

Are you at Gilgal? (From a Mess to a Message)

This article is part personal testimony, part study into the word of God about a journey from Egypt to Kadesh to Gilgal: It is a warning to the Church...a call to Revival. Topics included: Reproach, Sheep, Honey, Humble pie, Islam, Earthquakes, Swords and Tornadoes,

INTRODUCTION:

This strangely titled article is personal to me. It is born out of being there, done that, bought the t-shirt and seen the film.

I in no way planned to write anything. Overtime, a few thoughts in a letter to a friend have turned into this message.

THE WORD HAS CHANGED ME:

So, this has been thrust into your hands and you are asking what this is all about? Well it is part a personal message, part study that has a relevance to all Christians. God's word is powerful, I am sure what you will read, is God's word for today. We need to put ourselves under the authority of his word, ask God to open our hearts and hear him speak to us. *Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 (Message)*

"God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful word is as sharp as a surgeons scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defence laying us open to listen and obey."

"The word is a weapon that is mighty in destroying strongholds, enemy



encampments and every lie, arguments, theories, reasoning's, proud and lofty thing that set themselves against the true knowledge of God." (2 Corinthians 10v4 AMP)

We are challenged in the book of Timothy in the New Testament to have a "sound mind." A demon possessed man who met Jesus and the prodigal son of *Luke 15* "came to their senses." *2 Corinthians 10 verse 5* tells us to:

"Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ."

It's vital to realise that our thinking determines who we are, what we do and where we go. Our lives actually can be a likened to that of a journey. The Old Testament records some historical journeys that God has made sure are remembered. Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians *1 Cor 10v6* reflects on the journey of the Israelites to the promised land of what would be Israel (NIV):

"Now these things occurred as examples to keep us setting our hearts on evil things as they did."

The message translation expounds on this thinking of Paul: *"These (journeys and experiences) are all WARNING markers-DANGER! In our history books written down so that we don't repeat their mistakes. Our positions in the story parallel-they are at the beginning, we at the end-and*

we are just as capable of messing it up as they were. Don't be so naïve and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else."

In my life, I have had to come to my senses. I realised I was too self confident and too proud. I have fallen flat on my face and realised the way I have "done things, lived out my Christianity" needed radical action. To be what God desires for me, my thinking has had to change. I realised I

needed to go to a spiritual operating theatre and allow the surgeons knife to cut me open.



I had got myself into a mess but God has turned it around into a message. The journey of God's people in the Old Testament is a reflection of my journey. I have been at Kadesh (where is that you ask?). I have been at Gilgal. I have gone back to Egypt, been in the wilderness and now I believe God has taken me back across the Jordan and too Gilgal. If you

are not too familiar with those places, I hope by the end of this article, you will be able to say I have just been there, or I am going to that place.

AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY: "GILGAL"

Lets set the scene: We fast forward to the place we want to be and the place, which inspired me to write. The Israelites have crossed the mighty river *Jordan*. They had been wandering around the desert wilderness for forty years. They have finally come to a land promised to them by God. A land of their own where they could find rest! The whole nation after drying themselves off, make a monument to God, The men soon got circumcised and God speaks to the leader Joshua: The amplified bible says: *"And the Lord said to Joshua, this day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. So the name of this place is called Gilgal (rolling) to this day"*

I was sitting in a church service, and the above verse was spoken out. It really struck me. I read this verse and was quite puzzled. I had heard these words before, but not being a bible scholar or a trivial pursuit theology student, I wondered where is Gilgal and what does that word Reproach mean?

So because of this the below article was born. I sincerely believe God had a message for me. However, as I wrote and read, studied, listened to sermons, watched world events and sought God "This is not just about my life, my journey God wants to speak, encourage and warn to others."

REPROACH:

To understand about *Gilgal* and reproach, I delved into various

translations of the bible. I read the amplified version (AMP), New international versions (NIV) and King James version (KJV). All used that word reproach.

The new century version began (NCV) to shed some light on this curious verse. *"As slaves in Egypt you were ashamed, but today I have removed that shame." Therefore, Joshua named that place Gilgal, which it is still named today.* " The good news bible puts it this way: *"Today I have removed from you the disgrace of being slaves in Egypt"*

One-dictionary states that reproach means rebuke, things bringing disgrace. Through this word, In my life, God showed me he has removed that shame, rolled away those things that brought me disgrace in my life.

PART 1: START of JOURNEY "SO WHAT ABOUT EGYPT?"

The shame and reproach of Egypt. Joseph of Technicolor coat fame and his family lived in Egypt. The family had many children and

"Became so numerous and strong that Egypt was filled with them " (Exodus 1v7:GNB)

Pharoh felt threatened. Therefore, the solution to this population explosion that led to the Jews disgrace and shame:

Ex 1v11(AMP) "So they set over them task masters to afflict and oppress them with (increased) burdens."

The Good news bible says it this way: *"So the Egyptians put slave drivers over them to crush their spirits with hard labour"*

Even in the place of bondage and slavery, the Israelites still prospered. This led to the enemies in Egypt fear them.

The Egyptians worked the Israelites ruthlessly, they made their lives bitter with hard labour " (Ex 1v13: NIV) Other versions say it this way (GNB): *"and made their lives miserable by forcing them into cruel slavery...they had no mercy on them" The KJV says "they made their lives bitter with hard bondage"*

This stage in the journey can represent one type of person. Those who have never met Jesus and asked him into their lives. If we are not born again we are slaves to the Devil.



Also as A Christian I have been in that place of slavery, that place where I was trapped and in bondage. We can become slaves to sex, lust, money, drugs, shopping, fear, hate, bitterness, work, food, racism, etc. We leave ourselves open to be ruled by a cruel master. This place is where I was laughed at and ridiculed, put down and taunted by the devil and others. The slave masters condemn us, belittle us and say, "Your God has given up on you." "Give up, you will always do the same, you will never change" In my life, I was trapped but God set me free. I came to my senses, turned to God I realised he has rolled away that reproach!

CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME OUT OF EGYPT?

If you were asked, "What part of the city you live in has a bad reputation or which part of the country is looked down upon by the rest? Alternatively, which family are the black sheep of the

area, we might know, we might say. In Jesus Day, Nazareth was one of these black spots. A place even rejected Jesus. A place that was furious with him for his preaching. The gospel of John describes a conversation between two disciples, Nathaniel and Philip: Philip found Nathaniel and told him:

"We have found the man that Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about him. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth. But Nathaniel said to Philip "Can anything good come from Nazareth?""

Philip answered *"Come and see"* We can also ask, can anything good come out of Egypt? God would replies with "Come and see the multitudes that will leave the bondage, slavery, bitterness and hate of Egypt and come flocking to Christ.

"Years later the king of Egypt died, but the Israelites were still groaned under their slavery and cried for help. Their cry went up to God, who heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He saw the slavery of the Israelites and was concerned for them."

Thankfully Jesus hears our cries come and see. In my Bondage and shame, he heard my cry. He also wants us to see the desperate need of those in Egypt and respond. He calls us like Moses to help let "my people go"

Exodus 3v7 says, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land into a land flowing with milk and honey."

We all know the story of the prince of Egypt. Moses leads the people out of the country, through the red sea to the desert. The next stage of the journey I will mention later.

LITTLE DIVERSION: REPROACH PART II

I love the bible. It is a book for the real world.. With real people in it. I researched this word reproach and I discovered it is mentioned many times...

The psalmist in *psalm 22*: *"But I am a worm and a man, scorned by men and a reproach to people... all who see me mock me, hurl in insults, shaking their heads: "let the lord rescue him, let him deliver him since he delights in him."*

One passage that God has used to confirm the things written in this article is *Psalms 44*. The psalmist confesses:

"You have made us a reproach to our neighbours, the scorn and derision around us. You have made us a byword among the nations: the peoples shake their heads at us. My disgrace is before me all day long: my face is covered with shame at the taunts of those who reproach and revile me, because of my enemy who is bent on revenge.....yet for your sake we face death all day long, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered "

ANOTHER DIVERSION: CLOSE SHAVE, WHATS THE PURPOSE OF SHEEP?

The Israelites leave Egypt to go into the wilderness. *Psalms 77* says:

"You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron"

When you think of sheep, a cute, cuddly and fluffy creature that

wanders around hills eating grass might appear in your mind. Unfortunately in the bible times, the picture was somewhat different.

The most famous of psalms (23) begins with:

"The Lord is my shepherd. I have everything I need. He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water." (GNB)

Praise God that our God is a shepherd! *Isaiah 40v11 (NCV)* Says:

"He takes care of his people like a shepherd. He gathers them like lambs in his arms and carries them close to him."



