal – times when the Holy Spirit invades and refreshes the ministry of a local fellowship for a season.

Indeed, true revival is not about the programme of any single church, but God Himself overturning man's way of doing things as His tangible presence comes to brood over communities where He is specifically invited.

This invitation or ardent beseeching of Him to come and make His presence known and radically change the status-quo is often the response of those desperate to see something at work that is very different to the daily reality they live with. For example, the catalyst for the Ulster revivals of the mid-19th century was the humbling, suffering and trauma induced by the potato famine; in the 1949-52 Hebridean revival the catalyst was a genuine concern for the island's young people who appeared to be worldly, living their lives without any sense of God, despite many of their parents

having been touched and changed by revival a decade previously. In each of these cases, ardent, urgent, desperate, sacrificial prayer was the key to God's breaking in.

R.W. Floyd has said: *"There is no great movement of God that has ever occurred that does not begin with the extraordinary prayer of God's people."*

If we want to see God move again in the British Isles then we must turn our attention to Him and seek His face - not His hand - with all our heart, soul and strength.

When He does come down, God's presence brings a new consciousness of Himself – leading a person to humble himself and get right with God – to be holy, pure, truthful and righteous. This conviction falls both on the church and the unchurched, bringing with it a widespread conviction of sin coupled with a deep awareness of the nearness of His judgement and a reverent fear of the Lord. The fruit of this is genuine, deep, heartfelt repentance within the church, a release of great joy, a burden and love for the lost, widespread evangelism and a great many salvations.

This hunger after God and His presence also brings with it an even greater emphasis on prayer and an intentional longing for His presence, drawing closer to Him, in times of intimacy. In many instances, a fresh release of song writing may occur. These are the signs of true revival that have happened in documented historic revivals within the British Isles.

My colleague Tom Lennie¹ has documented scores of revivals that have occurred across Scotland in his well-researched and detailed books:

- *Land of Many Revivals: Scotland's Extraordinary Legacy of Christian Revivals Over Four Centuries [1527-1857].*
- *Scotland Ablaze: The Twenty-Year Fire of Revival that Swept Scotland 1858 – 79.*

¹ Tom Lennie is the Executive Editor of partner ministry Prophecy Today www.prophecytoday.uk/

- *Glory in the Glen: A History of Evangelical Revivals in Scotland 1880–1940.*
- *Island Aflame: The Famed Lewis Awakening that Never Occurred and the Glorious Revival that Did* [Lewis & Harris 1949–52].

You can read a recent article Tom wrote to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the outbreak on Lewis in Appendix 1. All of Tom's books are available in good Christian bookstores or on Amazon.

The Notion of 'Revival'

There is a problem in considering an end-time revival; it is the word 'revival' itself, because 'revival', just like the word 'church', is a loaded term that immediately conjures up certain pictures, hopes and expectations.

The global landscape of our world has changed significantly since the last sustained true revival on British soil, that in the Hebrides between 1949–52. So, when God next moves in our islands, we must not expect it to look the same as what has gone before. God is a multi-faceted Creator and rarely does the same thing twice. We cannot predict or attempt to build it for ourselves, which is a very good thing.

Recognisable differences from how revivals manifested in the past will be signs to us that it is authentically God at work. For example, in the Hebrides alone, there were very marked differences in the way God moved in the 1939 revival than in how He worked in the later movement. The '39 awakening was not a preaching revival, more a revival of prayer and worship occurring in people's homes; whereas the later move was most definitely focused around gospel services in church buildings. After meetings were then commonly held in homes, whereby individuals were left to wrestle with the cost of giving up control of their lives to wholeheartedly follow Jesus as true disciples. Apart from the preaching of the word, there was next to nothing by way of human intervention – for example, no prayer ministry team – just God!

The famed Welsh revival of 1904 was also quite distinct to those in the Hebrides and different again from the Ulster revivals in the 19th century. God's ways are higher than ours [Isaiah 55:9]; the wind blows wherever it

pleases [John 3:8]; He moves as He wishes and cannot be accurately predicted.

Revival Soon?

The word 'revival' also speaks of something that began, was sustained for a period of time and then ended. If we are indeed in the 'very last days' and the outworking of God's shaking the world and everything in it, then surely we must expect that He will also work in His mercy to bring about a harvest of souls in the midst of judgement.

In April 2025, the Bible Society published new data based on findings from their survey carried out by YouGov which reverses long-held beliefs that Christianity is declining in Britain. Over 13,000 people were surveyed on church involvement across England and Wales. Data was compared to a near-identical study of a similar sample group in 2018.

Across all age groups, church attendance in England and Wales increased by a massive 56% between 2018 and 2024. There are now over 2 million more people attending church than there were six years ago. Most notably, attendance among Gen Z (ages 18-24) has quadrupled, from 4% to 16%.

Whilst it is way too early to consider this anything like a true revival, clearly God is at work in pockets around the nation. This may well ebb and flow as the Spirit moves wherever He wills and for however long He wills; it might even gain momentum, grow and be fruitful right up until the moment of Jesus' return.

The truth is that we simply do not know what God will do or when and how He will do it – although, naturally, we hope and pray for a sustained move of God and the harvest it will bring.

Prophetic Insights

In May 2022, just as the writing of *Crossing Over* was completed, a group of intercessors, including Nick Szkiler and myself, met in rural Cumbria for a weekend of seeking God in prayer and worship for our nation. It was

Pentecost, and over the weekend we sensed the Lord spoke several significant things to us.²

Here are just two of them:

1. We saw a picture of a dam that was set to break over the British Isles. It had been gradually seeping whatever it contained over many years but when it collapsed there was a tidal flood of wickedness, evil, depravity and darkness such as the world had not known since the days of Noah and Lot.
2. Our question was why now? Who or what had been the reason the dam had been restrained? We strongly sensed that the answer was H.M. Queen Elizabeth II.

Isaiah 23:15-18 records a prophecy against Tyre – a seafaring island and renowned trading nation who had ‘prostituted’ herself with the nations of world for wealth. Some see a strong resemblance to the British Isles.

*“Now it shall come to pass in that day that **Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king.**”* [Isaiah 23:15 NKJV].

The meaning of this last sentence is ambiguous because it can mean either the lifespan of one king or the days of his [or her] reign. In verse 15 above, the Lord speaks of the nation having been forgotten by God for 70 years. But it goes on to speak of His ‘dealing’ with Tyre [Isaiah 23:17].

Dare we imagine what this might involve? Certainly, a humbling, hopefully followed by repentance and beginning again on a different, godly foundation. I imagine it involves all of these things, but the judgement must first run its course. We are told elsewhere in scripture that

‘It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ [Hebrews 10:31]

Dr. Clifford Hill, founder of Issachar Ministries, has often said that *“There will be no revival without repentance.”*

² You can read the summary of what was heard on the Prayer House Words page of the New Beginnings website: <https://newbeginningsdiscipleship.com/prayer-house-words/>

The scripture outlines the restoration of Tyre to the extent that:

“... her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the Lord; they will not be stored up or hoarded. Her profits will go to those who live before the Lord, for abundant food and fine clothes...” [Isaiah 23:18].

Transformation of Society

This appears to show the fruit of a real godly transformation of society; something only God could initiate and bring about. Verse 15 specifically says *‘according to the days of one king’*. There are some interesting things to draw from this for the British Isles:

One of the last true sovereign moves of God on British soil – one that brought a consciousness of God to affect and change whole communities, not just a single local church, was that on the Isle of Lewis, which died out in 1952. This was significant to us because we were meeting exactly 70 years later, in 2022. So, in that sense it could be argued that our nation had been forgotten by God for 70 years. Whilst there have been ‘seasons of refreshing’ that have come in between, we have seen little of a sovereign move of God since 1952 - where His presence moved into whole communities by which their nature was significantly changed with widescale salvations.

Just one week after our gathering in May 2022, Queen Elizabeth celebrated an historically unprecedented 70 years reign in her Platinum Jubilee. As those of us present in the room put together the scriptures with the facts, we looked at one another and said, *“Is the Queen going to die?”*

It is my firm belief that with the Queen’s death just three months after our Gathering, some canopy of grace and protection associated with her ended. Our late Queen had a great sense of duty before God to fulfil the vows she made to Him, and a strong personal Christian faith. It may be that on her death, the Lord’s protective hand was lifted off the British Isles, catapulting us into a very different spiritual season, one which many in the church are totally unprepared for.

The good news is that as the nation is gradually humbled and the props holding up our ungodly society crumble, we have the hope from repeated

cycles outlined in scripture³ that repentance will sweep through a church that finally wakes up.

The result will be that we, God's people, will begin to seek Him with all our heart, soul and strength and turn from our 'wicked ways'. So, we were likely to see an unprecedented move of God, not only in the British Isles but across the world, in fact everywhere where sea-faring Tyre-like Britain of the past was used to spread the gospel.

*'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 I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**'* [2 Chronicles 7:13-14].

So, bearing all these things in mind, I believe that a fresh move of God - IS on His heart to send.

The longstanding respected prophecies of Smith Wigglesworth in 1947⁴ and Jean Darnell in 1967⁵ - both significant years for the State of Israel - also bring a prophetic expectation of an end-time move of God. If you are not aware of these prophetic words, then do look them up. They are important because we may now be living in the years of their fulfilment.

The Gospel of The Kingdom

Although the term 'kingdom of God' is not expressly verbalised until we hear Jesus say it, the concept is implicit throughout the Bible. The kingdom of God is one of the great overarching themes of scripture that begins in the Garden of Eden and ends with the descent of the New Jerusalem. Ever since 'The Fall', God has been seeking a people who will allow Him to be their king and walk in a relationship of humble obedience day by day as He once enjoyed with Adam and Eve. The story has been one of repeated cycles of disobedience, followed by judgement that eventually leads to a humbling and turning back to God, with the result that He sends a deliverer

³ The whole book of Judges outlines these repeated cycles of sin, judgement, humbling, repentance and turning back to God for a season.

⁴ <https://www.prayforscotland.org.uk/smith-wigglesworths-1947-prophetic-word/>

⁵ https://worldprayer.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Jean_Darnall_prophecy.pdf

- be that a judge, prophet or king - or, indeed, eventually His own Son [Galatians 4:4].

The westernized gospel message most of us are familiar with places heavy emphasis on the fact that Jesus was born with the sole purpose of dying to save us, and by this we usually mean Gentiles. Of course, this is true in one sense; Jesus' destiny on earth was to shed His blood on the Cross for all humanity.

But that is not the whole message of the gospel. Our Greco-Roman thinking tends to be egocentric - how this affects me - whereas Hebraic thought always has the Trinity - the godhead - as the centre around which all of life revolves. Therefore, learning to live the whole of our lives in ways that please Father God should be central to our understanding of the gospel message.

It should not be purely about being 'saved' in order to get us into heaven when we die. The breadth of the 'whole' gospel message reaches far beyond our personal salvation; it has to, otherwise God's nature, to love His creation and people forever, would have changed, whereas He is unchanging [Malachi 3:6].

Jesus came not only to die but to live an amazing life. The kingdom of God was fully present in Him because He was the only man to ever fully allow Father God to perfectly reign and rule in Him and through Him. He was fully obedient to implement the kingdom's laws.

The Righteous Reign and Rule of God

At the outset of His public ministry, recorded for us in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus stood in the Temple and read from the prophet Isaiah:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

This was His assignment; to incarnate the message of the gospel of the kingdom - i.e. the righteous reign and rule of God. His was not simply a message of words as ours so often is, but a vital message of life, hope,

restoration, freedom, joy, and peace which Jesus proclaimed, demonstrated, explained and illustrated in every possible way. His message turned people's lives upside down in such a way that they were compelled to follow Him, even at their own personal cost.

'From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near' [Matthew 4:17].

*'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the **good news of the kingdom**, and healing every disease and illness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed; and he healed them' [Matthew 4:23-24].*

Jesus upset the social norms by healing on the Sabbath [Luke 6:5-19], raising the dead [Luke 7:12-15], radically setting a life-long captive free [Luke 8:27-36], and prophetically revealing Himself to be the Bridegroom at the wedding in Cana by miraculously turning water into the very best of wine [John 2:1-11].

His Kingdom is at Hand

Jesus did not preach the same gospel message that we do. Because He had not yet died, His message did not revolve solely around the Cross; neither is it recorded that He made 'altar calls' or got individuals to pray a 'salvation prayer.' His message was not about evoking an emotional response that is very real on a Sunday but easily forgotten and ignored for the rest of the week. The heart of Jesus' message was the present in-breaking reality of the kingdom of God. It was a dynamic power at work to change people's lives and it did exactly that.

Jesus illustrated the kingdom through many parables. For example:

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches' [Matthew 13:31-32].

A mustard seed springs up very quickly; it has the potential to grow phenomenally and to do so in very arid or rocky places, which means it is a strong, persistent and very invasive seed which is also a natural disinfectant.

'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about thirty kilograms of flour until it worked all through the dough' [Matthew 13:33].

Yeast is a picture of how the kingdom grows and operates: it grows gradually but has enormous explosive potential to break out and change the whole of society. It is a catalyst for change.

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it' [Matthew 13:44-46].

Wherever Jesus is, the kingdom is 'at hand', available and present. He brings with Him the reality of His kingdom - healing, miracles, etc. This is of such great value that people will give everything they have to possess it.

The kingdom of God has already been and will again be flung out to the extremities of the earth by a tremendously powerful, unstoppable force [See Matthew 11:12]. This force is not armaments or holy war but love, humility and servanthood. This love is Father's heart demonstrated through us, His bride, to a lost, hurting, bewildered and suffering world. It is Father's heart of love in us that carries a dynamic power to change individual lives and the society in which we live.

The kingdom, then, is manifest through a people who will subject themselves to God's kingship. If this is true, then what does it mean for us? How are we to live? How are we to respond? How are we to get ready?

