

PLUNDERED YET NO ONE SAYS “RESTORE”

Chapter 42 of Isaiah foreshadows Israel’s confrontation with Assyria, and her eventual seventy year exile in Babylon. Her homeland was to be left desolate, and the exiles would be reluctant to return and receive the blessing of the Lord’s restoration. This prophecy is a reassurance of God’s faithfulness in preparing the way for their return by removing every obstacle that confronted them, and raising up those who had been cast down.

This may also be viewed as a parallel prophecy that applies to the end-time Church that has been taken captive by the spirit of Antichrist, and left desolate and lifeless. In that light it also contains the comforting assurance of God’s intervention in the Church to those who are blind to Antichrist’s deceptions, to set the captives free, and restore the Church to its former glory.

The prophecy opens with God’s address to Jesus Christ the Messiah as God’s instrument of truth and deliverance.

**“I, the LORD , have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.”** Isa 42:6-7.

This commission of the Lord is confirmed in the 61st Chapter of Isaiah.

**“The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are bound...*”** Isa 61:1.

Jesus, the Messiah, is a covenantal promise of God’s faithfulness. He will open the eyes of those blinded by Antichrist’s deceptions, and release those held captive by Satan’s demon spirits.

God has been waiting for His children to turn to Him, so that He can intervene, and act on their behalf. He will lay waste the mountains and hills, or all obstacles standing in the way of their restoration. He will lead His children out of their captivity by opening their eyes to truth.

**“I have held My peace a long time,
I have been still and restrained Myself...
I will lay waste the mountains and hills,
And dry up all their vegetation;
I will make the rivers coastlands...”**

**I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known.
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked places straight.
These things I will do for them,
And not forsake them.” Isa 42:14-16.**

God then chastises those taken captive for their blindness and deafness towards Him, and the truth He has presented by His prophets and teachers.

**“Hear, you deaf;
And look, you blind, that you may see.
Who *is* blind but My servant,
Or deaf as My messenger *whom* I send?
Who *is* blind as *he who is* perfect,
And blind as the LORD 's servant?
Seeing many things, but you do not observe;
Opening the ears, but he does not hear.” Isa 42:18-20.**

His servant is Israel, who was given the commission to give light to the Gentiles, and draw all nations to Himself. The parallel equivalent to Israel is the Church, who was given the responsibility of preaching the gospel to all nations, converting them to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

**“But this *is* a people robbed and plundered;
All of them are snared in holes,
And they are hidden in prison houses;
They are for prey, and no one delivers;
For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"” Isa 42:22.**

Sadly, this is the state of the Church today - taken captive by the spirit of Antichrist, and blind and deaf to spiritual truth. The persistent voices of minority groups gain public attention and approval, whilst the majority of Christians remain abjectly silent and passive. Jude’s exhortation to contend for the faith has fallen on deaf ears. **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith [the Christian faith] **which was once for all delivered to the saints.**” Jude 3-4**

God has stated, **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,”** (Ps 33:12), but anyone who contends for our heritage as a Christian nation is roundly condemned for prejudice against the religions of minority cultures in our midst.

Religious instruction and Christian counselling has all but disappeared in schools, and public prayer, or any other voicing of Christian beliefs outside Churches is strongly opposed. Meanwhile minority groups supported for their campaigns for things such as religious equality, gay rights, women priests, and democratic rights that oppose God’ election.

THE DECLINE OF THE CHURCH

The church as we know it today is vastly different to that established by Christ and the apostles. Here are some of the main differences.

- Churches were local and autonomous, named after their geographical location. Now churches are international organisations with hierarchical leadership.
- Ministries were formed by the Holy Spirit, and allotted to Churches by Christ. E.g. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Ministers are now trained in worldly institutions, gaining intellectual rather than spiritual qualifications.
- In the early Church there was no division between clergy and laity. Now ministry is basically the province of the clergy.
- There were no denominations, but a universal brotherhood of believers.
- The true meaning of the Christian ordinances of Baptism, Communion, and Marriage, have been superseded by hollow counterfeits.
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are neglected and even absent from most Churches.
- The vitality of the indwelling life of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to meet all needs is rarely taught, and as a consequence the end-time church is insipid and lifeless.
- The power of the cross of Christ in defeating Satan was the basis of all legitimate ministry.