Our purpose in life was to be close to our creator. We are his treasured possession that he wants to take

care of.

We as Gods people are likened to the sheep. The Jamesion Fausett and Brown Bible commentary succinctly describes why we are very familiar to sheep:

"This simple creature (the sheep) has this special note among all animals, that it quickly hears the voice of the shepherd, follows no one else, depends entirely on him, seeks help from him alone--cannot help himself, but is shut up to another's aid"

Jesus is the good shepherd. He is in control. He calls and his sheep know his voice. His sheep need him completely

Because we are his children, we will face persecution. It is unjust suffering: As sheep, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Jesus sent the 12 disciples on a missionary trip and said " *I am sending you out like lambs among wolves"* The dark clouds of persecution are on the horizon. There are numbered days of us as Christians enjoying

the freedoms and comforts we have. Matthew 24v9 (NIV):

"And they will hand you over to suffer affliction and tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my names sake"

Are you prepared for the slaughter? You say, it can't happen here in this civilised state. More and more the Christian Church will, be hated and a reproach to the authorities, powers that run these nations. He allows and provides the blessings of going to the slaughter to bring forth this fruit of steadfastness/ patience: The writer of James regards going to slaughter or trials as this, ***James 1v2 (message)*** ***"Consider it a sheer gift friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure your faith life is forced into the open and shows its true colour. So, don't try and get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well developed, not deficient in any way. "***

We can thank God, Jesus has walked where we walk. He faced death. Praise God the Lamb of God was sacrificed on our behalf, to take away our sins and to enable us to have relationship with father God. Indeed the reproach, the shame, and the guilt hurt, the sorrows that held us was taken to the cross.

The picture of going to the slaughter as sheep is applicable when God wants to deal with areas in our lives. We face just suffering due to flesh that hasn't been executed. Job cries to God that "though God may slay him, he will trust in God" One minister says we have the old man in us, the flesh that needs to be executed. The flesh should be dead man walking!! God in his wisdom reluctantly permits, uses and turns what is evil for

opportunities to appropriate what Christ had done for us on the cross to put to death our old man with the ultimate end of God getting the Glory.

Jesus called himself the good Shepherd. The Shepherd protects his sheep and lays down his life ***In John 10 verse he says: "I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd mput the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary"*** Jesus protects us if we through faith abide with him. Through his death on the cross, he disarmed the powers, made a public spectacle of them; he redeemed us from the curse of sin and by his blood spilt enabled us to be washed clean. . However:

Isaiah 53v6 (GNB): "All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way "

In my own life, I had wandered away from the flock. In fact, I wandered away from the shepherd. I still went to church, but stopped listening to his voice. This eventually led to the thief to come, steal kill, and destroy.

We often face dark stages in our lives, we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but thankfully though art with us, and your Shepherds rod and staff comfort us!! We feel shame that we fail, that we let God down; we hurt others and can be so disobedient yet God has the ability to turn our darkness into light.

The shepherd looks for his lost sheep. In ***Luke 15***, Jesus describes vividly his shepherd heart with the three "Lost stories." The lost coin, sheep and son. What a heart God has to seek us out when we are lost. He leaves the sheep grazing in the pasture and searches for that lost sheep. How by his grace and tender love he drew us, into his flock from the slavery and prison

of Egypt. We heard his voice and we came home. He waited and waited until we came to our senses, realised our spiritual poverty and came to the father.

How in these last days Jesus is calling us home. Where we are in the wilderness, we have wandered, where we think we know best. He waits looking for us to come to our senses in all areas of lives, so then he can clothe us with a robe of righteousness, place a ring on our finger and help us live as joint heirs with Christ

In ***Hosea 6v4 (Amp)*** we see Gods heart towards the disobedient lost sheep of Israel:

"What shall I do with you? O JUDAH, what shall I do with you? For your (wavering) love and kindness are like the night mist or like the dew that goes early away. Therefore, I have hewn down and smitten them my means of the prophets: I have slain them by the words of my mouth. My judgments are like the light that goes forth. For I desire and delight in dutiful steadfast love and goodness, not sacrifice and the knowledge of and acquaintance with God more than burnt offerings "

Gods plan for us is to be have King David's attitude after he committed adultery with Bathsheba was to get rid of the reproach of Egypt by ***Psalm 51(AMP)***:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right, persevering and steadfast spirit within me. "

Not many of us may of committed physical adultery but what of spiritual adultery that has caused us to have Love for God that is fleeting as the early morning dew?

God is looking for Character in us. Character that is patient, steadfast, enduring, faithful and loyal. He wants no compromise or loyalty to anything in this world, which replaces God.

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God...submit yourselves to God, Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up" (James 4v7-8 NIV)

Hosea 5 contains some harsh words about the Israelites adultery and I believe is applicable to some in the church.

v4: "A spirit of prostitution is in their heart: they do not acknowledge the Lord. Israel's arrogance testifies against them..."

v6: "When they go with their flocks and herds to seek God they will not find him; he has withdrawn himself from them"

We have to wake up, we have to smell the coffee and say hold on has God withdrawn himself from us? Why is Christianity that built this nation now a reproach to society? Why is it that we are making minimal impact on society? Why is it that we aren't living in Revival?

The last verse of the psalm *44* describes us as sheep to be slaughtered. *Psalm 44v11 (AMP)* says

"You (God) have made us like sheep intended for mutton and have scattered us in exile among the nations"

Hosea 5v2: "The rebels are deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them

I went to Church and at various points, I thought I was okay. I struggled but at times felt God speaking to me. However, in my heart there were areas that were not submitted. They were in exile.

The following verse is exactly what happened to me:

Hosea 5v15 (NIV): "And they will (Israelites) seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me"

Charles Spurgeon in his one of his writings says the about the above verse:

"Losses and adversities are frequently the means which the great shepherd uses to fetch home his wandering sheep; like fierce dogs they worry the wanderers back to the fold"

There is hope:

v11 (AMP): "For I will cause the captivity of the land to be reversed and return to be as it was at first says the Lord. Thus says the Lord of Hosts: In this place which is desolate, without man and beast, and in all its cities there shall again be dwellings and pastures of shepherds resting their flocks." v13 (NCV): "Shepherds will again count their sheep as the sheep walk in front of them"

For Revival in the land. Let us seek God with our whole heart for the lost sheep to come back to the fold. Let our hearts echo:

Psalm 80v1-3 (NIV): "Hear us O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.

Restore us O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved!

v18: Then we will not turn away from you, revive us and we will call on your name"

Let the following be true: Peter writes in his letter found in the New Testament

"For you were going astray like so (many) sheep, but now you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian (the bishop) of your souls (1Pe 2v5)

AVOIDING REPROACH: GODS MESSAGE TO THE SHEPHERDS

Continuing with the sheep theme, *Ezekiel 34* pronounces Gods displeasure at the leaders, shepherds of Israel. Before you say, this is not applicable to me, I am not a leader. Well we might be a father, a Sunday school leader, a house group leader, a teacher or a spiritual father or mother to someone who is less mature than us in our churches.

Ezekiel 34v2 (NIV): "Woe to the Shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not Shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourself with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, or bound the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost."

The Shepherd God then comes with a solution to the lost sheep of Israel. He declares himself that he will be a shepherd that

"I myself will search for my sheep and look after them...I will rescue them from all the

places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness...v14 "...I will tend them in good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land and there they will feed in rich pasture..."

Christ the good shepherd, through our lives wants to use us to help find, draw back, tend, and lead help the lame and weak. He wants us all to come to new abundant pastures, new pastures that will truly satisfy.



"Shepherd anointing his sheep"

Psalm 23 is a good model to describe the role of a Shepherd. As Shepherds of the flock, God has given us; our families, congregations and small groups are we being good shepherds? Are we with God's anointing leading the sheep to living water or water that is polluted or wells that have dried up? Are the pastures we take them to lush and green or dry and scorched? Is the word we teach, from the Spirit that gives life, or from the flesh and the carnal mind? Are we seriously operating in might and power not by God's Spirit? Search yourselves and ask if the word is life. It brings abundant life, the truth sets prisoners free, and the word is a double-edged sword. Let the scripture we teach be God breathed and therefore useful for teaching, rebuking correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Are God's people thoroughly

equipped for every good work we have to do in this nation?

Are we seeking the lost, leaving the 99 and doing all you can to find them and helping them bind up their wounds?

Are we walking with them through the valley of shadow of death? Are we protecting them and using appropriate discipline (rod and staff). Are we laying hands on them and anointing them with the oil of joy? Are we helping them sit at the table in the presence of many enemies and enjoy Gods abundant bread of life, milk, honey and new wine?