THE BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM

There are three great biblical feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The first two were fulfilled at Jesus death and by the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early Church. But, so far, the Feast of Tabernacles awaits its final fulfilment in Jesus' Second Coming - when He comes to make His literal Tabernacle [dwelling place] with us on the earth. The feast is also known as the Feast of Ingathering, an agricultural term which also implies the final harvest of souls.

All three feasts speak to us richly of the Jewish wedding. At the first Passover, God promises to rescue His people with language evocative of a lover to His bride-to-be, [Exodus 6:6-8] - *"I will take you as my own people."* This promise went on to become a betrothal between bride and bridegroom at Pentecost on Mount Sinai [Exodus 19:5-8, below], Tabernacles points to the great wedding feast of the Lamb in the book of Revelation [Revelation 19:7-9]. The whole journey is all about the bride and groom!⁶

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.' So, Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, 'We will do everything the Lord has said.' So, Moses brought their answer back to the Lord' [Exodus 19:5-8].

This is a marriage covenant made between all twelve tribes [the bride] and God [the bridegroom]. The words translated in English as 'the people all' are literally in Hebrew the *kahal* i.e. the gathered community, flock, or family of God. So, the *ekklesia* 'church' or bride of Christ did not begin on the day of Pentecost narrated in the book of Acts, as is commonly taught

⁶ If you are interested in exploring this subject further, then please consider my book Biblical Feasts available on Amazon <https://amzn.eu/d/aQT0bzW>.

by the Gentile church, but two thousand years earlier on Mount Sinai – on the first named Day of Pentecost – when God vocally issued a call for a people to set themselves apart to Him in covenant (marriage) relationship. The concept of God's gathered bride was born on Mount Sinai at the first Pentecost [Exodus 19:8]; but it was born again on the Mount of Olives, also at Pentecost [Acts 2]. At the first Pentecost God gave His word – the ten commandments, Torah; at the second Pentecost He gave His Spirit.

This continuity from the Old Testament to the New shows that Jesus and the Holy Spirit's ministry through the apostles continued the existing, established pattern and calling for the family and God's bride. Messiah's coming was meant to be a reformation within Judaism, not a separation from it!

The Divorce

In this marriage covenant, God chose from all the nations of the earth the twelve tribes that comprise the Hebrew people to be His treasured possession. But they were continually rebellious and independent. He answered their cries for an earthly king, but this kingdom was eventually broken up and all the northern tribes (Israel) scattered across the face of the earth.

*"I gave faithless Israel her **certificate of divorce and sent her away** because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery" [Jeremiah 3:8].*

It seems that Judah was spared the same fate, but only just. Only Judah, Benjamin and Levi are distinct today and corporately known as the Jews. The rest have been assimilated into the nations where they were scattered, with many losing sight of their Hebrew identity completely. This is just one of the many good reasons why the gospel of the kingdom must go out across the world in these last days.

*"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he **writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house ...** then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has*

been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord” [Deuteronomy 24:1-4].

*“For example, by law a **married woman is bound to her husband** as long as he is alive, but **if her husband dies, she is released** from the law that binds her to him. So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man” [Romans 7:2-3].*

A bride is legally bound to her husband for her whole lifetime, so she cannot be bound to one man but married to another. Once a divorce has taken place the first husband cannot take her back because she has been defiled. The only way she was able to be remarried was if the bridegroom died, when the charge of adultery could no longer be brought.

“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete” [John 3:29].

*“He [Caiaphas] did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation **but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one**” [John 11:51-52].*

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them” [Matthew 5:17].

God, in the form of Jesus, was the bridegroom sent to die in order to fulfil what the Torah demanded. Only the death of the bridegroom would free God’s bride from the curse and consequences of her spiritual adultery; to make the way for faithless Israel, cut off under the old covenant and scattered because of her sins and resulting divorce, to be brought back into God’s family by way of a new covenant.

“The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” Hosea 3:1.

The New Marriage Covenant

*“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, ‘when **I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because **they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,*****’ declares the Lord. *‘This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people”* [Jeremiah 31:31-33].

“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” [Luke 22:20].

*“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, **that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance** – now that he has died as a ransom to **set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant”** [Hebrews 9:15].*

The death of Jesus, the bridegroom, opened the way for all God's people everywhere [Jews, scattered Israelites and Gentiles] to reconnect with Him through the new marriage covenant made through His blood. In the Jewish wedding, the cup offered to a bride by her bridegroom represents the cup of the New Covenant.

For almost two millennia it has been taught that the institutional Church is the Bride of Christ and that this has no bearing on the Jews and the scattered lost tribes. However, the overall biblical concept relates to the one new man [Ephesians 2:15] who comprises any Messianic-believing Jews, members of the scattered tribes and the Gentiles who have chosen to place themselves under the covenant through accepting that Jesus, Yeshuah, is the long-awaited Messiah and have obeyed Jesus' call to follow Him as disciples.

The Bridegroom's Love

Ever since Sinai all of history has been heading towards the Great Marriage Supper of the Lamb as described in Revelation 19:7-9.

Jesus told us in the parable of the wedding banquet – possibly with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in mind - that there are many who have been invited but for one reason or another they will not come.

“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame...Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet” [Luke 14: 21-24].’

These verses show us clearly God's deep heart of love for those who were lost, scattered and cut off.

As I was pondering all of this early one morning, I sensed the Spirit say to me *“Tell my people that I love them.”* My response was *“But I do that all the time Lord. You know I teach them about Your Father’s heart and love.”* His reply to me came immediately; *“How have you come to know Me since your husband died?” “As my husband, Lord.” “Yes and that love is not the same as that of a Father. Tell them that I also love them as their Bridegroom; it’s a different type of love.”*

Immediately the Lord took me back to the wedding of my son in 2023; there were a good number of guests but not one of them would have witnessed what I did. The ceremony was under way; the music was playing, and in the now common American tradition, the bridesmaids preceded the bride; first the children, then the older bridesmaids; and with each appearance our anticipation for the appearance of the bride only increased.

Then suddenly she was there, and she did not disappoint; she was and is, stunningly beautiful, inside, and out. But what I saw from my position in the row behind the groom was his reaction; he was looking intently for her but at the moment he first set eyes on her, he just burst into tears. She had come. She had made herself ready and he was overwhelmed with love for her.

This is just a shadow of our heavenly bridegroom's heart towards us, a picture of how much God loves us, His bride; you and me.

“How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!...” [Song of Songs 4:1]. *“You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you...”* [Song of Songs 4:7]. *“You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart...”* [Song of Songs 4:9].

And it goes on. Surely God loves us; you and me, not only as His precious child but also as His chosen bride and His heart is yearning, longing for us to make ourselves ready.

My daughter-in-law spent more than six months preparing herself for the wedding day. For many brides the time is much longer. But from the moment of the betrothal i.e. the promise to marry, until the day of the wedding, it was all systems go.

If all of this is how active and busy it is in the natural, how much more should we, as a prophetic people – those who are reading and seeking to understand the signs and the times of the age, and who realise that everything is moving towards the fulfilment of scripture – also be busy in making ourselves ready for the return of our bridegroom?

It is time to get ourselves ready because God’s moving in the nation begins in you and me.

We cannot hope and pray for a national spiritual awakening to suddenly fall on us from above if we are not first willing to allow Him in to bring a personal true revival in each of our lives. God is seeking the complete devotion of a bride who is totally, passionately, abandoned to Him; a bride who is set apart from all earthly distractions and temptations, devoted to Him who has her complete heart-allegiance; a bride who has realigned her values and priorities with those of the bridegroom and chosen to walk the narrow, hard path of radical obedience and denial of self; a bride who has learned to abide in Him. She is the one whom He will adorn with His glory so that she can carry His presence into a lost and broken world.

I hope it is clear just how high the stakes are. This is not something that is just about me, myself and I; it is about being the people, the bride, that God has called us to be and needs us to be for the end-time harvest of souls to be gathered in. Therefore, we each need to apply ourselves to the question of to what degree are we already ready, and if we know that we are not, then how do we begin?

THE STORM

In February 2005 I went to Lundy Island, a remote largely treeless rock in the middle of the Bristol Channel, on retreat. On the first afternoon as I was walking the cliff path near the old lighthouse, the Lord suddenly placed in my spirit a sense that a great storm was coming on the whole world – not just the British Isles – and that there were significant preparations that the people of God needed to set in place beforehand.

This was not only a spiritual storm or a single actual tempest, but a whole series of catastrophic seemingly natural and political events and outcomes that would increase in intensity and frequency over a period of years, until every aspect of modern society had been severely shaken. The result would be the gradual but systematic removal of the many and various ‘pillars’ or ‘props’ society has relied on rather than on God for a number of generations.

I am convinced the ‘wind’ began to change with the events of 9/11, then the first signs of the ‘storm’s’ approach to land were felt from the financial collapse of September 2008; it has been strengthening and increasing gradually ever since.

How do you react when you hear the prediction of a great storm? What we do will differ depending on who we are, what kind of personality we have, where we live and our personal circumstances. We might batten down the hatches, lock ourselves inside and sit it out. We might take ourselves away on holiday and leave our property to the mercy of the elements; or we might make some practical preparations, such as putting sandbags out if we live close to the sea or a river that has recently flooded or rushing to the shops to get enough milk and bread that will hopefully see us through.

In the past these responses and last-minute preparations have been adequate, but the type of figurative ‘storm’ that our nation and the world has moved into is of an entirely different magnitude and requires a more considered, mature response that must involve listening to God and putting into practice what He says. The vast majority of those around us

are not listening to Him – including even some within the Church - and are therefore unable to discern what is really happening or where events are leading.

How can we prepare for something we cannot perceive? Paul writes to the Corinthians:

*‘The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit’.*⁷

Therefore, it behoves those of us who are watchmen and have a measure of discernment and understanding to take the warning seriously and to prepare a spiritual ‘lifeboat’ whilst there is still time and opportunity. Be certain everything we hold dear – our homes, families, churches, finances, pension funds, health care, education, police and justice systems - *everything* that comprises our society as we know it, will be shaken by this ‘storm’, and it is already happening.

Where is this ‘Storm’ in Scripture?

There are a great many references in the Old Testament books of the prophets to something referred to as the ‘*great and dreadful Day of the Lord*’. **Isaiah 13** summarizes the magnitude and severity of a time when God Himself will act sovereignly to judge the sins of nations who have not honoured or served Him and who have repeatedly flouted His laws and mistreated His people.

In His end-time discourse in **Matthew 24**, Jesus outlined a most turbulent time - a tribulation [ordeal, distress, suffering] - that would come over the whole world in the years immediately preceding His return.

Please read the whole of Matthew 24.

Jesus outlines the following:

False Messiahs [verses 4-5];	Wars and rumours of wars [verse 6];
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⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Nations and kingdoms vying for power and domination [verse 7];	Famines and earthquakes [verse 7];
Persecution and death for Jews and Christians; real hatred because of the gospel [verse 9];	Mass rejection and turning away from the faith [verse 10];
Betrayal of the true believers by false or fearful brethren [verse 10];	False prophets/teachings [verse 11];
Increase of wickedness i.e. what the majority consider is acceptable behaviour [verse 12];	The love of MOST will grow cold [verse 12];
The one who stands firm will be saved [verse 13];	The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world [verse 15];
The Temple will be rebuilt [verse 15];	The abomination that causes desolation will be set up there [verse 15];
A mass flight of Jews and Christians to places of refuge [verse 16];	Great distress throughout the whole world [verses 21-22];
False signs and wonders [verse 25];	Supernatural darkness and activity [darkness means no growth for food commodities = famine and death] [verse 29];
All nations will mourn; unprecedented levels of death [verse 30];	THEN Jesus will return for His people [verses 30-31].

What Jesus outlined is dreadful; a relatively short but fiercely intense time of testing and sifting in the nations. It is reasonable to ask; *‘Why would a loving heavenly Father allow such a severe judgement and time of testing on the world and especially for those believers who comprise His bride?’*

The answer is simple: in order to turn the hearts of a rebellious and disobedient people back to Him. The Bible is full of illustrations showing

how it is necessary for a turning back to God to always be preceded by a humbling. Invariably this comes through difficult and challenging events. What is different now is the context; this has never before happened on the world-wide scale that is ahead. Yet it is prophesied in scripture:

*"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. ⁷ I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty."*⁸

*"At that time His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words **"once more"** indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things - **so that what cannot be shaken may remain**. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."⁹*

It is sobering to consider that our loving Father God is also a destructive, all-consuming fire whose holiness, righteousness and justice are not to be taken lightly or whose word is not to be messed with or disregarded. In the light of this it is reassuring to read:

"Mercy [always] triumphs over judgment!"¹⁰

God's nature is always to love first, which means that although He will definitely allow the storm to increase in severity until it has accomplished all that it must, His mercy is already at work in preparing His rescue plan. He does this ahead of time, releasing it to those who have ears to hear, hearts to discern, as well as eyes to read and understand the signs, times, and seasons. In Matthew 24: 37-39 Jesus said:

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and

⁸ Haggai 2:6-7.

⁹ Hebrews 12:26-29.

¹⁰ James 2:13.

they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

Whilst a change in mind-set certainly needs to happen concerning the nature and ministry of the end-time Body of Christ, the change that is needed is more than just spiritual; it is extremely practical as well.

Please read the story of Noah in Genesis chapters 6-8.

Noah was alert when God warned Him of the coming storm. In view of the mocking and indignity he must have faced, it would surely have been far easier for him to simply ignore the warning or try to place it to the back of his mind as he got on with normal life.

Noah did not do that. The Bible says Noah did everything just as God commanded him and his obedience appears to have been unquestioning. His preparation was not a last-minute thing; rather, it was carefully considered and thought through, and God's instructions were followed to the letter. Noah fulfilled the very detailed and costly practical preparations needed to save his family, those who became the foundation for a whole new society at the time.