The end result is that the end-time Church has lost its vital life giving power, and to most people it consists of a place to meet each Sunday. The following statistics illustrate the decline of the church in the past decades.

In 1911, 95% of the Australian population professed to be Christian. In 2011 that number declined to 61% and in 2013 it was down to 52.6%. A recent survey showed that there were more Muslims in the world than Christians.

In Revelation it was said of Antichrist, **“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.”** (Rev 13:7), and the facts above suggest that this has happened.

WHAT IS STOPPING GOD FROM INTERVENING?

The following are excerpts from a book by Watchman Nee, entitled “Let Us Pray.”

“When God created man He gave him a free will. There thus exist in the universe three different wills; namely, the will of God, the will of Satan the enemy, and the will of man”

“As the Lord cannot deny His own will, so He will not coerce ours.

“Prayer must originate from God and be responded to by us...He will wait until men agree with Him, and then He will work. This is ...one of the most important principles to be found in the Bible.”

“The word in Ezekiel 36-37 is quite surprising. The Lord says that He has a purpose, which is, that He will increase the house of Israel with men like a flock. This is the determinate will of God. What He ordains He will perform. Nevertheless, He will not

accomplish it instantly but will wait awhile. What is the reason for the waiting? The Lord says, ***“For this moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them...”*** He will wait until men show their agreement with Him.”

An “illustration of this in Isaiah 62: ***“I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night: ye that are Jehovah’s remembrances, take no rest, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise on the earth.”*** (v 6,7)....He urges them not to pray just once, but without ceasing. Keep on praying till His will is done....Let us understand clearly that as regards the content of God’s will, it is entirely decided by God himself; we do not make, nor even participate in, the decision. Yet concerning the doing of His will it is governed by our prayer.”

“People may wonder why the Lord does not destroy Satan in a moment’s time. The Lord could, but he has not done so. And why? Because he wants man to cooperate with Him in dealing with Satan....He looks for the cooperation of man. And this is the responsibility of the church on earth.”

“When the Lord wishes to do a thing He first puts His own thought in us through the Holy Spirit....Gods will is uttered through our prayer. Here may we see that prayer is indeed a work. Prayers which are in accord with God’s will originate from God, are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, and return to God through prayers.”

GOD HAS ALREADY REVEALED HIS WILL TO US

God has revealed His will to us through the Scriptures, as in this case, the Second Chapter of the book of Joel. First there is a warning about what is to happen.

**“Blow the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;
For the day of the LORD is coming,
For it is at hand:
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness...”** Joel 2:1-2.

Next there is a picture of the destruction and desolation that demon spirits have left behind.

**“A fire devours before them,
And behind them a flame burns;
The land is like the Garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Surely nothing shall escape them.”** Joel 2:3.

Then there is a call to Repentance.

**“Now, therefore,” says the LORD ,
“Turn to Me with all your heart,**

**With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."
So rend your heart, and not your garments;
Return to the LORD your God..." Joel 2:12.**

This is followed by an earnest call for the Church to turn to God, asking Him to intervene on her behalf.

**"Consecrate a fast,
Call a sacred assembly;
Gather the people,
Sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and nursing babes;
Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber,
And the bride from her dressing room.
Let the priests, who minister to the LORD ,
Weep between the porch and the altar;
Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD ,
And do not give Your heritage to reproach..." Joel 15-17.**

In answering their prayer, God will pour out His Spirit and restore the Church.

**"Be glad then, you children of Zion,
And rejoice in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the former rain [Pentecost] faithfully,
And He will cause the rain to come down for you —
The former rain,
And the latter rain in the first *month*." Joel 2:23.**

In agriculture, the latter rain is that which comes towards the end of the crop cycle to full out the heads and precipitate a bountiful harvest.

**"And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days." Joel 2:28-29.**

The Church has been entrusted with the responsibility of overcoming Satan, and establishing the kingdom of Christ on earth, but of course this is impossible without our willingness to do all in union with God, seeking His guidance and empowering to accomplish all things. At this time the burden of our responsibility is to pray earnestly to God, asking Him to bring hearts to repentance, and that we might cry out to Him to intervene, to pour out His Spirit on the Church, to cast down the strongholds of Antichrist, and to restore the Church to its original glory preparing her for Christ's return.