**YET ANOTHER DIVERSION:
HELPING THE FOOLISH,
DESPISED SHEEP**

Other challenging verses in this book say: *Ezek 34v 16(GNB):*

"I will look for those that are lost, bring back those who are wandered off, bandage those who hurt and heal those that are sick: but those who are fat and strong I will destroy..."

Ezek 34v18 (GNB): "Some of you are not satisfied with eating the best grass; you even trample down what you don't eat v20 (GNB): "...I will judge between you weak and strong sheep. You pushed the sick ones aside and butted them away from the flock. "

'From the early days of my Christianity, God has drawn me towards those who have wandered off, hurt and are sick, also those with special needs and had it tough. To be honest I haven't looked for this. One man who has really inspired me is the songwriter Keith Green (There is a redeemer fame). With his wife, they opened their house. Homeless people, single mothers etc. Several years ago, in a time of fasting and prayer I was saying to God how I wanted to do

the same. God then spoke to me. There is a man at Church who is looking for a place to stay. I said no way! He is so different to me. He has difficulties that I cant cope with. I struggled to justify it in my heart. Then God brought me to *Isaiah 58*, the passage about true fasting. v6:

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: To loose the chains of injustice...v7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter?"

I let God, reluctantly have his way. I had grown up in the wrong part of middle class self-centred utopia. Never encouraged to help others. However, God had to slay this attitude. I tell you something. Allowing that man to come was one of the best things I could of ever done. It opened the gates of blessing. (*Jer 33: Call to me and I will show you great and mighty things*) Later on in his time in my house, he brought a backslidden Christian who struggled with drink and other issues. This guy gave his life back and wow! Every night in our house there were Spirit filled prayer meetings, bible studies, witnessing. This man started a bible study in my Kitchen, with those weak and hurt sheep. It was tremendous. God's heart is that we minister to what the world calls the least. In fact, we begin to see ourselves as the least and humble ourselves. We do away with our pride, complacency and lack of love.

I wanna say that it's hard!! Everything in me does not want to do it! To love the unlovable. Yet, when we begin to see our own hearts and our adultery, prostitution, uncleanness, and rebellion, we soon realise how wide and deep Gods love is for him to love us the unlovable. Many times, I have literally not allowed people through the doorstep of my house and heart.

Yet read and read the following words from this song by a Christian Artist called Scott Krippayne:

"To many times I am lead by emotion and feelings that move like the wind, when my path meets with those others see as unlovely and I'm pushed beyond comfort again as my selfish heart is exposed once more.

Your spirit whispers inside saying to live a life of faith is daily to decide:

I will love, for to follow Christ,
Is to lay aside my right to choose
whom I will love:
For the least of these:
The outcasts and enemies

Let me do what you do
For in loving them
I will love you

What is gained if I am kind to
others who love me?
My sacrifice will be repaid.

It seems to me I can't escape the
truth you are revealing:
That to love means to give my life
away.

There are Holy moments that wait
for me, so many times each day; in
every chance encounter with the
ones, you send my way.

This whole article is about getting right with God, meeting with him like we have never done before. If we don't desire to do what the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to do then we will seriously miss out on knowing God and doing what pleases him. We are all called to love:

"Keep on loving one another as Christian Brothers. Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did that and welcomed angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering, as though you were suffering as they are" (Heb 13v1-3: GNB)

As I was writing this section and the pieces were coming together, I thought, that's enough of this theme, lets move on. However, no, I was led to other passages that in my understanding are very challenging:

Sodom is famous for certain things. Surprisingly in Ezekiel, is remembered for:

"This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, overabundance of food, prosperous ease and idleness were hers and her daughters: neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Ezekiel 16v49 (AMP)

I have heard it said many cities are like Sodom. Could it be said that those things mentioned in Ezekiel 16v49 have entered our Churches? We all know what happened to Sodom.

The amplified bible really stretches out a few verses found in *1 Peter 4v8-9* that if we have been in Christian circles we would be familiar with:

"Above all have an intense and unending love for each other, for love covers over a multitude of sins (forgives and disregards the offences of others). Practice Hospitality to one another (those of the household of faith). (Be hospitable, be a lover of strangers, with brotherly affection for the unknown guests, the foreigners, the poor and all others who come your way who are of Christ's Body"

I now quote some verses from one of the Keith green challenging songs:

Do you see? Do you see? All the
people sinking down, don't you
care? Don't you care?

Are you going to let them drown?
How can you be so numb? Not to
care if they come.

You close your eyes and pretend
the job is done

"Bless me Lord! Bless me Lord!" You
know, Its all I ever hear, no one
aches, no one hurts, no one even
sheds one tear,"

But he cries, he weeps, he bleeds
and he cares for your needs.

You just lay back and keep soaking
it in.

Can't you see it's a sin?

He brings people to your door, and
you turn them away as you smile
and say "God bless you and peace"

And all Heaven just weeps

Because Jesus came to your door
and you left him out on the street.

**Open up open up and give
yourself away, you see the
need you hear the cries, so
how can you delay?**

Every Christian is called to offer hospitality (some might be better at us at doing it!) and open their door. If half of every congregation were at least to open their house on a Sunday afternoon and allow the single, single parents, poor, widows, visitors, we would see amazing things. We have to get over a cultural mentality that our houses are fortresses. Our Houses and lives are not our own. We have them because they are gifts from God, to do the will of God. Jesus said go into the world. He didn't say wait for everyone to come into Church. Using our houses or accommodation where we show hospitality, support, love, shelter, share a meal is God's kinda love. Traditions, patterns of thinking have to come crashing down. We cry God bless us, we want to know you Jesus and he says I came to your Church, I came to your doorstep, I spoke to you at the bus stop, but you didn't want to know. Our lives are not our own! My heart burns. My spirit weeps that we cant see that in doing this we minister to Jesus. It's an act of Worship. Only if we cry to God,

break my hard heart, soften me, and fill me with love. Its one prayer he is only too pleased to answer.

Back to the sheep. *Ezekiel 34v20(AMP): "I will judge between fat sheep and impoverished sheep or fat goats and lean goats"*

God's heartbeat. God's desire. God's challenge to us is also in *Matthew 25v32-46. v32 "All nations will be gathered before him and he will separate them (the people) from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats"*

Jesus said the basis of the separation was how they treated the weak sheep;

The sheep: *v35: "For when I was hungry you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you brought me together with yourselves and welcomed and entertained and lodged me...I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came and visited me"*

v40: "In so far you did it for one of the least (in the estimation of men) of these my brethren, you did it for me"

The goats failed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison. Jesus says: *v45 (AMP): "Solemnly I declare to you, in so far as you failed to do it for the least of these you failed to do it for me"*

**PART 2 OF THE JOURNEY:
"IN THE WILDERNESS"**



"Desert of Moab"

God called Moses to help let his people go. The Israelites are out of Egypt. God uses Moses to help deliver them. They go into the desert with the idea of going into the Promised Land (Gilgal) where the book of exodus, numbers and Deuteronomy describes many events and places. There are too many to go into now. However, I will focus on particular themes:

Straight away, as the Israelites escape the slavery of Egypt, they start to fear because the Egyptians are chasing them. They start to regret they ever left Egypt.

"Did we not tell you in Egypt, let us alone, let us serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Ex 14v12 AMP)

When God calls us to leave the slavery, we hear the Shepherds voice. A war begins. A war of our flesh. I know when I was backslidden, I heard Gods voice so many times calling me. Yet, the flesh and the demons cried and came up with excuses. The prospect of being in the wilderness was not something to look forward to. I preferred to remain in bondage, slavery yet that provided a distorted type of security that satisfied for the moment but over the long run was empty and futile.

Praise God. Moss's reply to the Israelites was:

"Fear not; stand still (firm, confident, undismayed) and see the salvation of the Lord which he will work for you today. For the Egyptian you have seen today you shall never see again... the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold peace and remain at rest"

Through Moses, the Egyptians were drowned in the red sea. The cause of slavery cast into the sea. Sin dead and buried. *Exodus14v31 says: "And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians and the people reverently feared the Lord and trusted in the Lord and to his servant Moses"*

This faithfulness didn't last long! Harsh conditions, primarily lack of water and food cause them to murmur and complain

"If only we had died by the Lords hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat And ate all the meat we wanted, but you brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Ex 16v3: NIV)

God provided manna from heaven, gushing water from rocks and quail. The Israelites went up to a place called Kadesh. They were on the verge of leaving the wilderness and going into the Promised Land. Yet as I go into detail later on in this article, they feared rebelled and wandered around the wilderness for forty years: If we see why the Israelites had this happen to them. Why is it that the church is in the wilderness?