BEING PRACTICAL

MATTHEW 25

Having set out the table of events in **Matthew 24**, Jesus goes on to illustrate in very practical terms how we should prepare ourselves for these days.

In biblical numerology the number five is commonly interpreted to mean 'grace and favour from God.' So, the multiplication of the number five to make twenty-five can be seen to say 'Grace upon grace.' This implies that in this chapter 25 and with the end-times very much in view, Jesus has something extremely significant to impart for us; it is purely from His grace upon grace that He shares these things with us. Surely there is no coincidence in this number having been allotted to this particular teaching at the time the bible was divided into chapters and verses. Therefore, we need to heed, apply and do whatever we can to obey His guidelines.

THE TEN VIRGINS [VERSES 1-13]

The role of the virgins, or bridesmaids, was, as it still is today, to prepare and assist the bride in her preparations to meet the bridegroom. So, this is a picture that should speak to all of us in this season. It is the job of each of us to prepare the bride.

The scripture clearly states that there were ten virgins. This is a number that represents the completion of God's divine order: holiness; His guidelines [Law], or a period of testing.¹¹ We are arguably living in the season that will lead up to the completion of all things, during which we will go through a period of great testing. We must not only know God's word but also seek to carry it in our hearts, teach it to others and obey it ourselves.

¹¹ https://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/10.html#google_vignette

The fact that these ten were virgins adds to the insights: they had not engaged in sexual intercourse and were therefore deemed to be morally pure; innocent in the things of the world, undefiled, untainted by sin, its desires and consequences; having integrity. Therefore, these ten were able to be set apart in their hearts to God in a way of life that married women could not. They could give themselves wholeheartedly to their assignment, to prepare the bride, because they were not distracted by husbands, families or other commitments. Therefore, the metaphor of a virgin can also be used to illustrate the covenant relationship between God and His bride.

All ten virgins carried lamps. They were waiting for the call informing them that the bridegroom was on his way, which would mean they would join in a large outdoor celebratory procession. So, their lamps were not tiny nightlights in a glass jar or the tiny clay oil lamp, often used in homes of the time; but long poles each with an oil-soaked rag on one end. Each rag was literally drenched in oil but would use so much that it would need replenishing every fifteen minutes or so.

We are told that five of the virgins were foolish and five were wise. Let us remember the number five speaks to us of God's grace and favour, so it is entirely an act of Jesus' grace that He is illustrating this truth to us in the hope we will understand and glean something very important from it.

It will help in our understanding if we define the terms 'foolish' and 'wise':

- To be **foolish** is to lack good sense and judgement; to be silly, stupid, rash, thoughtless, reckless or unwise.¹²
- To be **wise** is the exact opposite: having or showing the ability to make good judgments, based on a deep understanding and experience of life, to be astute, prudent, shrewd, informed, aware and clued-up.¹³

The wise maidens realised that to make it to the *Chuppah* - under which the marriage ceremony would take place - and then onto the wedding

¹² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/foolish>

¹³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wise>

banquet, would use a great deal of oil. So, they prudently took what they considered to be sufficient spare oil in jars. They were prepared. The foolish maidens failed to think through all the consequences, to weigh up what the lengthy procession would mean for them, so they acted rashly and did not make any provision. That lack of judgement cost them dearly.

It is important for us to realise that in the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, nobody knows the day or the hour when the wedding will take place, except for the bridegroom's father.¹⁴

So, despite being prepared to escort the bride to her wedding, all the virgins could do was wait. And wait they did; so long, in fact, that they all fell asleep, which means that the lamps of all ten went out; those of the wise maidens as well as those of the foolish.

Just when they were all asleep and no longer alert, the shout of the imminence of the bridegroom's arrival was given and they all woke up suddenly, throwing off their bleary eyes and rushing to trim their lamps - cutting off the charred edges where the rag had burnt down previously - and soaking them afresh with oil. In the trimming process, the foolish would have shaved off any dried-in oil and without having brought any fresh supply, their lamps would have gone out very quickly - hence their panicked demands for the wise to give them some of their oil.

Shrewdly, the wise refused to hand over any of their supplies, telling the foolish to go and buy their own! But whilst they were gone to the store, the bridegroom arrived, the procession got under way, the wedding took place and the door to the banquet was firmly closed to the foolish virgins. Jesus ends with a firm warning:

"Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

¹⁴ Matthew 24:36.

The Virgins - Purity

Please read Psalm 119:1-16

As stated above, the virgins were deemed to be morally pure; innocent in the things of the world, undefiled, untainted by sin, its desires and consequences; and having integrity.

Let us be honest; no-one likes living in close proximity with someone who does not wash regularly or smells! It is simply unpleasant and in today's world, unnecessary. True covenant friendship means we will do whatever it takes to please the other party and stay in the intimacy of fellowship, so it should be obvious that at all times we need to aim for cleanliness and purity in our walk with God – even more so as we consider the very high stakes as we prepare ourselves to live through the increasingly dark and testing days before us.

Spiritual uncleanness causes a barrier between us and God because we automatically withdraw to what we consider to be a safe distance! Let us be clear about this; it is not God who does the withdrawing, it is us. I know when I have left the place of purity and intimacy because I no longer feel the Spirit's closeness and I struggle to hear His voice. Like Adam and Eve, I try to hide and cover up until the light bulb moment where I wake up and realise I am truly missing His fellowship. There is a way back; it is through **confession, repentance and a sincere re-consecration.**

Whilst we live and breathe, we will continue to clumsily say things that hurt or offend or find that temptation overwhelms us and we then have to cope with the resulting mess. We will not be wholly pure and sanctified [set apart to God] until the day we die and receive our new spiritual body. Nevertheless, we should not allow these struggles to become a barrier which will prevent us from pressing deeper into building our relationship with God. He accepts us as we are but if we seek a deeper level of fellowship and intimacy with the bridegroom, we cannot stay as we are.

*'How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.'*¹⁵

God uses His word - whether spoken, written or intuitive - but inspired by the Holy Spirit to illuminate the areas in our heart where He is still not Lord.

In the reading above, the Psalmist understands our dilemma. How can we stay pure? By obeying God's word. How do we know what His word says? We read, study, meditate and memorise it. It is the very word of God, inspired by the Spirit's power, that gives us the desire to be different, leads us to repentance and assures us of our renewal and restoration. Therefore, a significant part of our preparation needs to be a deliberate choice to pursue holiness and purity, to consciously choose to set ourselves apart from many would-be 'others', to belong wholeheartedly to only one bridegroom.

Speaking spiritually, these 'others' are anybody or anything that we place higher in value than our relationship with the Lord. We might call these the various idols of our hearts; things like financial security, career, family, property, even our church or ministry. They are the things we may have allowed to take root in our hearts and, whilst they remain there, they will always move us to selfishly serve them and not be as wholeheartedly for God as we might say we want to be, or give the impression to others that we are.

Scripture plainly teaches that the Lord hates all forms of idolatry and our response must be to repent and allow our priorities and values to be realigned, with Him at the centre. If we are going to stand firm in the days to come, we must begin this process of realignment now.

Idolatry is, of course, sin but there are many other forms of sin that prevent us from either receiving the fulness of God's love for us or prevent us from freely sharing it with others. For example, there is unforgiveness, prejudice, dishonesty, sexual impurity and judgementalism, as well as various forms of habitual sin, which I do not need to name.

¹⁵ Psalm 119:9.

*'Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and **break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.**'*¹⁶

As those called to prepare the bride, it would be hypocritical of us to assume we should not first apply this word to our own lives. So, to myself and to everyone reading this, I say *"It is time to break up your unploughed ground"*. Anything that has become an uncultivated waste ground, places where we have allowed the rubbish and weeds to settle, things that are unhelpful and unfruitful, God says plough it up, burn the rubbish and get rid of the weeds. This is something only you can do. In New Beginnings Discipleship I can give you the tools but I cannot weed the garden of your heart for you. We each need to take our own responsibility to deal systemically with the sin in our lives; it is the pruning back so that we can produce a stronger, more vigorous growth, which in turn produces more fruit.

In gardening terms 'no-dig' has become very fashionable. But there is a danger in minimal cultivation – only breaking up the surface. A hard layer develops, and roots cannot penetrate the soil. Do not be tempted to only deal with things on the surface of your life and allow a hardness of pride to develop underneath. The season we are living in requires each of us to allow God in to deal with the deep things in our lives so that He might give us a heart that is supple, sensitive to His voice and beats in rhythm with His heart.

*"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*¹⁷

When we truly love someone, we will do anything for them and, in our personal preparation as part of God's bride, He is calling each of us to go in deeper with Him, to set ourselves apart to and for Him in such a way as we have never done before. The parable clearly illustrates the great cost paid by those who did not make the preparations required. If we seek Him with all our hearts, He *will* come and shower His righteousness upon us.

¹⁶ Hosea 10:12.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 36:26.

His righteousness leads to our living in the fullness of who we are in Christ, in the power of the gospel of the kingdom, and with all that means to influence and impact a lost and hurting world.

Think: Take some time now to sit quietly and ask the Holy Spirit to highlight any areas in your life that might need ploughing up. Write down what He shows you. What will you do next?

Oil – The Holy Spirit

Please read Psalm 23; John 14:23

The oil represents the Holy Spirit. It is clear from the parable that for us to endure the time of testing, each of us needs to be truly soaked, soaked again and resoaked continually in the abiding presence of the Spirit. Only then will we burn passionately for Him and it will be possible for us to carry His burning fire to those around us. This is not something that can be acquired at the last minute; rather it is something we must set our faces towards and nurture in our hearts and practise over a sustained disciplined time.

We cannot rely on the resource of anyone else in this season – I cannot do for you what it is your responsibility to do for yourself – therefore it is crucial for us to get our ‘oil’ directly from the Lord; there are and will be no valid intermediaries. This vital resource only has one true Source – the throne-room of God – and only one sure way of accessing it, which is for us, He and I, you and Him, to spend time together.

*“My beloved spoke and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, **come away with me.**”¹⁸*

Here is an invitation which we need to heed. It is an invitation to intimacy, to a deeper relationship, to spend quality time with our covenant partner.

Let us be honest, no-one should marry someone they have only known facts about; Lady Diana Spencer did this when she married a man she had only met twelve times before the wedding and still called ‘Sir’! Both she and he found out all too quickly that they simply were not compatible. For

¹⁸ Song of Songs 2:10.

a marriage to truly work, we need to know the personality and character of our partner, what makes them who they are – what makes them tick. There is only one way to do this and it is by spending time together. It is exactly the same in our relationship with God.

We know the facts - that God loves us, that He is faithful to all His promises and good towards all He has made. But do we actually know these facts as personal truth? Do we really know our bridegroom in the way He longs for us to?

In September 2023 I lost my faithful covenant partner of almost forty years. Since then, my life has been filled with a great many challenges which normally the two of us would have talked and prayed through together. I have been forced through circumstances to get to know and understand a new husband in a way I had not known Him before. No, I have not hastily remarried – I'm talking about Jesus.

But because of our relationship, built over many years, it has not been a struggle – in fact it has been the beautiful fruit of my bereavement. So, I am able to witness to *how* He has been faithful to me, *how* He has never let me down, *how* He has fought my battles for me, *how* I have seen and lived in His goodness and *how* I have come to know Him as my provision, healing and deliverance.

Hebraic thinking is always practical, never just about acquiring knowledge. So, we can idealise about wanting a deeper relationship with Father God, about growing in spiritual understanding. But until we actually *do* something practical about it, it remains just theory or noble aspiration. Theory will not get us through the challenging times that are ahead for all believers. In *New Beginnings Discipleship*, I give you lots of tools for how to do this, but I cannot do it for you; only you can pursue the bridegroom and build the intimacy and the deeper relationship with Him. There is an optimum time to do it, and that time is now.

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Isaiah 55:6.

In modern society intimacy is a word commonly associated with a sexual relationship. Whilst it is clearly about the expression of giving and receiving love, it is actually much more than that. We find true intimacy when the mutual bond of covenant friendship is so easy, close and undemanding that we can exist for hours without having to do or say anything that disrupts the warmth and peace of the place of rest.

In Psalm 23, especially verses 2-3, it is clear David has found a dwelling place in the abiding presence of God deep within his heart that is not only peaceful but also restores and refreshes his very soul; it is where he finds his source. In this place there is no room for striving, worry, fear or trying to work it out; only tender quiet, almost bold confidence, in the ability of his covenant partner - who he knows will never let him down or leave him to face challenges alone - to guide him through. It is the place where true love grows and deepens.

Once this place of intimacy is reached in our relationship with God, we need never fear again because we have understood the nature of true covenant love completely, which is to be true intimate friends of God. Everything He has is ours and everything we are is His – even our very life. And as we learn to live in and out of that place of surrender, we find that our love for Him grows deeper and increasingly we are filled with the deep abiding joy, peace, rest, assurance, confidence and love of the Holy Spirit. This is the precious ‘oil’ that will enable us to burn for Jesus.

Think: Is God an active participant in your everyday life or do you keep Him at arm's length in some way? If so, what needs to change in you to allow your relationship and friendship to deepen and mature? Spend some conscious friendship time with God... Meditate on the wonder of John 14:23, then thank Him...

Keeping Watch – Prayer and Intercession

‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.’²⁰

Jesus’ words bring a stern reminder that, if we are not to be caught unawares, we should not allow ourselves to spiritually fall asleep, but to

²⁰ Matthew 25:13.

seek at all times to remain alert because we simply do not know the date of His return. We must be ready.