**THE HEART OF THE MATTER:
BROKENESS, HUMILITY,
DISCIPLINE**

Deuteronomy 8v2 is a key verse to explain why the desert experience was so valuable: *"The*

Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness to humble you, prove you, to know what was in your mind and heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not he humbled you...and allowed you to hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know or did your fathers know, that he might make you recognise and personally know that man does not live on bread alone but man lives by every word that precedes out of the mouth of the Lord"

v5 "Know also in your minds and hearts that as a man disciplines and instructs his son, so the Lord your God disciplines and instructs you

Psalm 95v7-11:

"For he is our God and we are the people of pasture and the sheep of your hand. Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as at Meribah and as at Massah in the day of temptations in the wilderness, when your fathers tried my patience and tested me...40 years long was I grieved and disgusted with that generation, and I said It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they do not approve, acknowledge or regard my ways. Wherefore I swore in my wrath they would not enter my rest (The land of promise)

God also reminds the Israelites that he took them through the "great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground" that he might test and humble them to do them good in the end. (Deut 8v15-16)



"Great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground" (Deut 8v15-16)

God also reminds them to "forget not how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day you left Egypt until you came to this place, you have been a rebellious against the Lord"

Sexual immorality, compromise, gluttony, unforgiveness, Bless me bless me mentality, idols, materialism, lack of love towards the unlovable and the lost, pride, desiring the comforts of this world more than God, hate: All have led to us being in the desert, to be humbled and disciplined by God. I believe in our churches and congregations there are the Moses, Miriams, Calebs and Joshuas. Praise God for that. However, as a body we are in the desert!

The book of Hosea is all about a rebellious Israel and its spiritual adultery. Its set many years later than the exodus out of Egypt. God says what he will do to resolve this situation:

Hosea 1 (NIV): v3 "I will make her (Israel) like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst..."

v5 She has said, "I will go after my lovers, who give me food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink..."

v14 "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her"

Psalm 81v11(AMP) says "But my people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would have none of me... so I gave them up to their own lusts and let them go after their own

stubborn will, that they might follow their own counsel"

Psalm 106v13(AMP): "They hastily forgot his works, they did not wait for his plans to develop regarding them, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted and tried to restrain God (with their insistent desires) in the desert. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls and thinned their numbers by disease and death"

**THE HEART OF THE MATTER:
Personal testimony**

There was a big crisis in my family. There were various factors to this. Serious attack from the enemy and other issues. However, one reason that this was because I had lusted exceedingly, restrained God, and this had led to leanness in my soul. Paul in one of his New Testament letters tells us to give no provision to the flesh. I had done that and was about to pay a price. God spoke to me and told me I was in the desert to show me what my heart is like. He also showed me the passage from Jeremiah 17v5, 9 (NIV): "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and who's heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in a waste lands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives

v9 "the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond all cure. Who can understand it?

v10 "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct"



Lamentations 3v13: "He has caused the arrows of his Quiver to enter into my heart (the seat of my affections of emotions)

After the initial crisis had subsided, God really showed himself to me as I called out to him. He gave me manna from heaven and water from the rock.



"Moses next to the rock gushing with water"

He took me to an oasis like the Israelites went to the oasis of Elim just after they had left Egypt. However, the Israelites then went to the wilderness of sin. That's where exactly I went. I thought my heart was all right. (PRIDE). The family crisis only got worse and I collapsed into a heap and went on a downward spiral of backsliding and rebellion. God was showing me where my heart was. The heart is deceitful! When I lost the dearest thing in my life, I rebelled. I look back at my journals and see how much hope and security I had put into certain people. They deep down were what I was looking for. However, God will not give his glory to anyone else!

I did know at times God was carrying me and I would cry out yet my heart was still stubborn. **"And in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God bore you as a man carries his son" Deut1v31 (AMP).**

It did get to a point where I would wake up with such a fear of hell. I began to fear for my

life. If I went in a car, I feared about what would happen if I would, I die. I kept hearing the song "Road to Hell" by Chris Rhea at significant times of sinning. Yet my heart was prepared to forsake an eternity in heaven and go back to the fleshpots of Egypt to find satisfaction, yet be under a cruel master. I even asked the devil to give me my own way. I wrote this during this time:

**I was on the road to hell
i once was up but i fell
i saught love to make me well
I would of never imagined i'd
have this story to tell**

How deceitful our hearts can be. Lord **"Search me (thoroughly), O God and know my heart! Try me and know my heart!" (Psalm 139v23 AMP)**

Over the year or so of rebellion, I came back to God, several times. I saw him use me, bless me, speak to me, yet I kept going back to the sin. Often a complete heart operation takes serious amount of time! I also wrote the following:

**Do I want the things of God ?
What is it to do your will
You answer back and say be
still
Be still and know that I am God**

**Yet Lord I want to throw it
away
No matter what you say !!
What does it take to hold my
hands up
How long do I have to drink
this bitter cup ?**

**I want to have my way
I do not want to be where you
lay
You took up the cross and
curse
Lord let these words be more
than verse**

I felt at times so helpless and out of control. I wanted to be locked into a padded cell and the key to be thrown away. I wanted

people to look after me, sit me down and challenge me. I wanted my handholding. I wanted hospitality to be shown to me!! A lot of the time it was God bless you! Inside I was crying out. I desired to be free and move into the things of God yet, I couldn't do it.

God would often warn me of the consequences of my sin... how it was affecting my children, how it was destroying others. Men particularly have such a responsibility as heads of the family. We provide a covering over our family if we are loving, serving and seeking God. If we don't follow God, we open our up our homes to attack.

I began to disbelieve the promises God had shown me, and believe the blessings that had come into my life were a lie. A pupil at my school I teach at said something significant to me. They basically said if "God gave you certain promises and blessings about your own life and family at the start why aren't they relevant now ?" He who began a good work will complete it!

I cried and cried to God and he told me to step out of the boat, tread on water, he told me to leave the land I was used to and go to a new land. I began to fellowship with members from a Nigerian Church whose love, prayers, ministry have helped me get over a final hurdle and have some steadfastness in my life and start to see those promises become fulfilled.

**EATING HUMBLE PIE
(Its good for the digestive system)**

Gordon Cove in his book on Revival Now: Prayer and fasting says:

"In every spiritual Advance there must be a stripping off of pride and an opening of the nature by some doors to a new power. No

man can be a better man save as his pride is crushed into repentance"

1 Peter 5v5: "God opposes the proud but give grace to the humble...humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God...submit yourselves to God, Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up" (James 4v7-8 NIV)

What is it to be humble?

Dependency on God and not your own resources. A reliance on the Spirit of God not the flesh. Considering others better than you. Being a servant. Being prepared to do the least tasks and jobs. Not bigging yourself up. Allowing God to have your life, dreams, ambitions. Surrender and yielding to God. In fact simple obedience is Humility.

The prime example of Humility is God: *"Who is like the Lord our God, who has his seat on high? He who humbles himself to regard the heavens and earth" (Psalm 113v6 AMP.)* The message translates *Philippians 2v5-8: "God made himself nothing, he gave up his place with God, gave up all he had. He set aside the privileges of deity, stripped himself of all priviledges and rightful dignity to assume the guise of a servant."*

I was watching a Documentary on TV. It was looking back at the Second World War: In one country, airplanes would drop food parcels down to the needy

residents: it was called operation "manna from heaven." This struck me... the people were dependent on these rations. They had to rely upon someone else. Yet, what were supplied were rations. Manna to the Israelites from Heaven was a blessing from God, yet it is God's rations!!! God uses rations for us to depend on him, submit to him and seek him. He then wants to draw us to a place where we can have a land flowing with milk and honey where we can throw away our ration books.

Jesus spent 40 days praying and fasting in the desert with *"Its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground"*

He was tested by the scorpions (the devil), he had to humble himself and depend upon his father. Yet he was faithful in the desert, in the day of small things, he was a good steward with little, in the dry and arid land. He then was catapulted into a powerful ministry; he went into his promised land.

Now this is the exciting bit: God is prepared to visit the humble: *"He picks up the poor from out of the dirt, rescues the wretched who have been thrown out with the trash" (psalm 113v7)*

.... That he may seat them with princes, even with the princes of his people" (Psalm 113v8 AMP)

Psalm 138v6 (AMP) "Though the Lord is high, yet he has respect to the lowly (bringing them into fellowship with him); but the proud and haughty he knows and recognises only at a distance"

Isaiah 57v14 (AMP): "For thus says the High and lofty one-He who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, but with him who is thoroughly penitent and humbly spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble..."

Psalm 69v32 "The humble shall see it (salvation) and be glad; you who seek God inquiring for and requiring Him as your first need, let your hearts revive and live! For the Lord hears the poor and needy and not despises not his prisoners (His miserable and wounded ones)"

Psalm 149v4 "For the Lord takes pleasure in his people: he will beautify the humble with salvation and adorn the wretched with victory

Psalm 68v10 "You O God, in your goodness did provide for the poor and needy"

Psalm 147v6 "He lifts up the humble and downtrodden"

Psalm 147v3 "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds"

3-0 NIL DOWN AT HALF TIME

Firstly thanks to Pastor Leslie Emmet from Mill pool for this section. Inspired by a sermon I heard. Liverpool football club were in the champion's league final against a far superior top Italian team. However at half time: They were 3-0 down. A virtually impossible situation. However, Liverpool came back under the inspirational leadership of their captain to draw 3-3 all at full time and then win on penalties. We may be down but victory will come. Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.....We may not any particular difficulties now. Yet, we should be in a place of brokenness and weeping. Our Church, Christianity is not where it should be. We have to face it; we are as a body, either 3 nil, 3-1 or one 3-2 down or 3-3 all. Many in the nation do not know Jesus. Yes, God gives us moments to celebrate his victory. We experience the living water come

out of the rock of ages, our Jesus Christ. Yet, we are not at our destination. The Lord disciplines us, tenderly speaks to us while we are in the desert. Jeremiah in the book of lamentations exclaims:

Lam 3v48: "my eyes overflow with streams of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people"

Lam 2v11: "My eyes fail from weeping, I am torment from within, my heart is poured out on the ground, because the people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city"

Lam 3v19: "Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches in the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord, lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children who faint from hunger at the head of every of street"

I was struck by a headline on the front page of the independent Newspaper. "The people of Niger look well fed as you can see" Above this caption is a starving child near death. Underneath the headline, the newspapers remarks: "Mamadou Tandja, President of Niger denies claims of famine in His Country"

The UN claims 32,000 children are in danger of dying! Firstly, our hearts should be moved to pray by this natural disaster. On another level, just like the passages from Lamentations, our hearts should be broken for the many thousands of children/youth in this country who are starving spiritually. Let us not be blind like the president to the desperate need. He of all men is able to help solve the problem. Lord soften our hard hearts so we seek you and seek you until we see the lost fed in

the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

Joel 2v12 (NCV): "Even now, come back to me with all your heart. Go without food, cry and be sad."

Psalm 69v10 (AMP): "When I wept and humbled myself with fasting."

In these serious times, we need to put God first. Fasting is a way to show God we are determined at all costs to seek him. Are we prepared to put God first and say we want him more than food?

Do we weep when God weeps? In *Gen 6v5-6 (NIV) "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of the thought of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man of the earth and his heart was filled with pain"*

God was sad with the Israelites in the wilderness:

"...40 years long was I grieved and disgusted with that generation" Psalm 95v10 (AMP)

Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus had died. We have to listen to his voice, the chief shepherd as he calls to us in the darkness of the tomb in this nation deep in sin and come out. We may be weeping as Jesus wept. Praise God joy comes in the morning and there is a resurrection and victory.



Jesus wept over Jerusalem "And as he approached (Jerusalem) he saw the city and wept over it." (Luke 19v41 AMP) He pronounced Judgement and declared that many would be devastated they did not

recognise the day of visitation by the saviour of the world!

Back to our friends the Israelites in the desert. To continue the theme of weeping:

Numbers 25v1 (AMP): "Israel settled down and began to remain in Shittim...(NIV)...the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with the Moabite women"...who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before their gods. So Israel joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor, and the lords anger burned against them."

The leaders of this rebellion were killed to avert Gods anger: It then says in verse 6 the whole of Israel wept before the tent of meeting. Their prayer would have been like that of the below Psalm:

Psalm 74v1 (AMP): "O God why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger burn and smoke against the sheep of your pasture?"

God longs to draw near to us, bless us mightily, and enable us to be in a place of revival. A place where his Glory dwells and the river flows and flows. Yet God decides not to dwell in his Church, dwell in his living temples the way it should be. He has cast us off to a degree. Why? God says, "I am the Lord; that is my name! And my Glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42v8 AMP)

Also as men, who are heads of households, let us consider our ways: Like Israel, Have we allowed sexual immorality and the worship of idols into our own homes? Have we been at ease, settled down? Have our hearts dulled? Has our prayer life for our families dwindled? How dependent and passionate for God and his face are we? Its pride and I have been there where we look on the outward

appearance and circumstances and think it's all right. Modern day idols can be only subtle, yet devastating to the family. We can't begin to settle down and become relaxed like the Israelites did. Men especially we have to be on guard to prevent the cross contamination with the world and the worship of other idols: TV, pleasure. Entertainment, sensuality, materialism. We have to be vigilant and guard our hearts and our families because the heart is the wellspring of life! Purity is essential. God weeps and his anger does burn. Lord have mercy on us! He disciplines us because he loves us. Recently I listened to a song based on Psalm 60 sung by a gospel minister Donn Thomas: Its called lament for the nation:

**"With you we will gain the
victory
And you will trample down our
enemies
You have shaken the land
You have torn it apart
Mend its fractures
For it is quaking
You have shown us desperate
times
You have staggered us by your
wine
Save us, help us
Those who you love
Please Deliver"**

BROKEN POTTERY:

The bible is full of brokenness.
Psalm 29v5 (KJV): The voice of the lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon

Psalm 31v12 (NCV) says, "I am like a piece of broken pot"

"Insults and reproach have broken my heart." (AMP) (Psalm 69v20)

God speaking to Ezekiel after he says we will bring his sword of

discipline onto the nation of Israel:

"Therefore groan, son of man! Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief" (Ezek 21v6 NIV)

Hosea 5v11 (NCV): "Israel is crushed by the punishment because it decided to follow idols." KJV says, "Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgement"

Ezekiel 6v6 (AMP): Then those of you escape shall remember Me among the nations to which they shall be carried captive, how that I have been broken by their lewdness and have Myself broken their wanton heart which has departed from me and blinded their eyes...

We all have a desire to be used of God, to be his witnesses and help bring life to our families and communities. We aim to be a very much like the boy who came to a large Christian arena event, with his packed lunch and ended up being the catering services for the entire event. The boy with his loaves and fishes in the story of the feeding of the five thousand. The thing is, Jesus gave thanks for the food then broke the bread. The breaking of the bread resulted in a multitude being fed and satisfied. God used the little the child had offered and did a supernatural miracle. "God, please by your grace and mercy, brake me so I can be humble, surrendered and poor in spirit to feed a multitude!"

The prodigal son was broken, (Luke 15) the women who poured perfume over Jesus was broken. Peter. Was broken when he denied Jesus. Lets us not be like the bystanders in these stories who become cynical, comfortable, unappreciative of God's Love and closeness to those who are broken-hearted.

The commentator for the Liverpool game remarked after the dramatic comeback and victory "Liverpool have done mission impossible." King Jehosophat and the Israelites were faced with a great Army of edomites. Jehosophat prayed with much humility "You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand"...O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face, this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2 Kings 20 v6, v12 NIV)

God replied: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Kings 20v15)

To finish off this section, I found the following extract in one of my journals from the time of the family crisis. I quote the words from one of the Christian writers Oswald Chambers devotional writings:

"Why shouldn't we go through heart breaks? Through these doorways, God is opening up ways of fellowship with his son. Most of us fall and collapse at the first grip of pain. We sit down on the threshold of God's purpose and die away of self pity...God will invade enter in with his sons pierced hand taking grip of us "Enter into fellowship with me, arise shine." If through a broken heart God can bring his purposes to pass in the world, thank God for breaking your heart"

IN THE DESERT: WE NEED TO BE DISTINGUISHED

From the reproach of Egypt, the Israelites disgrace themselves again. The rebellious Jews had built a golden calf and Moses saw them as: (Exodus 32v25 AMP): "Unruly and restrained (for



Aaron had let them get out of control, so that they were a derision and object of shame amongst their enemies).

Moses sees the desperate situation. He sees how the devourer has been at work, the darkness and reproach his people had. He communes with God. He seeks after him desiring his presence. He realises if these people are Gods chosen people, they need to be so distinguished from other nations. He also prays for favour:

"Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found favour in your sight, show me now your way, that I may know you and that I may find favour in your sight, and Lord, do consider that this nation is your people"

And the Lord said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

Moses said to the Lord; if your presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here! "

v16: "For by what shall it be known that I and your people have found favour in your sight? Is it not in you're going with us so that we are distinguished, I and your people, from all the other people in the earth?"

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do this thing also you have asked, for you have found favour, loving-kindness, and mercy in my sight and I know you personally by name."