In scripture there are many different adjectives and verbs used to describe various characteristics of what it means to guard or keep watch. I found no less than twelve different Hebrew or Greek words:

- Hedge about [with thorns], guard, protect, beware, be alert, vigilant, watch, be sleepless, keep awake, listen, hear, pay attention, be diligent, patrol, inspect alongside, strain forward, wait, be cautious, be sober, mark out and eye up – take aim at, spy, observe, maintain, obey, preserve, peer into the distance.

This presents us with a challenge! In the parable, the shout of the arrival of the bridegroom came very suddenly whilst the virgins were all asleep. So, for an Issachar People, our 'watch' must begin with our continually seeking to understand the times and season in which we are living as well as listening to God for His instructions for what we are to do, so that we can be effective in sounding the alarm and warning - perhaps even waking up - others. Our ministry, Issachar People, exists precisely for this purpose. But what Jesus is really instructing us to do is to pray.

The language of our love relationship with the bridegroom is prayer. Prayer should be as natural to us as breathing, and as our native language. I know would-be couples who spend hours every evening on the phone to each other getting to know each other better, sharing the events of the day together, developing a level of intimacy and knowledge about what pleases each other.

As in the natural, so it is in the spiritual, we need to spend time with Him, sharing our hearts, our needs, our troubles. God may not need to be told – because He knows it already – but we need to nurture a spirit of surrender and dependence on Him and this is only done by maintaining close communication and contact.

When we have that closeness, we should not be at all surprised if He begins to share those things that are on His heart with us: things that bless and please Him but also things that trouble Him and which need deeper levels of prayer rather than just general prayers. We need to pray in an

informed way based on what we are discerning is happening in the spiritual realm as well as what we see happening on the world stage. The challenge is to the ministry of intercession.

In the Tabernacle, the priests made **continual** intercession for the people before the Lord. So, if we are to be successful in carrying out our commission to keep watch, we need to be aware that it will be an ongoing commitment until the day the bridegroom comes.

Intercession is one particular type of prayer in which those involved stand in the 'gap' between God and an individual, a community or nation.

*"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and **stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land** so I would not have to destroy it, **but I found no one**. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord."²¹*

Clearly God takes this calling very seriously and it disappoints Him when no-one responds to the challenge. The above scripture shows clearly that the results of a lack of intercession are very serious.

There is a difference between a person who is called to be an intercessor and a person who prays. Any person can pray, but not all praying people are called to be intercessors. An intercessor is a person who by calling or by nature chooses to be a mediator on behalf of those who cannot, for whatever reason, intervene for themselves. They make requests, urge, plead, beg, counsel, discuss, risk – and in terms of prayer – even fast, sacrifice, and engage in spiritual warfare, with the result that their intercession influences the final outcomes for those they serve.

God is holy and cannot look upon sin. Therefore, unrepented sin always deserves judgment and punishment. Jesus has, of course, paid that punishment for us. In a court of law, the defence counsel pleads with the judge on behalf of the accused. He makes his intercession. Surely we are a nation under judgement and sadly we, the church, must bear the

²¹ Ezekiel 22: 30-31.

responsibility for this as through slumber, apathy and passivity, we have allowed the enemy to plunder much of what was once God's in our islands.

As intercessors on behalf of our nation, we feel the weight of people's sin – the height from which we have fallen²² – and we stand in the gap in repentance and plead with God, the righteous Judge of the whole earth,²³ for mercy. None of us deserves mercy but because of the blood of Jesus, we have not only received mercy [relief from our punishment], we have also been shown grace – God's underserved favour in making us His children and showering us with untold riches in Messiah.

Many biblical characters took up this intercessory stance on behalf of national sin, for example, Moses, Nehemiah and Daniel. In response to their pleas, God intervened in history at that time. If we have the expectation that we are to see an end-time move of God in our nation, we need an army of intercessors who will respond to God's call to 'stand in the gap on behalf of the land.'²⁴

History proves there has not been a revival or move of God that was not born out of prayer. But just because people pray, we cannot presume revival will come. For example: at Westminster Chapel there were 300 people meeting daily to pray for revival for thirty years, but God has not sent it yet. My husband and I ran a Prayer House in rural Cumbria where people prayed quite literally from early morning, through noon and often into the night, for 20 years. Whilst we can testify that the spiritual atmosphere in our valley has definitely changed, we have not yet seen anything close to what we understand to be the marks of historic revival. But I absolutely believe all these prayers are stored up in a heavenly bowl, awaiting the Lord's appointed time.

*"The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.**"²⁵*

²² Revelation 2:5.

²³ Genesis 18:25b.

²⁴ Ezekiel 22:30.

²⁵ Revelation 5:8.

This is not about how many people are praying or for how long; neither can we substitute praying for obeying. God is looking for a bride who is so in love with Him that she will yield her corporate heart to Him, expressing that to Him in heartfelt prayer and sacrificial intercession.

There is clearly a battle raging over this land. And if we do not stand up and fight in the spiritual realm then we stand to be overwhelmed. This goes for the sharing of the gospel too; if we do not do our part, the enemy is already training and releasing his 'evangelists' in our nation. It is a battle, and we need to be a bride that wears army boots!

In Revelation 17 we see Jesus, Faithful and True, riding out at the head of His glorified end-time army. An army implies a war; war implies battles and battles imply there are soldiers to be conscripted and trained. Wounded soldiers do not go out to fight because they are easily picked off by the enemy.

If you feel the Lord's call to be part of His praying army then please consider registering your interest for our online *Prayer School* in which we seek to equip people in how to pray effectively as intercessors for their community.²⁶ If you feel God calling you to pray but you are still hurting or carrying wounds of some sort then it is time to seek help. Perhaps consider signing up for the *New Beginnings Discipleship Training School*.²⁷

*'Just one touch from the king changes everything.'*²⁸ We are going to see God do amazing things in these last days but it will come through and out of the judgement. God is waiting for His bride to get herself ready to host the move that is on His heart to send. But it will not come without prayer; it will not come without intercession; it will not come without the oil and infilling and reliance on His Spirit; it will not come without holiness and purity in the bride.

It is not revival or an end-time move of God itself we are called to pray for, but Jesus; it is Him that we need, His presence, in our fellowship gatherings, churches, villages, towns and on our streets.

²⁶ <https://newbeginningsdiscipleship.com/prayer-school/>

²⁷ <https://newbeginningsdiscipleship.com/part-two-discipleship-school-option/>

²⁸ Lyrics ©Godfrey Birtill 'There's a battle raging over this land.'

THE TALENTS (VERSES 14-30)

Please compare with Luke 19: 11-27

Both above parables speak of a man who is going away, and entrusts all his property to his servants. The Luke passage clearly identifies him as a king who, only on reaching his destination, will be enthroned as such. In both of these passages, the journey the man makes is another veiled reference to the bridegroom who has gone away for an unspecified time, but whose return is guaranteed at some point. It was a significant matter of trust for a king or a man of wealth and position to entrust his property to servants.

The talent was an ancient unit for measuring value in Greece, Rome and the Middle East, rather like our former 'gold standard.' In the Old Testament, a talent was a unit of measurement for weighing precious metals, usually gold and silver. It was the heaviest unit of measurement for weight, equal to about 75lbs or 35kg. Imagine for just one moment how heavy David's crown was:

*"David took **the crown** from their king's head, and it was placed on his own head. **It weighed a talent of gold**, and it was set with precious stones."²⁹*

The construction of the Tabernacle identifies the talent as being gold.

"All the gold that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold from the offering, was twenty-nine talents ..."³⁰

By New Testament times, a talent was a large monetary measurement roughly equal to 6,000 drachmas. One talent equalled about 60 minas or 3,000 shekels. A mina was a much smaller coinage, weighing approximately 1.25lbs or 0.6kg; a shekel weighed about 0.4 ounces or just 11 grams. In New Testament times, a shekel was a silver coin weighing one shekel. The mina equalled about 50 shekels.³¹

²⁹ 2 Samuel 12:30.

³⁰ Exodus 38:24.

³¹ Fairchild, Mary. "How Heavy Was a Talent in the Bible?" Learn Religions, Jul. 19, 2024, learnreligions.com/what-is-a-talent-700699.

So, there is no getting away from it, whether we are reading the parable of the talents or the minas, Jesus is talking about money and wealth, not simply our natural or supernatural gifts and abilities, what we might call our talents. Having said that, in the parable of the talents, there does seem to have a correlation with the abilities of the individual to do something with that which has been entrusted to them:

“...to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.”³²

The Greek word translated here ‘ability’ – *dunamis*³³ – means energy, physical power, which, by implication, can even be a miracle itself. From this we can deduce that Jesus is implying that the master or king had deliberately chosen to entrust his wealth into the hands of servants who, in his estimation, had the ability to put it to work with the expectation it would increase.

“Put this money to work,” he said, “until I come back.”³⁴

If we do a comparison of the outcomes for the wealth distribution in the two parables, this is what we see:

Talents of Gold	Multiplication	Reward
5	$X 2 = 10 + 1 = 11$	Put in charge of many things.
2	$X 2 = 4$	Put in charge of many things.
1	$X 0 = 1$	Bank interest would have literally given ‘offspring’. ³⁵ Stripped of everything. One talent given to the one with 10. Thrown into outer darkness.
Minas of Silver	Multiplication	
1	$X 10 = 10 + 1 = 11$	Charge of 10 cities
1	$X 5 = 5$	Charge of 5 cities

³² Matthew 25:15.
³³ Strong’s G1411.
³⁴ Luke 19:13.
³⁵ <https://greekbible.com/matthew/25/27>.

1	X 0 = 1	Bank interest would have literally given 'offspring'. Stripped of everything. One talent given to the one with 10.
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Whether this outcome sits easily with our 21st century ideas of fairness and equality or not, Jesus is clearly teaching a very hard lesson: He expects us to do something with whatever He has entrusted to us – not to simply enjoy it for ourselves – but to put it to work to reap a harvest of some sort for the greater good of others and the extension of His kingdom in these end times.

*'But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, "**We don't want this man to be our king.**"'*³⁶

This verse shows us something deeply significant about the hearts of some of the king's subjects. They simply did not want to allow Him to be their king. They were not willing to serve anyone other than themselves and their judgement was swift and harsh.³⁷

In each parable, the man who received one talent or mina seems to have acted out of real fear, resulting in his failing to do anything at all with what was entrusted to him.

*'Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **So I was afraid** and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."*³⁸

Again, there is a swift judgement given by the master or king.

Jesus is making the point that He expects us to unreservedly put our money and resources to work for the kingdom so that it produces 'offspring' of some kind – a multiplication. We are not to allow the fear of man, looking stupid or feeling inferior to others, the fear of Satan,

³⁶ Luke 19:14.

³⁷ Luke 19:27.

³⁸ Matthew 25:24-25' see also Luke 19:20.

persecution or even death to prevent us from putting ourselves, our money, wealth, property and the varying abilities given to each of us to multiply the original 'seed' entrusted to us.

Jesus Our King?

In order to be the people God means and needs us to be, God's kingdom must first be formed in us. We must allow Him to be king. A seed takes many years to grow into a fruit-bearing tree. It's the same principle with God's kingdom in us. It is a process, so we need to be patient with ourselves. Right from the cradle we have learned by an in-built default to look out for number one, so it takes time to put our own desires, wants and ingrained behavioural patterns to the back of the queue, to learn to walk by faith with Father God, and attend to what pleases His heart more than our own.

Queen Elizabeth II was Head of State of the British Isles and the Commonwealth, boss of the 'firm'. But she was also a wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who loved dogs and horses and had, apparently, a great sense of humour. Various people had connections with her in each of these distinct roles but there was one over-riding factor: no-one ever forgot she was Queen. Even closest family members on encountering her for the first time that day had to address her as 'your Majesty' and bow or curtsy; only at subsequent meetings could they be more informal. In fact, all those involved in palace life, from the humblest to the greatest, were her servants. Everything revolved around what pleased her.

It is the same in our relationship with God: we are His children and bride; we may know Him intimately as the lover of our soul and as a Father who has generously blessed us and made us heirs with Jesus of a great many spiritual blessings and freedoms. But that closeness does not permit us to live life any way we wish; even in the intimacy of a child-parent, lover-bridegroom relationship, we must never forget to honour and reverence God as our king.

*'Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.'*³⁹

If even Jesus was described as His servant, then how much more should we determine to learn how to live our lives in order to please our king, or Lord, and do His will? The Greek word 'Lord' – *kurios* – literally means our owner.

*'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.'*⁴⁰

*'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own; you were bought at a price...***⁴¹

We are not our own, we have been bought with a price. Jesus' death was the price God paid to bring us out of slavery to sin and to call us to Himself as His people.

In Greek there are seven different words for 'servant'. Whenever the term carries the sense of being formally bound to another, the word used is *doulos* which is commonly translated as 'bond slave.' A bond slave could be a slave who, having been set free, then chooses of his or her own freewill to remain living as a servant to his or her master.

*'For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price...'*⁴²

*'You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.'*⁴³

Father's costly love demands our costly response.

³⁹ Matthew 12:18.

⁴⁰ Galatians 2:20.

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

⁴² 1 Corinthians 7:22-23.

⁴³ Romans 6:18.

*'Love the Lord your God with **all your heart** and with **all your soul** and with **all your strength**.'*⁴⁴

Think: What might this verse mean for you and your life; your priorities, values, resources and time?

In the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, each of the knights swore allegiance to the king. Although each one had his own individual 'quest' or 'assignment,' their oath of allegiance to put the king first always took priority over personal matters. We find a similar heart-allegiance in **1 Chronicles 12:38**: the fighting men gathered at Hebron '**...determined to make David king**'. To be determined is to be 'single-minded', 'unwavering' and 'resolute', which means the business of making David king took top priority over everything else, whether personal ambition, family responsibilities or comfort.