In the story of Esther (found in the old testament) that I mention later, she found favour in the king's eyes. I believe favour is a key word. With God's favour, comes his presence. With God's presence, we are distinguished. We can then offer what the world wants. The world is desperate for true satisfaction and love.

Some words associated with favour in the dictionary are promote, endorse, recommend, support, reward and back. A teenage term is frequently used when friends want favour from their peers. They say that so and so will back their case. How in these days of scattered sheep, the devourer rampant we need God to back our case! Give us promotion, reward us, and support us

Psalm 119v58, (AMP): "I entreated your favour with my whole heart; be merciful and gracious to me according to your promise."

I wandered what the word entreat means. It means to beg earnestly or an urgent request. How we have to humble ourselves and make an urgent request for Gods favour!!

Fasting is one way of humbling yourself. *Leviticus 16v29 (AMP): records "It shall be a statute for you forever that in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month you shall afflict yourself (by fasting with penitence and humiliation) and do no work at all."*

Isaiah 58 is a chapter all about fasting and how Gods people should and shouldn't do it. God's people were trying to obey the above commandment by fasting but social justice, ministering to those who were weaker and allowing their slaves to rest was not happening. "Lord I want to serve you" was their cry, yet when God brought them the unlovable or the ignoble the Israelites ignored them and als mistreated their own servants. From verse, 8 of *Isaiah 58* there are some amazing conditional promises if the people would share their food with the hungry, let the oppressed go free when they fasted.

v8 (GNB): "Then my favour will shine on you like the morning

sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed."

v8 (KJV): "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily"

Favour was mentioned in an obscure verse I read in Judges. The Jews had reached the Promised Land and the different parts were being distributed. Caleb a leader had a daughter called Acsah. She was keen to receive a field in this distribution of land. The following verses draw a great picture of our God the father:

*Caleb asked her, "What can I do for you?" She replied, "Do me a special favour. Since you have given me land in Negev, give me also springs of water." Then Caleb gave her the upper and the lower springs" (*Judges 1v14-15 NIV*)*

The AMP bible does not use the word favour. It says "And she said to him, give me a present"

Our Father God asks us what can I do for you?

Our reply should be "Father I want a special favour, a present from you."

"What present?"

"Father I want what Jesus described to the woman at the well... "But who ever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (*John 4v14:NIV*)

To dwell a little longer on the above verse. The message version says it like this: "The water I give him will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life!!!! "

Or Father you ask me what you can do for me, well can I have a

special favour like in *Isaiah 35v8-9 (NIV)* "Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground bubbling springs"

Hosea 10v12 (AMP): "For it is time to seek the Lord, to inquire for and of him and to require his favour"

PART 2: JOURNEY INTO THE DESERT THE DEVOURER

"I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied, when they were satisfied they became proud; then they forgot me. So I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path.... like a lion I will devour them; like a wild animal will tear them apart" (*Hosea 13v5-8*)

A theological question might rise in your mind about God coming like a lion and devouring his People. The New Testament says the devil goes around like a roaring lion waiting our. Its my understanding that God in his higher ways permits the devourer/ Satan to cause destruction/ test his people for the sake of refining and disciplining so that ultimately God will get the Glory. Through sin and rebellion, pride, luke warmness, (Not God's will) we open our selves to be attacked and stolen from. In the Old Testament, the work of Satan ultimately is attributed to God who is sovereign and in control and permits this evil for higher purposes. (Read Job)

One key passage I keep going back to, *Psalm 44*, talks about an enemy, *v11*

"You gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations" Verse 15-16 "my disgrace is before me all day long, and my face is covered in shame at the taunts of those who reproach and revile me, because of the enemy, who is bent on revenge."

Joel the prophet prophesises in one of the minor prophet books about the state of Judah, Gods chosen nation of people. The words from God go into much detail about the destruction and devouring that had taken place by locusts.

Joel 1v6 (AMP):"For a (heathen and hostile) nation (of locusts, illustrative of a human foe) has invaded my land, mighty and without number; Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the jaw teeth of a lioness.... it has laid waste my Vine (symbol of Gods people) and barked and broken; my fig tree it has made them completely bare and thrown them down: their branches are made white..."

v11 (AMP):"Be ashamed O you tillers of the soil: wail o you vine dressers for the wheat and the barley because the harvest of the field has perished".

v18 (AMP):"How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed and huddle together because they have no pasture: even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment (are forsaken and made wretched)"

v19 (AMP):" O Lord, to you I will cry, for the fire has devoured the pastures and the folds of the plain and wilderness, and the flame has burned all the trees of the field."

In Joel 2, a great hostile nation is mentioned again. This great army of darkness can be paralled to the great army of darkness

that has overrun Europe and this nation of Britain:.....

v1: "A day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick mists and darkness. Like the morning dawn spread upon the mountains; so there comes a heathen hostile people numerous and mighty, the like of which has never been seen before....."

v9 "They leap upon the city: they run upon the wall: they climb up on and into the houses: they enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them: the heavens tremble."

Recently on the front page of the Metro, there was a big headline about the famine in Niger, Africa. There was a picture of a starving man and the skeleton of a cow sitting in desert like conditions. The caption underneath declared that locusts and famine have ravaged the land."

A vast army came to invade Judah many years later after Gods people had entered the Promised Land. King Jehoshaphat called a fast and prayed:

2 Chronicles 20v2 (NIV): If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgement, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us"

The Church and our nation has to some extent has been laid waste. The nation is under terrible attack and there is a famine of the living word. The thief has come into she sheepfold and stole, destroyed and killed.

However, as a Loving Shepherd he leads us to a place of repentance:

Joel 2 v12 (NCV): "Even now, come back to me with all your

heart. Go without food, cry and be sad."

v17 (AMP): "Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar: and let them say, have pity and spare your people, O Lord and give not your heritage to REPROACH that the heathen nations should rule over them or use a byword against them. Why should they say among the peoples, where is their God?"

God is calling all Church leaders like never before to seek God, to reverse the reproach:

Joel 2v12 (AMP): "Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn and keep coming to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning (until every hindrance is removed and the broken fellowship restored)

Hope is given in v18 of Joel 2: "Then was the Lord jealous for his land and had pity on his people..."

v19 (KJV): "Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and yea shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a REPROACH among the heathen.

v28 (NIV): "I will pour out my Spirit on all people"

I share this from personal experience. I allowed the thief to come in and kill, destroy and steal. It doesn't happen overnight though. It starts with little things that eventually multiply and spiral out of control. One inch of our lives not surrendered, or made Holy allows Satan the devourer to come in and steal. The Church comprising of his people has become a reproach to the nations. It has tried man made methods, man inspired sermons, and pastures withered and dry that end up

with little satisfaction for its own sheep and those outside the sheep pen. God's word brings life! God's word brings forth his promises, his Isaacs. Hallelujah, Jesus says he has come to give life. The message translation puts John 10v10 like this:

"I came so that they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of"

Other passages in the Bible talk about Gods victory in the midst of our enemies:

Psalm 57v3 states: "He shall send from heaven and save me from the REPROACH of him that would swallow me up"

God says in Isaiah 54 v 16 "I created the devastator to destroy but no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper "

In Malachi 3 v11 (AMP) God states "And I will rebuke the devourer (insects and plagues) for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of the ground"

Praise God he comes in his mercy and is faithful to his promises. The land of Judah faced famine, destruction and discipline. However, in this apparent horror we see the father heart of God who wants to restore. Joel 2v25:

"I will restore or replace for you the years that the locust has eaten...and you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord, your God who has dealt wondrously with you"

**YET ANOTHER DIVERSION:
DOES GOD PLAY HIDE AND
SEEK?**

God by his mercy doesn't show himself because we could not stand the Glory!! Mans flesh, is in

the way. God will not allow man to have the glory. He waits hiding, he causes us to seek and seek until we want nothing else but God.

Jeremiah 29v13 says: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you" (NIV)

Is God first in our hearts?

The Devil has come into this nation like a flood. His locusts have devasted the land. Let us heed the words of God, who spoke to Solomon if such a situation arises:

2 Chronicles 7v14: (AMP) "If I shut up heavens so no rain falls, or I command the locusts to devour the land, or I send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, pray, seek, crave and require of necessity My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land."

I am trying to build a picture of where the Church is. We have to humble ourselves, realise our spiritual poverty, hunger and thirst after righteousness and watch God move.