In the present day, God is looking for us to be the embodiment of a servant-hearted people who will determine to make Him king; those who will allow Him to reign in them and over them by making His kingdom – His will, His ways, His purposes, His values and priorities – first over every aspect of our life. It is very easy for us to make a heart-led emotional response to a deeper commitment to Father God; it is not so easy to follow it through until we are the type of singular-minded transparent vessels for the kingdom that Jesus was.

*'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'*⁴⁵

The key to true life in the kingdom of God is our obedience. Gentile Greek-thinking places heavy emphasis on the intellectual understanding of arguments and concepts. On the contrary, Hebraic thought is always practical. If we say we love God, we must go further than just understanding it in our mind; our lives must show it. It is that simple.

The rabbis taught that the depth of our love for God is measured by how much love we give to our neighbour. This is most likely why Jesus linked **Deuteronomy 6:5** with **Leviticus 19:18** in His summary⁴⁶ of all Torah [the

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 6:5.

⁴⁵ Luke 11:28.

⁴⁶ Mark 12:30-31.

Law]. If we love God and His word but fail to love our neighbour then, in Hebraic terms, our life is a sham; we are not only showing ourselves to be double-minded and liars, we are also misrepresenting God to those who ‘read’ our lives on a daily basis.

“Then he said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.’”⁴⁷

Once again, Jesus is emphasising that we are to allow Him to take first priority over every aspect of our lives. This comes back to where our heart-allegiance really lies. Self-denial is an unpopular concept in our self-obsessed, self-pleasing world. The other aspects of Jesus’ minimalist lifestyle, such as His widespread rejection, persecution, betrayal, and death, do not readily appeal to our twenty-first century self-preservation instincts either. We do not like the thought of too much of what we have spent our life-time learning, achieving, or striving to possess being dealt that kind of fatal death blow. Ouch!

As we move further into the season of the end-times, as His servants to whom much has been entrusted, God is looking for our complete allegiance and obedience. Thankfully, He knows we are incapable of bringing every aspect of our lives under His control immediately; it is an ongoing process. But confession of sin is not enough. For God to truly reign and rule as king, our lives need to bring forth the fruit of repentance: our returning to Him with all our heart, soul and strength, and that means putting everything we have, are and own on the altar before Him. Only when we do this sincerely and wholeheartedly, with hearts surrendered and willing to obey, will we see the type of kingdom multiplication of our resources described in the parables of the talents and minas.

Think: What do you think this might mean for your life? Ask the Lord to show you just one area in your life where you may be being ‘double-minded.’ Confess your sin to God and identify what type of action you need to take to truly work out your repentance in that area. Ask God to help and

⁴⁷ Luke 9:23-24.

strengthen you in your resolve to surrender that area to Him, allowing Him to be king.

None of it is Ours

*'Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, **for everything in heaven and earth is yours.** Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. **Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things.** In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.'*⁴⁸

We might think we are the owner of a certain property, bank account, pension fund, car, field or allotment; or we might entertain a modest pride in our achievements – perhaps with our musical or artistic gifts or farming knowledge or joinery skills. But there are no exceptions, and no distinctions can be made: *everything* we possess is a gift from Him. He is The Source. Nothing can be presumed; we have no rights to anything; everything we have is a blessing bestowed on us by God.

It was stated previously that the Greek word, *kurios* [lord] literally means 'owner.' So, as believers, we are not the owners of anything. Everything we are and all that we have continues to belong to Him; we are just the temporary stewards or servants entrusted with the responsibility of these things. This means we need to learn how to hold these things lightly.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus is clearly outlining that we are not only responsible for what He has given us, but also accountable to Him for what we do with the things we have temporary stewardship of. This perspective emphasises how much we each carry a serious responsibility to put to work all that we have and all that we are [naturally, physically and spiritually] in a way that honours God and fulfils His plans and purposes, not just for ourselves and our families, but for His kingdom today.

It is not sufficient to have learned how to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit; we need to actively implement and obey His instructions.

⁴⁸ 1 Chronicles 29:11-12.

The God who Gives

*'For God so loved the world that he gave...'*⁴⁹

Giving – and especially giving freely without counting the cost - is in the very nature of the godhead. He is always giving of Himself, endlessly, selflessly, generously and lavishly, even though it cost Him everything to give His Son. The never-ending flow of His love pouring earthwards is a picture of His constant giving. If we are to release His love to others, we must reasonably expect it will involve giving something away: it might be something of ourselves (a hug, a smile or being patient when it is not easy) or it might be some money or a piece of property we are stewarding.

When our heart attitudes, thought life, gifts and possessions are surrendered to God, our daily life will definitely be different. We will relate to God as Father, have a greater appreciation of Jesus and know the daily presence and leading of the Holy Spirit. But there will be other changes too:

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*⁵⁰

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*⁵¹

When we are continually being filled and led by the Spirit of God, we will be givers rather than takers. These qualities, which are the nature and characteristics of Jesus, are the fruit or result of the Holy Spirit's make-over in our lives and are the very things we are asked to give away.

Society has trained us to think of money as separate to possessions; we often put personal qualities or feelings (like the fruit of the Spirit) in another

⁴⁹ John 3:16. See also Luke 11:13; John 1:12; Romans 8:32; Galatians 1:3-4; 2:20; Ephesians 5:2 and 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Titus 2:13-14; 1 John 3:24.

⁵⁰ John 15:5 & 8.

⁵¹ Galatians 5:22-23.

'box' labelled 'private'. We are no longer fragmented people but healed, restored and *whole*, therefore this is no longer how things should be.

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"*⁵²

The example God has given us is to be lavish in our giving: to give, give, give and even when we think there is nothing more, to keep on giving. He poured Himself out for us when He sacrificed His only Son so that we might know and experience the Father's love for ourselves. We would have been denied this if He had put Jesus in a 'box' labelled '*Just for Me to enjoy*' or even '*For the Jews only*'!

*"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? **Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.**"*⁵³

*"For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving."*⁵⁴

Every gift, spiritual quality or blessing comes from Him and is to be received gratefully. But when we acknowledge God as the owner (the Greek word translated 'lord', *kurios*, means 'owner') we cannot selfishly keep very much of it to ourselves. We are not only stewards responsible to God for what He has poured into us; we are also channels for that blessing to flow out to bless others. As much as it is Father's heart to give, so we too should be givers.

In Mark's account of the healing of the woman with the issue of blood [Mark 5:25-34]. Jesus identified the very moment the woman's healing was given because He knew that power had been released; He had given something away. We will too; it might be a touch of comfort or empathy on someone's shoulder; it might be sacrificing an evening of 'me time' to sit and talk to someone who is lonely; it might mean taking someone to the hospital, cooking extra portions of food or sharing our home, even our

⁵² 1 John 3:1.

⁵³ 1 Chronicles 29:14.

⁵⁴ 1 Timothy 4:4.

income, for a period of time. In each of these examples one or more fruit or evidence of the Spirit in us is being given away.

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”⁵⁵

The Greek word *hilaron* [translated here as ‘cheerful’] is the root from which our word ‘hilarious’ derives. It can also be translated as side-splitting, riotous, uproarious, and hysterical! It is not mandatory to have long faces and be serious when we are giving something away for the kingdom. It is Father’s great delight, joy and pleasure to give to us, His children and bride. It is also His heart for us to know the real joy that comes from seeing someone else receive a blessing when it is given with no strings, just unconditional cheerful generosity.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”⁵⁶

It is clear the early believers practised this cheerful giving. They not only felt a strong sense of responsibility before God for what they did with their possessions but they held things so lightly that when the Holy Spirit prompted them to sell something to meet someone’s need, they did so. There was no compulsion, coercion or manipulation at work; they were open to following the Spirit’s leading. Father’s heart of love was seen amongst them and His kingdom grew as they allowed Him to be the owner [Lord] of *all* their property, not just a small percentage. This is what it really means to live by faith; not just trusting Father God for our income but for our expenditure as well!

The ‘M’ word!

We are called to be givers in God’s kingdom and that also means our money!

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:7.

⁵⁶ Acts 2:44-45.

open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”⁵⁷

This Scripture is probably the most quoted text in relation to the giving of our money into the kingdom. It promises tremendous blessings when we bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. But giving to Father God is not an investment, something we do in the hope of getting a return; we give to please our Father and to express His heart of love to others.

Tithing began in the Hebrew story with Abraham and Jacob. Yet these tithes⁵⁸ cannot be compared to the tithe under Torah. They are completely different entities. The storehouse did not exist before Torah [the Law] and was simply a foodbank from which the priests, the poor and the needy took their food. Torah was fulfilled in Messiah's coming and in AD 70 the Temple was destroyed anyway; the Levites' job and the storehouse both disappeared. Other than when Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, there is only one explicit mention of the tithe in the whole New Testament and that relates back to Abraham's offering to Melchizedek which, of course, predated Torah [the Law] by some 400 years.

“This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means ‘king of righteousness’; then also, ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace’. Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest for ever.”⁵⁹

The writer to the Hebrews implies that Melchizedek [who seems to have appeared out of nowhere, with no traceable history or background] may have been a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament; everything about Melchizedek, his names, his roles and the bread and wine he gave to Abraham appear to bear this out. It is written explicitly in **Hebrews 5:10 and 6:20** that Jesus is our High Priest from Melchizedek's order, and Peter teaches that as believers, we too are priests of that same

⁵⁷ Malachi 3:10.

⁵⁸ Genesis 14:18-end; 28:12-end.

⁵⁹ Hebrews 7:1-3.

order – not the Levitical order. Yet, it is this very passage that is usually seized on, in conjunction with **Malachi 3:10**, to justify the giving of Levitical-type tithes today. The argument is made that this particular local church is the equivalent of the storehouse because it is where God's people are fed spiritually. Therefore, members should give their whole tithe into that particular house of God. In some cases, God's people are definitely fed in their local believing family unit, but in many cases this is not true. Messiah's Body today is full of malnourished believers starving for lack of spiritual food who have not been taught how to feed themselves and who may eventually starve to death for want of calories to grow!

If we are going to continue the practice of tithing today, we should make an attempt to unravel the confusion of Scripture and separate out the two strands so that we can see the clear differences between the two. We may practice either [or both] of these:

1. Abraham's tithe: i.e., follow the Spirit's prompting to freely give once, directly to the one who blessed and/or fed us, without any on-going obligation.
2. Follow the Torah tithe wholeheartedly: i.e., give into a foodbank or storehouse from where those unable to support themselves any other way [the priests] or the poor and needy can come to make withdrawals.

The typical church community is often short of money but at the same time money-dependent to make the whole 'wheel' keep turning. Therefore, it is completely understandable why the teaching on the local church being the equivalent of the storehouse is perpetuated. But it is not biblical.

"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you ask, "How are we robbing you?" 'In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – your whole nation – because you are robbing me.'"⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Malachi 3:8-9.

Think: Could there possibly be a link between these verses and the statement made that the church is often short of money? If so, what might be the way forward?

If you tithe to a local church, how does that church make use of the tithes it receives? What proportion is distributed biblically? (You may need to go and ask someone for the answers. You may feel awkward about asking but the fact that you ask makes the leaders accountable for what they do with the money given.)

If you do not tithe, then how and what do you give to God? How do you decide what, when and where to give your money, time, possessions, abilities, and home?

Bringing our Offerings to God

Tithing was just one way of giving in the Old Testament. The other way was to bring a sacrifice, an offering to God. Whereas the tithe is not a part of Father's character (He has never given just 10% of Himself to us), sacrificial giving most definitely is. He gives us 100% because He gives freely, generously and abundantly above and beyond all we could ask or ever imagine. And by offering His only Son, Jesus Christ, He gave sacrificially. The giving of sacrificial offerings is the type of giving we see modelled in the New Testament.

The Pharisees were religious in their giving; they followed the rules to give a precise 10% of even their tiniest herbs; but their hearts did not reflect Father's heart of love and generosity towards the poor and needy. The early believers were commended for giving sacrificially [out of their poverty] to meet the physical needs of both the poor and the itinerant teachers and preachers of the gospel. In fact, they were doing what the tithe had been intended to do but were directed by the Holy Spirit and the Father's heart rather than by a rigid calculation.

Paul was not embarrassed to make his needs known and it seems that some groups were mean-spirited even then! Paul also exhorted congregations to give freely and generously to one another, but he never

used manipulation, exerted pressure or coercion; they always gave out of the overflow of love Father God had poured into their hearts.⁶¹

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”⁶²

Father wants us to be as open and dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit in our financial giving as we are in every other aspect of life and ministry. In many ways, giving a straight tithe into the same ministry month after month is taking the easy option, especially when we do it by standing order, because we do not necessarily have to think (or pray) too much; we can sit back, relax and enjoy the remaining 90% ourselves because our responsibility to give something financially has been taken care of. Right?

Wrong! Poor teaching in the wealthier western Church has led to a real imbalance in Messiah’s Body across the world: some tithing believers (and some ministry leaders) earn huge amounts of money and enjoy luxury lifestyles out of the giving of their congregations, whilst some in those congregations, even those who have given sacrificially, suffer on the edge of poverty. Meanwhile, man kingdom projects that have been birthed in the heart of God go unfulfilled for lack of finance.

It is much harder to open our hearts after pay-day each month and, having set aside enough to cover our essential needs (food, household bills, etc.) plus a modest contingency sum, to then offer up the remainder to the Holy Spirit saying, *“Now show me what You want me to do with the rest”*. This really is living on the edge by faith!

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made”⁶³

⁶¹ Please see Matthew 19:21; Mark 12:41-44; John 3:16; Acts 2:45; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14; 2 Corinthians 8:2-3; 9:6-7; 12:14; Galatians 2:10; 6:8; Philippians 4:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 6:17-19.

⁶² Galatians 5:18.

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 16:2.

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”⁶⁴

Paul does not advocate haphazard or whimsical financial giving but rather thoughtful, deliberate, systematic, pre-determined, purposeful and responsible giving. We settle on what we are to give (it could even be a percentage) then carefully set it aside from the rest of our money so that it will not be spent in the common purse but be available to be given as directed by the Spirit. Then we must obediently either give whatever we have allotted or by faith trust God for what He asks us to give: to give more is disobedience but to give less is also disobedience.

It is like putting our financial seed or produce into a spiritual storehouse rather than a physical one but with the same purpose; to supply for those who cannot support themselves, including full-time teachers and preachers,⁶⁵ the poor and the needy.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”⁶⁶

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”⁶⁷

“And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.”’ Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have

⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:7.

⁶⁵ 1 Timothy 5:17.

⁶⁶ Matthew 6:19-20.

⁶⁷ Matthew 6:26.

prepared for yourself?" "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God"⁶⁸

Any natural storehouse has a limited lifespan; it is temporal, earthly. In today's terms, it cost millions of pounds not only to construct the Temple but also to rebuild it twice. But it was not an eternal investment. One day, even our stylish, new, multi-purpose church centres and warehouses will have outlived their usefulness, especially once persecution forces us to operate underground. That day could come sooner rather than we think. We need to think and pray very hard about what we sow the resources Father has entrusted us with into, and ask ourselves the question: *"Is this eternal or temporal?"*

A storehouse is not an excuse to hoard: it is just a collection point from where things that have come in go out again. Therefore, a spiritual storehouse is not a building or a bank account but the work of the kingdom of God.

Think: Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your attitude towards giving: Do you ever give cheerfully? Are there things you are holding on to? Why might that be? Are you scared of where this challenge might lead you?

Talk to God about your financial giving. If you tithe: are you going to continue tithing to the same place(s)? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you are to restructure your giving into the kingdom. If you do not tithe, are you truly open to follow the Spirit's promptings to give where He directs? Is there anything you have to do to set in place a spiritual storehouse? How might that work?

Larger Investments, ISAs and Pension Funds, etc.

As we continue to contemplate the challenge Jesus faces us with in the parables of the talents and minas, we must do so in the knowledge that the world's economy is extremely volatile; the banking and financial systems are increasingly unstable. The strongest world economy since the 2008 financial collapse has been China's - but that is now heading for crisis. If China's economy suffers then others will follow like dominoes. An

⁶⁸ Luke 12:16-21.

uncertain outcome for Brexit has resulted in growing political and social unrest, partly in fear of unstable economic outcomes, and such instability has only increased since COVID-19 and the escalation of conflicts in both the Ukraine/Russia and the Middle East. It is not an exaggeration to suggest we could see riots over food and fuel shortages on our streets before long.

The concept of programmable Central Bank Digital Currency [C.B.D.C.] introduces the practical means for a state not only to control access to the money we hold in banks and building societies, but also to restrict its use, or control the type of purchases for which it may be used. In Britain this has taken a step closer to becoming a reality now that C.B.D.C. introduction is being examined by the Bank of England.

For us as believers, it may not always be possible to use the existing banking systems, which will at some point require us to be microchipped or which could require us to take a mark of some sort in order to access our own money.

To some, this still seems an unlikely development, yet the means to use biometric technology to verify financial transactions via wi-fi or 4/5G already exists. Unnoticed by many, the Microsoft Corporation filed patent number WO2020060606 on March 26th, 2020. The patent was headed *Cryptocurrency System Using Body Activity Data*. Human body activity associated with a task provided to a user may be used in a mining process of a cryptocurrency system. The potential implementation of the mark of the beast is now a very real and present danger.

For Christian charities there is another layer of danger: many are accustomed to having unrestricted access to money donated to them with the benefit of Gift Aid. As the world's economic system continues to be judged by God, there might well come a point where those who have unwittingly partnered with it through the Gift Aid scheme suddenly find themselves being required to pay back some of what they have been given. Refusal of such a demand could immediately see a charity forfeit its monetary resources and a form of persecution ensue.

All of this leaves us with the very real challenge to consider wisely ahead of time exactly what King Jesus might be saying to us regarding any financial investments, ISAs or pension pots we may have and any kingdom-funding gifts we may want to give.

Nick Szkiller tells a story relating to a challenge given to a person of wealth immediately prior to the banking collapse of September 2008. Apparently, the person was challenged by the Lord to give away a certain sum of money, let us say it was £1,000,000. Obviously, the person had the means to do this, but even to someone of wealth, it was still a huge amount and required a great leap of faith. The person questioned God repeatedly over the challenge and then failed to implement it.

The day of the collapse of Lehman Brothers arrived, Sept 15th, 2008, which was immediately followed by the worldwide collapse of the financial system. The result for the man of wealth was that **in one moment he lost the exact amount of money** from his financial portfolio that the Lord had challenged him to give away! The point of this true story is that, as a believer, it was not *his* money but the Lord's, and its 'owner' knew that it could be put to work for the sake of His kingdom, rather than be lost as it was.

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."⁶⁹

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had."⁷⁰

Scripture tells us plainly that the Early Church radically shared and disposed of their worldly assets among the believing community. Let us be certain, everything we hold dear - *everything* that comprises our society as we know it - will be shaken, and that includes our financial assets and resources.

Think: How does what is written in this section apply to you? Are you being challenged to surrender the hold you have on your personal resources and

⁶⁹ Acts 2:44-45.

⁷⁰ Acts 4:32.

place them completely at God's disposal whilst you still have control of them? What might this mean for you practically?

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS [VERSES 31-46]

The context of this parable is a clear reference to the Second Coming and the beginning of Messiah's millennial reign **[see Revelation 20: 1-6]**.

The Shepherd, Sheep and Goats

There are numerous references throughout scripture⁷¹ that confirm to us that God is the Shepherd here referred to and, as Judge of all the earth,⁷² a time of sifting and separating of the sheep from the goats is coming. It is certain that everyone will be judged and separated off: sheep to the right hand and goats to the left.

I was once told by Israeli farmers that in the common breeds of sheep and goats found there, which often include breeds that have hair rather than wool, it is not always easy to distinguish between the sheep and goats with the untrained natural eye. Having had both sheep and goats as very close neighbours for most of my life, I'm aware there are some big differences between the two:

Sheep	Goats
Graze on grass, ignores trees, shrubs and weeds.	Will eat anything, including leaves, twigs, shrubs and weeds.
Flock together.	Are independent.
Will weather a storm.	Will seek out shelter.
Largely white in appearance.	Can be any mix of colour: black, white, brown.
Coats of wool [apart from the hair breeds mentioned above].	Coats of hair.

⁷¹ Genesis 48:15; 49:24; Psalm 23:1; 28:8-9; 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:12; Micah 5:4; 7:14; Zechariah 9:16; Matthew 2:6; John 10:11 & 14; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 7:17.
⁷² Genesis 18:25.

Tails go down [which is why they are usually docked]	Tails go upwards.
Horns are either docked or grow to the side of the head.	Horns tend to grow at the back of the head.
Generally only smell of lanolin, which is not unpleasant.	They have a strong odour, which many people find overwhelming.

The goats I have experienced as neighbours have been a nightmare; they would regularly jump over a boundary wall into our garden, smashing the glass in my greenhouse [twice!] – and they even ate my washing straight off the line! In distinction, the sheep tend to just stay put and generally cause little trouble. From the little information we have in **verses 31-46**, it is clear Jesus is making a point: if they are both of the short-haired variety [as is common in the Middle East], they may look very similar on the outside, but actually they are very different creatures inside; with very different natures, personalities, smells, objectives and instincts.

In seeking to interpret Jesus' analogy, He is the Shepherd, while the sheep and the goats exist together in some form of expression of His Body until He returns, at which time the differences in their nature will be revealed.

*'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.'*⁷³

The sheep represent those who have been listening for His voice, are part of His 'flock' and are seeking to be obedient. The Hebrew word *kahal*, from which the Greek *ekklesia* derives, literally means flock, assembly or gathering together. The goats, in distinction, may go to church and might even lead one(!) but inwardly their hearts are not warm, supple and submissive to the plans and purposes of God. They will live rebelliously – independently - seeking to blaze a trail of their own or to make a name for themselves away from the safety and security of the genuine flock. They may well leave some form of devastation or at least, a bad smell in their wake.

⁷³ John 10:27.

“Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” [John 14:24].

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven**” [Matthew 7:21].*

The Righthand and Lefthand

The symbolism of the sheep being separated to the shepherd’s right hand is rich in symbolic meaning, as repeatedly throughout scripture it represents power, authority, strength, skill and acts of righteousness; the blessing and the favour of God⁷⁴. The left hand, conversely, is usually associated with weakness, inferiority, selfish and unwise choices, discipline and judgement.⁷⁵

The Criteria for Rewards

On first reading, the criteria Jesus states for the sheep receiving their reward in His kingdom seem straightforward enough: feeding the hungry and quenching the thirst of those who are thirsty, providing hospitality to strangers, clothing the poor, visiting the sick and those in prison. Surely everyone who would call themselves a believer in Messiah would do these things, including the ‘goats’? The caveat comes in verse 40:

“The king will reply, “Truly I tell you, **whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**”

Who are Jesus’ brothers and sisters? I believe they are the Jewish people along with the wider whole House of Israel (i.e. the one new man [see Ephesians 2:14-16] which includes all those who have a living relationship with Jesus, the Bible believing remnant today.

Let us remember that in the light of His discourse outlined in **Matthew 24**, this whole chapter sees Jesus imparting wisdom and guidance specifically for the end-times. So, it seems that how we treat and respond to the needs of His children and bride in these days is of crucial significance for Jesus

⁷⁴ https://biblehub.com/topical/s/symbolism_of_the_right_hand.htm

⁷⁵ https://biblehub.com/topical/t/the_symbolism_of_the_right_and_left_hands.htm

and must therefore also be a matter of fundamental importance for us today. The goats go on to receive a devastating eternal punishment:

*'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, **whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.**" 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'*⁷⁶

The severity of this judgement emphasises how very important it is to be obedient to God; to seek His heart and to know His ways – so that we might genuinely let His love flow out through us to feed the poor, clothe the needy, heal the sick – to let His Kingdom come and His will be done – in the communities in which He's placed us in this season.

The Reality of End-Time Persecution

*'Then **you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.** At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other...*⁷⁷

None of us likes to consider that we might be the generation who are called to lay their lives down for being a follower of Jesus, for the extension of His kingdom or for standing with the Jewish people and the nation and land of Israel. But, in speaking of the end-time spiritual battle Revelation 12 verse 11 is very clear as to how the Church will overcome:

*"They triumphed over him [i.e. Satan, his demons and schemes against God's end-time purposes] **by the blood** of the Lamb and **by the word of their testimony**; they **did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**"*

I am sure that you, like me, have heard many sermons on these verses. Generally, the challenge of the final sentence is left out because either the preacher does not believe that a time is coming when our comfortable Western church might be threatened by persecution or it is simply too uncomfortable a challenge for us to want to unpack it.

⁷⁶ Matthew 25: 45-46.

⁷⁷ Matthew 24: 9-10.

It was early in 2008 that my husband and I found ourselves tagging along on a tour of sites in Cambridge where Protestants had been burnt at the stake during the reign of 'Bloody Mary'. It was there and then that the Lord first really challenged us both over the matter of possible martyrdom in the days ahead. This was a seed of thought that grew, as just a few weeks later an acclaimed metal detectorist found a coin from Mary Tudor's reign along with five small balls of lead shot in our field. As he and my husband were in the field, I had been in the prayer house and, completely independently of them and ignorant of what they had found, the Lord spoke these words from Psalm 116:15 to me:

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

I knew instinctively that for the second time in just a few weeks He was challenging me over this. Will I really be willing to stand strong and not betray Him when the knife is at my throat or the gun at the back of my head? This challenge is something for all of us to consider and one that I return to often.

We need to wake up to the understanding that this end-time discrimination and persecution is not something just applicable to a vague group of 'others' who live somewhere else in the world (many of whom have already experienced persecution for decades) but something that is beginning to break forth here and now, across America, Europe and although we do not like to admit it readily, across the British Isles too.

On my first visit to Yad Vashem [the Holocaust museum and memorial in Jerusalem] I remember being faced with the stark reality that during the 1930s the doctrine of the Nazi's 'final solution' was propagated by the media, the universities and the educational establishments and was critically endorsed by the Church. I heard the voice of the Lord speak clearly to me in that place *"See how easily the world system is already set in place for this to happen again. Next time it will not be confined to one relatively small section of Europe, it will be worldwide."*

At that time everything within me cried out *"Nooooo!"* But I knew it was true and would come to pass. Now, many years later in the wake of the events in Israel on 7th October 2023 we have already seen mass antisemitic

rallies on the streets of our capital, endorsed by our police forces and church leaders. Israeli flags have openly been burnt and Jewish people arrested for trying to stand up to the mob. Recent events in Manchester and Golders Green, London, show only too readily that persecution of the Jews in Britain is not only alive and well, but gaining momentum daily.

Recently, in a church small group, on being asked what I do, I mentioned being a part of Issachar People and that ministry's wholehearted support for the Jewish people and Israel. Immediately I was strongly verbally slapped down and silenced. To be robbed of my freedom of speech within such a church environment is evidence of the reality of discrimination/persecution today. It can come from within the Body of Christ; from an uninformed and prejudiced minority whose voice is louder and more demanding of attention and one who claims 'offence' as their justification. This is the living evidence in our midst of the reality of the sheep and the goats.

Persecution is not something that happens to people elsewhere; it is already on the rise here. Our civil liberties to freely speak and live out our faith are already undermined in the laws of our land and this will intensify as the day of Jesus' return draws closer.

Think: What is your reaction to what has been said? Does it have a ring of truth to your spirit? Is this something that has ever crossed your thought processes before? Have you ever considered the challenge of martyrdom and what that could for you personally?