The hard-hitting prophet Amos echoes the words spoken to Solomon. Amos 5v6 (AMP): "Seek the Lord (inquire for and of him and require Him) and you shall live, lest he rush down like a fire upon the house of Joseph (representing the ten tribes) and devour it. Amos 5v4 offers a different slant

"Thus says the Lord of the house of Israel: Seek me (inquire for and of me and require me as you require food)

"Seek God like we require food. The effort we put into making the bread to fill our physical stomachs! What would be the results if we gave up some of

that time we devote to food and its preparation and prayed instead? Man cannot live on bread alone!!! Through fasting, we humble ourselves, we give God more time, and our inner man is quickened. An example and picture of the effectiveness of fasting is found in the wonderful story of Esther.



"Esther and the King"

In the story of Esther

Esther fasted for three days because the Jews were in trouble and several times after that she approached the king and his words to her were *Esther 5v2-3 (AMP)* "And when the king saw Esther the queen standing in court, she obtained favour in his sight and he held out to her the golden sceptre that was in his hand. Therefore, Esther drew near and touched the tip of the sceptre. Then the King said to her what will you have, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you, even half of the Kingdom." Through prayer, and often helped by fasting we can enter the very throne room of God, draw near to him and present our requests. Here we have assurance God has heard us; we are his Children and faith to believe. How much God our father longs for us to draw near, seek his face, delight in his presence, bow before him and spend quality time.

Hosea 6v3 (AMP): "Let us know (recognise, be acquainted with and understand) Him; let us be zealous to know the Lord (to appreciate, give heed to, and cherish him). His going forth is the dawn, and he will come to us as the (heavy) rain, as the latter rain that waters the earth"

Are we going to really seek God and be Zealous? The above verses we actually said by a hardhearted Israel whose love was fleeting like the morning dew. The Thesaurus describes zealous as: fanatical, full of zeal, full of great enthusiasm. Other adjectives we could use: let us really be ardent, dedicated, determined, enthusiastic, full of gusto, fervour, passion and zest for God.

THE GOD WHO HEARS IN THE DARKNESS:

Our nation is in darkness. Individually or at the local Church level only, some light is getting through. We can take comfort and build our faith, as we believe God can change this:

2 Samuel 22 describes a picture of God who hears from heaven and intervenes on our behalf when we are in darkness: "I will call to the Lord and be saved from my enemies...In my trouble I called to the Lord: I cried out to my God ...from his temple he heard my voice, my call for help reached his ears... He tore open the sky and came down with dark clouds under his feet. he made darkness his shelter, surrounded by fogs and clouds. Out of the brightness of his presence, came flashes of lightning...The Lord thundered from heaven, the most high raised his voice. He shot arrows and scattered his enemies. His bolts of lightning confused them with fear...the Lord spoke strongly. The Lord reached down from above and took me, he pulled me from the deep water, he saved me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me, because they were too strong for me."

Its well worth reading the whole of that passage, so full

encouragement. God has heard from heaven our cry for help. In the darkness of the clouds, the shadows of sin and victories of the enemy, the lack of vision and blindness caused by the fog, God is descending down to roll away the reproach of our enemies He sees our reproach, our shame before the nation and starts to speak his word that literally scatters his enemies.

Its says in *Joshua 5v1*, the beginning of this passage of the rolling away of reproach, that: "Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites "

There is a coming revival. A light within the darkness, an entering into the Promised Land where the enemies of God will shrink back in fear.

Malachi 3v11 although the emphasis is about giving to God states "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit" says the Lord almighty. Then the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land."

The enemy comes to devour, we see the fruit of the harvest wither and many converts backslide or never get far. However, the promise is we will not be put too shame as a church as a people but we will be called blessed, in fact a delightful land!!

THE WEATHER FORECAST FOR TODAY IS: THUNDER AND LIGHTNING



Psalm 81 provides a succinct summary of

the exodus journey of Gods people from Egypt to the Promised Land. An interesting and encouraging verse is found in this commentary:

v7: "You called in distress and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder"

Psalm 29 talks about the voice of the Lord. A passage has really spoken to me:

v3 (NCV) "The Lords voice is heard over the sea, the glorious God thunders: the Lord thunders over the ocean. The Lords voice is powerful, the Lords voice is majestic. The Lords voice breaks the trees; the Lords voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes the land of Lebanon dance like a calf..."

v7 (NIV) "The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning, the voice of the Lord shakes the desert the Lord shakes the desert of Kadesh."

"A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished-sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning!"

Other passages refer to stormy weather:

Psalm 97v2 (MESSAGE): "bright clouds and storm clouds circle round him:"

Psalm 97v4 (AMP): His lightning illumine the world: the earth see and trembles:"

Job 37v5: "God's voice thunders in marvellous ways; he does great things beyond our own understanding"

Job 38v1: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm"

Ezek 34v13 "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.... I will rescue them from all the places where

they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness"

Recently, nationwide there has been noticeable bouts of thunder and lightning. I am convinced God is using the natural to emphasise something happening in the spiritual realms.

THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM?

Dark clouds of judgement/ discipline have come to this nation. The enemy has come in like a dark flood. The spirit of terror, rebellion, goes from house to house like a thief destroying, devouring, I read recently in the new paper metro a quote from one of Al-Qaeda leaders; Al-Zawahri. He urged all Iraqis to "rely on God (Allah) and devour the Americans like lions-bury them in the Iraqi graveyard" As in the natural, in the spiritual realms the devourer, the spirit of terror has come in a new wave. One of these plagues to hit this country is the spirit of Islam

I was reading a Jacob Prasch (messianic Jew who is a minister). He confirmed what I have written above. He believes God is allowing this spirit of Islam to come and be a force to discipline the Church. How can that be? God wont do that! The signs are all there. God is disciplining us. We are not the light we are meant to. We have a form of godliness but deny its power. We (the body) have not come to our senses. We are a prodigal church. Fear/ terror will drive us into the grave or drive us on to our knees to humble ourselves, seek Gods face and turn from our wicked ways. Through the bombings, laws to do with freedom of speech/ discrimination/ blasphemy will be passed that will result ultimately in the persecution of bible believing Christianity and the Jews. Islam is now being given more TV/ media/ Radio coverage than ever before. In Brixton,

London gangs of youths are going around and killing people if they don't convert to Islam! To prevent persecution of the Muslims and them being ostracised because of the Muslim terrorists, the government is doing all it can to protect and promote Islam.

We mustn't forget that Gods pattern is that he will ultimately judge those nations/ideologies that oppose us. Communism from the pit of hell was used by God to do a mighty preparatory work in USSR and china. In the USSR communism collapsed. What it intends for evil, God works it out for Good. It will be when we as a body have reached the Promised Land, when in the last days God will have poured out his Spirit on al flesh.

Jesus talks about the end times:

"Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains"...then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death and you will be hated by all nations because of me" (Matthew 24v7-9 NIV)

The words of Paul the apostle in *Romans 1v18(NCV)* states "Gods anger people is shown from heaven against all the evil and wrong things people do."

In the thunderstorms of life, in the dark clouds of sin and prison. the dark clouds created by the swarming locusts, the dark cloud of judgement and discipline the voice of God speaks. It brings light, it scatters enemies, and it shakes the desert areas of our life. The tall proud cedar trees, the things we rely on, things in our lives come crashing down....

When a vast army of Edomites (Arabs are descended from these peoples) invaded Judah this is what the Godly leader King

Jehoshaphat did: (2 Chronicles 20 v2, v4 NIV)

"Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him"

THE UPDATED WEATHER FORECAST IS: LOTS OF RAIN AND TORNADOES

The writer of *Psalm 77* reflects back over the miracles God did for the Israelites when they left the bondage of Egypt:

"The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron"

Recently I was in Birmingham city centre, it went very dark, I heard very loud thunder and saw very bright lightning, and I got caught in some heavy rain. An hour later, I was stuck on a bus going home. The traffic jams were enormous. I received a phone call to say there had been a tornado, a twister in my local shopping area and metres away to where I worked!!! I couldn't believe it. This does not happen here!! The devastation. Hundreds of houses were reduced to rubble. One TV report said that ancient Oaks in a Churchyard had been uprooted: Fear and shock struck the communities. Freak weather, one of the signs that the world is decaying. The birth pains leading to the coming of Jesus. I asked God what else he was saying through this unusual event. I stumbled onto the above

Psalm 77 and Jeremiah 30v23 "See, the storm of God will burst out in wrath, a driving wind swirling down on the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this." The KJV says "Behold the whirlwind of Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he hath done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart; in the latter days ye shall consider it."