Fighting Back – Going Underground

The Special Air Service [S.A.S.] is an elite, unit of special forces within the British Army. It was founded in 1941 to undertake a number of roles including underground reconnaissance, counterterrorism, direct action, and hostage rescue. Members of the S.A.S. are highly trained individuals who appear to be utterly fearless and therefore are feared by their enemies. One of the reasons they can operate to this standard is that they are a **totally set apart group, inwardly and outwardly committed** to the tasks they are called to undertake.

The role of the S.A.S. is something very akin to that seen within the early church. In the book of Acts, we read of the severe persecution of the believers by Paul prior to his encounter with Jesus. Persecution did not end with Paul's conversion; it increased to such an extent that all the apostles were either imprisoned, martyred or both, and this level of suffering and oppression continued until the so-called 'conversion' of Constantine the Great around 313AD.

In the British Isles, the early Celtic church was only ever a small segment within a much larger society, but it was an incredibly important and significant one. In the 2nd-4th centuries it was an underground hidden movement that was so powerfully ablaze with the Spirit of God, it impacted and changed whole communities. Despite persecution, the Roman ruling powers of the day were incapable of extinguishing the glowing flame that led to the transformation of society at the time. Eventually God used the foundation laid by this underground body of believers to be the plumb line for the whole fabric of society: our Judeo-Christian heritage, morality, and values.

For almost 130 years [1532 - 1660] England experienced extreme religious persecution: Protestants persecuted Catholics, then Catholics turned the tables and hunted down Protestants, with this reversal happening not once but several times. I understand that around 1650, the first minister of one Baptist Church in Bristol was tarred, feathered then tied to a cart before being dragged to a place where he was hung, drawn, and quartered! It was not for nothing that the early Baptists - many of whom endured severe persecution and martyrdom - were called 'Radical Believers.' They knew and were secure in the love of their covenant-keeping God and He knew them. Just like the modern S.A.S. they were not afraid to work underground and take great risks for their mission. The life story of John Bunyan tells us they were an underground church, meeting in homes, barns and outside spaces; they provided safe houses and refuges, but above all they remained resolute in their faith. They preached the word, baptised converts (in mill ponds and streams) and taught new believers to obey God over and above anything or anyone else. As someone trained as a Baptist minister, I have often prayed that God would put their steadfast resolve and D.N.A. into me.

Could it be that God is offering us the exact same opportunity: to be a real power force of influence for His kingdom in the reshaping and rebuilding of society *through* the storm not just after it has subsided? Is this what the end-time movement might actually look like?

The truth is that rebuilding cannot wait; it must begin NOW, within a people who are willing to be wholly abandoned to Him and His purposes; those who are fearless and willing to open their mouths and not be silent in the fight for righteousness and justice; who are willing to open their homes to feed, clothe and hide strangers; who will use their God-given resources to rescue, support and provide for those in need and to visit those imprisoned for taking their stand. The challenges of this season need us to become believing communities that provide stability, support, security, and refuge throughout the period of the storm, however long that might be.

In the natural, it is way too late to begin preparing a lifeboat when the storm is already approaching. As it is in the natural, so it must also be in the spiritual: the 'lifeboat' needed to shelter and provide for the persecuted Jews and Gentile believers needs to be prepared, equipped and resourced in advance. Especially now, whilst we still have finance, food and material resources available.

Places of Refuge and the Hidden Network

One of the great privileges I have had since 2010, is that as I have travelled around the British Isles sharing on all of the above, I have realised that, largely, God has already been sowing the seed of the need for places of refuge – a hidden network - into people's hearts.

Not everyone has known what to do with the challenge and God has certainly used my sharing to awaken many or give context to the seed He had sown already. Little by little, there has been the emergence of an underground network that literally goes from Land's End to Shetland and beyond. This is not something the hand of man [or woman!] has done, it is entirely a Sovereign work of God. So, whilst it is a network of sorts, at this moment in time it is not mapped or has any sense of cohesion and there is no strategic co-ordination between those involved at this time.

With the prospect of providing refuge for an open-ended period of time to

people who might be fleeing persecution, in fear of their lives and perhaps in a climate where we are no longer able to use our cars - meaning people would largely be journeying by foot as well as hungry, in need of a change of clothes and with all manner of various emotional, physical and practical needs - we sought and bought various essentials. What we were led to store might well differ from what you are led to store. A list of the items we felt led to store can be sent on application to me via my email address sarah@issacharpeople.org.

We also did the following:

- We learned how to use and maintain Victorian and Edwardian tools, [i.e. items that do not need electricity or battery power].
- We considered what might be safe ways of communicating with one another when it will be unsafe to use mobile phones, the internet and all manner of social media which could not only betray ourselves but also, unwittingly, betray a brother or sister in the Lord.
- We plotted safe routes between our own place of refuge and our nearest known neighbours. We walked these routes and plotted overnight stopovers. We also ensured the routes ended at least one mile away from any known place of refuge, so that in the event of the network being breached or someone being betrayed or followed, they would not actually be able to lead the authorities directly to the safe house.

Think: What is your reaction to the thought of being persecuted? How might this shape your concept of preparedness? What might 'Are you ready?' mean for you in this context? Consider Noah: what does the Ark represent to you? Have you ever thought of your home as a refuge and/or storehouse? Who might that be for? In what ways might practical preparations differ from spiritual ones? If you already have a storehouse, are you paying more attention to one aspect than the other? Why might it not be wise to use the internet, smart phones and social media at that time? Think beyond yourself to your social network too... What might be the implications for them if you use social media for them?

JOSEPH STOREHOUSES

How Secure Is Your Food Supply?

America's trade tariffs seem set to further push our national economy, and indeed that of the whole world, into a global recession. But have you ever wondered where your food supply would come from if the recession becomes a depression similar to that experienced a century ago (the 1920s), or we were suddenly thrown into the wake of a national or international emergency that resulted in a major disruption to our food supply?

Food Vulnerability

We have not had any real self-sufficiency in food security in the UK since the early nineteenth century, prior to mass migration from rural areas to the newly-industrialised cities. Following the end of World War II, the introduction of the 1947 Agricultural Act began to drive an agenda to industrialise farming, with the result that the very companies producing the chemicals to spray our crops are the very same ones producing the medicines to correct the side-effects of eating them!

Since the sixties we have undergone a complete transformation in what we eat: no longer relying on seasonal home-grown foods, but increasingly on imported ingredients that we feel we need to service our changed tastes and multi-cultural diets. Many do not even know how to make a meal from scratch, preferring ready meals and bottled sauces that are full of unhealthy preservatives and additives.

The result of this is that two thirds of our population is overweight, with a half of these being considered obese. The true cost of eating refined, processed, over-chemicalised, hormone-induced foods from the industrialised modern farming is our national health.

In addition to this, our food industry wastes a third of what is produced, while a further third of what is bought is wasted or thrown away in the

home as consumers pay strict observance to 'best before' or 'sell by' dates, both of which are only meant as guidelines.

My father grew the majority of our vegetables in our garden and in a massive allotment, a trend that is returning as many are beginning to wake up to our vulnerability over food supply and are once again seeing the importance of learning how to grow their own crops – although in many instances this is fuelled from the fear inspired by the 'climate change' agenda. To 'grow your own' is fine for those who have a back garden, allotment or small holding, but the majority of our population live in urban areas and have become ever more dependent on fewer, larger suppliers who can withhold food stock at will and charge us whatever they like.

The 2030 Agenda

Behind all of this is the working out of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, launched by President Obama and Pope Francis in Rome in 2015, and adopted by the United Nations. If you are unaware of what this entails then you can check out the seventeen goals of the agenda here. In short, it means that sustainability in the environment is being elevated over food production.

So, farmers are being incentivised to give up their land to renewable energy [solar and wind farms], housing, re-wilding, non-food production business on agricultural land such as glamping, herbal leys, forestry and industrial parks – all of which implies real implications for long-term farming and food security. The Governments changes to Agricultural Relief for Inheritance Tax will inevitably lead in the long term to many small farms needing to be sold. Under the terms of the 2030 Agenda, we might well expect these farms to be bought up by the larger conglomerates.

As part of its 150th anniversary, Sainsburys have issued a Future of Food Report, in which it outlines its aims to produce 'planet friendly' foods that will encourage consumers to eat non-meat alternatives (e.g.: seaweed and jellyfish!) driving the need for further research and investment in agro-biodiversity.

How do we respond?

What then, would be the outcome for us, for you, if something seriously interrupted our status quo? Think: how would you feed yourself, your family or neighbours? It is one thing to aspire to growing our own but, as I know through experience, it is something entirely different to actually grow food that is edible and preserve the surplus in such a way that it remains edible for the winter months when fresh garden produce is scarce.

To do so for my own household required a process over several years of diarising mistakes in order to ensure they were not repeated, adapting to the vagaries of living at altitude - above the snowline - and lots of practical investment and preparation. To achieve similar results for a whole local community would require infrastructure, wisdom and a much larger support network. Even then, it is practically impossible to grow and preserve the sheer volume of food needed to feed ourselves for one year without resorting to imports.

The UK does have an official Government Resilience Framework, published in 2022, but it offers little on the role of the public in civil food resilience. The 2025 National Risk Register only conceives of one direct food impact, that of food supply contamination, which is seriously downplaying what specialists in the food industry regard as a likely outcome. On 22nd May 2024, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, gave a speech on resilience, in which he advised the public to store three days' worth of food at home. This appears to have followed the launch of a 'Prepare' website by the Emergency Planning College, but it was issued without explanation or context and failed to offer any form of strategic guidance or infrastructure, especially for those who do not have any means to grow their own.

In World Wars I and II, the British public had to be brought into active engagement because food supply became stretched and could not be taken for granted. As normal methods of food provision were disrupted, food supply was brought under Government control. We produced only about a third of our food and large sections of the population were underfed and nutritionally poor.

My submariner uncle risked his life in the Atlantic, patrolling the essential food convoys from America. But with the very real threat of food blockades, and the convoys being blown up, rationing was introduced; public advice on growing food was widely issued, people learned new skills, a 'war on waste' was introduced and a massive effort was undertaken to turn non-agricultural land into food producing areas.

With our world appearing to again be teetering on the brink of a global war, those of us who claim to understand the times and the seasons also need to take this threat seriously and consider together what God's wisdom and strategies might be to us.

Storehouses

I admit that this was not a subject high on my personal agenda until, in February 2005, I found myself walking along a lonely clifftop on Lundy Island, when I clearly heard the Holy Spirit say to me "You're in a Joseph season". In Genesis 41:1-7 we read:

"Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

"He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream."

Scriptural message for today

I immediately understood what I was being told: our nation was, at that time, still in a relatively prosperous season – but lean years were coming. This would not be something that only affected the British Isles, but the whole world. It would not be one single event but a whole series of seemingly natural and political catastrophic events and outcomes that would increase in intensity and frequency over a period of years until every aspect of modern society had been severely shaken. The result would be

the gradual but systematic removal of the many and various ‘pillars’ or ‘props’ society has relied on rather than on God for a number of generations, including our food security.

That God had directly linked this word to the story of Joseph meant He needed me to understand the key lesson: at some point, the ways in which we have relied on imported goods since the end of World War II would, very likely, be interrupted, or even closed off to us. The subsequent war in Ukraine certainly closed off our grain ‘pipeline’ from the former ‘breadbasket of Europe.’

Scarcity to come

The story of Joseph is one particularly linked with grain, possibly because, although we cannot live on bread alone [Matt 4:4], it is certainly a staple food, and, according to Revelation 6:5-6, may well become scarce, leading to famine as these end times continue.

“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’”

Grain is a collective term which can mean anything from wheat, barley or corn, to dried peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. Ezekiel 4:9 shows us that all of the above can be put into a storehouse and used at some point in time to make a form of bread:

“Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and use them to make bread for yourself.”

Joseph’s strategy

God gave Joseph a plan to raise strategic grain storehouses all across the land of Egypt, which, because they had been prepared and filled beforehand, meant that when the famine reached a crisis point, they could be opened.

“When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.” [Genesis 41: 56-57].

Over the remainder of my time on Lundy, the Lord repeatedly hammered home to me the same point: that we no longer have any national strategic grain stores; that we had become complacent about our food supply; that the Government had no answers; the Church was largely asleep and ignorant of these things; and we had lost touch with our natural home-grown national food supply – preferring cheaper imports – and had constructed large housing estates over much of our agricultural land.

I am convinced the financial collapse of September 2008 was a defining event on God’s prophetic calendar, following which the worldwide financial system and economy has been increasingly shaken to the point that we are now in a position of real vulnerability, especially for our ongoing food security.

Sharing the message to prepare

On my return from Lundy, still three-and-a-half years before the crash of 2008, I travelled widely sharing this message with whosoever in the Body of Christ would receive me. I felt a bit like Noah because I was outlining a very challenging scenario that required a practical response, yet it was a strange message to carry when the world economy seemed rosy and stable enough at the time.

God spoke a very clear word to my husband and myself: *“Prepare your hearts, prepare your home and prepare the people of God.”* So, despite the looks of unbelief from those around us, my husband and I, along with Nick Szkiler and others associated with us across the North of England, began to implement the preparations we felt we needed to set in place in order to model something and demonstrate our personal faith in the message we had heard from God.

Giving first

Over a number of years my husband and I had lived with the scripture

directing us to provide for the 'widows, orphans and foreigners'.⁷⁸

Seven years before the storehouse project, we were led to give away everything we owned - the equivalent value of our Gloucestershire home at the time - in order to provide a home for a widowed family member. This meant that when we moved to Cumbria we were totally reliant on the Lord as we lived completely by faith. What we gave away would have bought everything needed to build the prayer house and all the infrastructure needed for the storehouse project and more.

With hindsight we understood this to be not only a demonstration of our willingness to obey God, whatever He asked, but so that what was built was done completely by Him and not our own ability to make it happen. We had no idea that within the next decade we would be given it back again!

We, and our core group at the prayer house where we were in the Eden Valley area of Cumbria, also built the House of Hope for orphan victims of the war zone in northern Uganda. Only when these two things had been done could we begin to consider a storehouse for the 'foreigners' around us.

Miraculous provision

In addition to the above, and as my husband turned sixty and became eligible to cash in the only pension fund he had, we used the money to buy the field adjacent to the prayer house where we lived and worked. As food-growing novices, the Lord taught us how to grow edible food – not all home-grown produce is necessarily edible!

This went on to become the source of much of the fresh produce that was preserved and laid down in our storehouse. Eventually, by 2013, we had become completely self-sufficient in our food supply and the Lord gave us the miraculous phenomenon of giant vegetables – albeit only for one season [see Appendix 2 for some photos].

We taught ourselves how to preserve the food we grew. This involved learning to use a canning machine, bottling, drying, dehydrating, and

⁷⁸ Zechariah 7:10.

freezing.

We partnered with a neighbouring farmer for our meat supply – he grazed his sheep in our field for which we received a supply of lamb for our freezer.

Nick Szkiler became a dealer in hand-operated grain mills. The ability to mill flour from raw grain is one of the most basic essentials of emergency planning. We taught ourselves how to make good edible whole wheat bread, having first ground our own flour from raw grain. This is not as easy as it sounds!

We created recipes using dried goods from the store. It is one thing to store foodstuffs but it is something entirely different to create something edible from them.

Amongst the members of our prayer house community, we set up a local trading co-operative, through which we traded goods and food supplies among ourselves.

Nick Szkiler, my husband and I also explored a wholesale trading company for Canadian Red Wheat. Nick went twice to Canada to talk with various farmers, trading co-operatives and shipping companies.

In 2014 Nick set aside a whole year to the making of a film, Grain Will Be The New Gold. The title came from a prophetic word, but the inspiration came from Revelation 6: 5-6. Sadly, it lacked the financial infrastructure needed to make it work so it was clearly ahead of time. However, everything is already set in place when the Lord moves His people to perceive the need and release the financial resources to make it become reality.

Nick Szkiler and me run a course from time to time, Kingdom Grain. In this we 'unpack' our 'storehouse' of experience and information based on our journey over the past 20 years or so. If you are interested in this course or would value some guidance on storing basic essentials, then please contact me or Nick through the Issachar People website at sarah@issacharpeople.org; nick@issacharpeople.org.

Activating Faith

One of the repeated criticisms received over the years we have carried this message is that to create a storehouse is in some way to counteract our faith in God, who is our Provision. Will He not always supernaturally provide for us? Whilst well meant, this argument does not hold up biblically. We have already explored the story of Joseph and referred to the accounts of Noah and Ezekiel.

God clearly fed Elijah through the ravens at the Kerith ravine: 'The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.' [1 Kings 17:6]. But that was an exception, not a rule.

In **Matthew 14:13-21** Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes that were presented to Him and multiplied them to feed the crowd of five thousand. This miracle of multiplication is repeated in **Mark 8:1-9** in the feeding of the four thousand. In **Matthew 25**, as we have already read, the virgins who failed to prepare their lamps beforehand were resoundingly shut out. The understanding we have arrived at is this: if we will exercise our faith by asking God to instruct us in exactly what preparations we are each to make (and this will differ for every household) and then do it obediently, we can confidently go forward believing that He will continue to lead, guide and teach us as to what to do, where to go and whom to partner with when those resources begin to run low.

He is our faithful covenant partner; He is always on our side and will never let us down. So as long as we do our part and set aside what He asks us to, we can be certain that He will definitely do His part too, and in some way multiply that which we have prepared.

Think: What is your reaction to what is written about the vulnerability of our national food supply? Have you thought through how you might begin to provide basic food for your household? Do you already have a form of storehouse?

CONCLUSION

Having received the original revelation on much of the content of this booklet on Lundy in 2005 – and in subsequent years with my husband, Nick Szkiler and our core group - in trying and testing the practicalities we were shown – I well remember an occasion when I sat on the floor of the prayer house with a map of the U.K. in front of me.

On this map I had tentatively plotted the places of refuge I was already aware of in the North of England. There were huge geographical gaps between each one, gaps that would take three or four days for the fittest of people to walk by the light of the full moon. This made me question what would happen to the children, elderly, sick and pregnant. I asked the Lord to show me how these isolated places might become a workable network. He gave me a waking vision and you can tell how long ago it was because it involved acetates!

As I looked at the map and saw the refuges I was aware of plotted, suddenly it was as if an angel came and placed an acetate showing the locations of another completely different network of believers over the top. I could immediately see that there were more dots on the map. This happened again and again – seven times in all – until, eventually, I could see what God was showing me: He already has it in hand! His network would emerge when it was the right time. A good number of refuges and safe houses are already prepared - to the extent that there are many established around the British Isles – and they are just the ones I'm aware of - but there are still many yet to be created.

Many have been carrying this message for years, whilst it is still new to others. So, the network is still growing and developing. At this point in time those seven different networks I was shown in the vision may **not yet know each other or, if they do, not yet readily work together. Only when that happens will we be able to trust one another in the type of context we foresee.** Perhaps this is one reason why Issachar People has been brought into being for this period of history. We are, after all, an organic network of God's people, brought together by His Spirit to work and serve His end-

time purposes for Israel and our own nation. The challenge of that is to obediently do what He tells us to do and do it with open hearts and hands that come from hearts that are wholly laid down to Him.

So, for the vision to come to its fulfilment, it is our sincere hope that in time God will join us with other like-minded, servant-hearted believers, those who understand the times and season in which we are living and know what we, the Church of Jesus Messiah, should do; those who support the Jewish people and God's end-time purposes for Israel; as well as understand that the discrimination of now for us as Christians will inevitably increase to become real persecution. So, we may well also need this underground network ourselves.

Only when we come together with no agenda other than His agenda, will we see God's kingdom begin to come, His will being done and the end-time move that is on His heart come to pass, not just across the four nations of the British Isles, but across the face of the earth.

APPENDIX 1: WHEN GOD CAME DOWN

By Tom Lennie

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Lewis revival: 1949-52

December 2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the beginning of one of the U.K.'s most loved spiritual awakenings. While Scotland has played host to a vast array of religious revivals over the course of five remarkable centuries, unquestionably, the best known of them all is the Lewis revival of 1949 to '52.

Famed in Revival History

Indeed, this awakening has found its place as one of the most famed spiritual movements in world history. This is a staggering achievement. As a result, hundreds of 'revival pilgrims' from all over the globe make their way, every year, to the island where it all began.

Reasons for the revival's popularity are easy enough to find. Everyone loves a good story, and a great many stories associated with the Lewis revival quickly capture people's imaginations – the impactful account of the two elderly sisters who prayed the awakening into being; the ministry of the evangelist at the fore of the movement; the dramatic testimonies of many who came under its influence; exciting accounts of the supernatural; the revival's advance in the face of intense opposition; and its lasting impact on many island communities.

But the title, '*The Lewis Revival*' is contentious, for believers on Lewis are well-aware that their island has played host to numerous moves of God's Spirit. Ask many a Christian in Lewis their thoughts on the Lewis revival and you may just receive the teasing response; '*Which Lewis revival are you talking about?*' [Although, in truth they will have little doubt which awakening you are referring to].

Revival Praying

To a great many people, the real heroes of the Lewis revival were the Smith sisters – Peggy and Christine, then aged 84 and 82 respectively; the one badly affected with arthritis, the other totally blind. These two siblings were known to be serious intercessors – housebound due to infirmity and therefore of little further ‘use’ to society, they knew full well how to be useful in the spiritual realm, spending much of their time bowed in intercession before the Lord, engaging in spiritual warfare and pleading with Him to rend the heavens and visit their district once again with showers of divine blessing. The siblings’ hidden ministry as infirm intercessors has endeared them to successive generations of believers.

But believers from Barvas who remembered those stirring times like to point out that the Smith sisters were by no means the only ones who lived lives of prayer – indeed Barvas was known as a community at prayer – with saints of God all over the bleak landscape constantly calling on the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon the parish.

Revival Begins

The revival had its beginnings in the districts of Shader and Barvas, on the Westside of Lewis, in mid-December 1949, when mainland Scotland evangelist Duncan Campbell was invited to hold an evangelistic campaign in Barvas Church of Scotland. The first few nights were good, but hardly spectacular. Then on Monday 12th December, a spiritual break occurred, and the Spirit was poured out on the congregation.

Soon Duncan Campbell could record in his diary, *‘We are in the midst of a glorious revival. God in His great mercy has been pleased to visit us with showers of blessing, and the desert is rejoicing and blossoming as the rose. Some of us will live to praise God for what our ears are hearing and our eyes are seeing these days in Lewis. Meetings are crowded, right up to the pulpit steps.’*

Remarkably, within around ten days of commencing his mission, Campbell could report around seventy adults having professed conversion. From that night on, every meeting was packed, and the whole community appeared to be in the grip of a powerful awakening.

Revival Extended

From Barvas, the revival spread round the island: north to the parish of Ness, eastward to Point and Lochs; south along the Westside to Arnol and Carloway; south-west to Bernera and the parish of Uig, and extending across to Harris and even the small isle of Berneray. It was a truly remarkable movement by any standards, ultimately sweeping several hundred folks into the kingdom of God.

As the movement intensified, people became convicted, not just in church, but as they worked in the fields, in the peat-banks or at their weaving looms, or even as they walked by the roadside. A few were converted before ever listening to a sermon or attending a meeting.

Nearly every convert was keen to emphasise the awareness of the presence of God as the outstanding feature of the revival. The sense of the presence of God seemed to pervade the community. *'It seemed as if the very air was electrified with the Spirit of God'*, noted one convert.

Another of the revival's most salient features was the singing of praises to God. Believers sang in the churches; they sang during times of family worship in their homes; they sang as they walked to and from meetings; they sang in buses and on boats; in the peat banks, and as they wove at their looms. A lot of new revival hymns were composed at this time.

Some other notable features of the revival included:

1. The awakening's influence on children;
2. The essence of prayer, not just prior to revival breaking out, but throughout its progress;
3. The importance of fellowship – believers constantly meeting and sharing together – being bound together in the love of Christ.
4. Revival phenomena – the more unusual manifestations of God's presence in people's lives, including, on occasion, trances, the hearing of heavenly choirs, prophetic words and premonitions. But the Lewis revival was not, as such, a Pentecostal or charismatic revival – physical healing, for example, was not a prominent feature.

Revival Myths

But the revival was not without its share of controversy. The movement was opposed by some of the leaders of the largest denomination on the island – the Free Church of Scotland – as well as by the smaller Free Presbyterian Church. On this staunchly Calvinist island, many were deeply wary of what they saw as the ‘Arminian’ teaching of Duncan Campbell and the organisation he worked for – the Faith Mission. In some localities the opposition was staunch, churchgoers were dissuaded from attending meetings, and Campbell’s health suffered for it.

Additionally, Campbell was accused of exaggerating stories of the movement. Sadly, this charge is not unfounded. The tendency of Campbell to both embellish and even fabricate revival stories is both baffling and disconcerting. It becomes essential to deconstruct a number of popular stories of the Lewis revival, stories that turn out to be mythical in nature, either in part or in whole. It is only in stripping back the untruths that the glorious truths of this famed movement become truly revealed – truths that are every bit as inspiring and faith-building as the myths they replace.

In my book, *Island Aflame*, I offer a possible explanation as to why the evangelist might have told untruths about the revival that he played a central part in – an explanation that in no way seeks to denigrate the man, but rather one that is ultimately helpful in maintaining the overall integrity of the evangelist.

Many other untruths about the Lewis revival have arisen over the decades, including the more recent claim that Peggy and Christine Smith were none other than the great aunts of the 45th President of the United States of America – one Donald Trump [whose mother did indeed hail from the Isle of Lewis].

It is essential, then, to remove that cloak of sensationalism that has enshrouded the Lewis revival for far too long. To help set the movement in perspective – in the proper context of the remarkable legacy of spiritual awakenings on Lewis and indeed, across Scotland.

Conclusion

Even with the removal of exaggerated and far-fetched stories, the evidence is overwhelming – a highly significant spiritual revival took place on Lewis and Harris between 1949 and 1952. It was a revival characterised by powerful Bible-based preaching. A revival that exposed sin and revealed the life-changing truth of the gospel. It was a revival replete with remarkable, life-transforming testimonies, revealing the unbridled joy that relationship with Jesus brings. It was a revival that led to a life of witness for hundreds of individuals, and full-time Christian ministry for many.

It was a revival of premonitions, prophecies and many other supernatural occurrences. A revival that has stirred up faith and hope in the lives of thousands of Christians around the world, among believers hungry to see God move in their own communities.

The Lewis revival will continue to stir hungry hearts, build faith and inspire hope in believers. Revival tourists will continue to flock to the island and parish where it all began in December 1949, to visit the kirk where Duncan Campbell delivered his hellfire sermons, to be shown the site of the cottage where the saintly Smith sisters lived, the Shader meeting hall where the first conversion took place, and the large Arnol farmhouse that allegedly shook.

There is great inspiration to be gained in such pilgrimage. The Lewis revival has had phenomenal influence around the world. May the Christian world never forget, and never fail to be inspired and awed by genuine, true stories of the glorious Lewis revival of the mid-1900s.

'Island Aflame: The Famed Lewis Awakening that Never Occurred and the Glorious Revival that Did [Lewis & Harris 1949–52]' by Tom Lennie, seeks to offer a comprehensive and sensitive reassessment of the Lewis revival. Published by Christian Focus, it is available from [Amazon](#) for £11.25 including p.& p..

APPENDIX 2: THE GIANT VEGETABLES

By Sarah Winbow