The Spiritual lesson is not God was the cause of the tornado, yet the lesson is in the spiritual areas of lives God is bringing his mighty wind of discipline and judgement to up root and brake what is not of him. I am convinced of this and what I know God has placed on my heart in this article is happening. I have been through it and I am suffering to some extent in this dry and thirsty land like the rest of the body of Christ. The book of Habakkuk says this *"O lord, I have heard the report of you and was afraid. O Lord, revive your work in the midst of your years, in the midst of your years make yourself known! In your wrath remember love, pity and mercy!" (Habakkuk 3v2 AMP)*

We are living in the end, latter days. Thank God, he does remember in his wrath, mercy. What happens in the natural also can symbolise what happens in the spiritual: I went to a prayer meeting and there was a message in tongues and interpretation that I recorded:

"This Holy God reveals his truth, His faithfulness, His Honesty to you. This Holy God is determined that you will see his word coming to pass in your life. You have heard it said even today, "I have never been in rain like this... You have

heard it said even today, "Never has there been a tornado in this part of the country." Even in the natural, something new has taken place... The Lord would say to you tonight: "Yes you have heard of rain and maybe even experienced rain in other parts of the world, you have heard of the winds of my Holy spirit flowing so strongly in other parts of the world, you've heard how Spirit has brought devastation to all the works of the enemy and wrecked so many of his plans, when the Holy Spirit has flowed in power and might, but in your hearts you have said..."It will never happen here, it cannot happen in this place, in that land, in that church, in that area: Yes, but here it will never happen area...Well says the Lord your God to you tonight, even as it has happened in the natural so "I am preparing to send the winds of the Holy Spirit: Not just for that land or that church or that place but to you in this area, in this city. I have prepared to send an abundance of rain, in you, in this area, in this city, I am prepared to send such a tornado of the My Holy spirit that barriers and blockages and obstacles that the enemy has built up over centuries, you will see them torn apart, and devastated, not just those that are big in your communities, those in your families, in your own homes, and your workplaces, you will see the glory of the Lord. Has the Lord not promised: All flesh shall see his Glory when it is revealed? Has he not promised, He will pour out his Holy Spirit on all flesh? Therefore, part of that all flesh is here, in this place, here in this area.

, And the wind of God will come, the rain of God will pour And, you will see what you have heard has happened to other people, you will experience what other people have experienced. The Lord your God is with you and working for you, in this place" says the Lord your God.

After the prayer meeting God reminded me about *Psalm 29v8 (NIV)* that says: *"The voice of the Lord twists the Oaks and strips the forest bare...and v5. the Lord Breaketh the cedars*

Still after several weeks since the tornado, there is a large tree standing in a churchyard where a very significant part of the trunk had been torn off by the tornado. It's a spiritual reminder of the might of God and how he can break us!

The God of Judgement and the God of mercy will come, speak his word and those deep rooted things in our lives, families will be uprooted: What a prospect the promised land of Revival is!!!

PRIDE and FAT COMES BEFORE A FALL:

"I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied they became proud; then they forgot me" (Hosea 13v5-6: NIV)

Psalm 27v5: "The Lords voice is majestic. The Lords voice breaks the trees, the Lords voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon."

Cedars were some of the finest trees in the land of the Middle East. They were used in building God's temple. They stood tall and proud. My spirit started to say this refers to pride. The voice of the Lord is speaking to break our pride:

Pride takes on so many forms. Independence, not being honest, selfishness, operating in the flesh, might and power, those seeking their own glory, recognition, not consulting and waiting on God for direction and opportunities.

Psalm 106v13(AMP): "They (Israelites in desert) hastily forgot his works, they did not wait for his plans to develop regarding them."

1 Peter 5v5:

"God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble" (NIV)

For God sets himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful)- [and he opposes, frustrates, and defeats" them] (AMP)

Hosea 5v5 (NCV): says, "Israel's pride testifies against them. The people of Israel will stumble because of their sin"

Amos 6v8: "I abhor the pride of Jacob"

Psalm 119v69-70 (AMP): "The arrogant and godless have put together a lie against me, but I will keep your precepts with my whole heart. Their hearts are as fat as grease, but I delight in your law"

God in the book of Ezekiel 34, the chapter about the shepherd and sheep, talks about the fat and apparently strong sheep. The Amplified Bible v16 *"But I will destroy the fat and strong (who have become hardhearted and perverse) I will feed with them with judgement and punishment"*

In the New Testament, Jesus talks about people similar to the fat sheep. In Matthew 13, the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks in parables to the crowds coming to hear him (Are we a disciple or are we part of that crowd?) He explains that the people who are apparently keen to listen in fact have spiritual heart disease:

"For this peoples hearts has become calloused" (NIV) "for the minds of these people have become stubborn" (NCV). "For this peoples hearts have become waxed gross" (KJV)

Waxed gross means it has grown fat. In the medical world, we talk about hardening of the arteries. The people who came to listen in fact have hearts that are

surrounded by this spiritual fat that prevents the words of Jesus penetrating.

People have come to hear the words of Jesus yet they have come with spiritual earplugs! They don't really want to change; they want to stay the same. They don't know they are lost sheep, they don't see their pride. They are prepared to go around the desert year after year, not realising the Promised Land is on the horizon. They don't see the desperate needs of society and how only by humbling their selves and seeking God's face will God heal their land.

We must all have some spiritual fat covering our hearts. We as a body have resisted Gods grace; we aren't where we are meant to be!! Lord, show me where I am proud!

The American worship band Casting crowns sing the following song, we are the body:

We are the body, why aren't his arms reaching?
Why aren't his hands healing? Why aren't his words teaching?
If we are the body, why aren't his feet going?
Why is his love not showing?

If we don't see what that song says then its pride that has blinded us to the need. One of the reasons God was to discipline Israel, was due to their attitude to the poor *"The people of the land practise extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and ill treat the alien, denying them justice" (Ezek 22v30 NIV)*

"This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, overabundance of food, prosperous ease and idleness were hers and her daughters: neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Ezekiel 16v49 (AMP)

Jesus says about these blind people in Mt 13v15 (message):

"They screw their eyes shut, so they don't have to look, so they don't have to deal with me face to face and let me heal them"

This spiritual blindness is dangerous. We need to consider our ways, come to our senses, and develop a sound mind. The prophet Amos blasts:

"Woe to you who are complacent in Zion and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost Nation" (Amos 6v1:NIV)

"How terrible it will be for you that have such an easy life in Zion" (Amos 6v1:GNB)

"This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, overabundance of food, prosperous ease and idleness were hers and her daughters: neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Ezekiel 16v49 (AMP)

In the process of writing this article, I spoke to a brother about honesty. We need to cultivate honesty in our lives. Honesty and openness that allows us to share each other's burdens. Our pride stops us admitting we are struggling, or sinning or our families are going through a tough time. Young people and the broken are looking for this transparency, and honesty.

To end this section on pride, I will quote words from a rap by a Birmingham Christian artist called Sammy G:

"I am confused seeing Christians paralysed in pews

Cosy in Church pews, taking off their shoes, religion in the eye block and obstruct views, and the good news of Christ abused for false practise, mighty man of God makes them feel like an actress, Jesus giving life religion, taking a mans blackness, what would Jesus do? Take church to the masses, roll with the crew and preach like John the Baptist, relate to

prostitutes and collector of taxes, still you see me as a rapper who must be chatting slackness, why is it so many soldiers backslide? Why is it church can be a place to hide? Why is it so many egos collide? If people swallow their pride, their belly burst!

JOURNEY PART 3: IN THE DESERT OF KADESH

Psalm 29v8 "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh"

In the desert of Kadesh, it is believed the Israelites camped very soon after leaving Egypt. The Israelites were so close to seeing the Promised Land:

Deut 1v2 (Amp): "It is (only) 11 days journey from Horeby the way of mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea (on Canaan's Border: yet Israel took forty years to get beyond there)"

The Israelites reached Kadesh and sent out spies to see the Promised Land

Numbers 13v 27-28: They reported, "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large"

Jesus describes the events of the last days before his coming in *Matthew 21*. He says in v26 *"Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken"* The message translation puts this verse like this: *"It will seem like all hell has broken loose-sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the earth in a panic, the wind knocked out of them, by the threat of doom, the powers that be quaking!"*

Deut 1v26

Caleb, one of the 12 spies tried to silence the rest of fearing Israelite spies. He declared that

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it "

The Spies operated in fear and told everyone that the people in the Promised Land are bigger and stronger. *Numbers 13 v32 "The land we explored devours those living in it"*

The promised revival is a place of massive blessing. In that place, we will face a powerful enemy, a powerful devourer. The devil will not submit so easily. There will be Jericho strongholds we have to take. Yet, whole cities will be taken for God. Strongholds of Islam, drug addiction, immorality, depression, alcoholism, family breakdown, will come tumbling down. We can certainly do it, but it requires us to be bold and courageous,

After the forty years in the desert, In Joshua 1 God tells Joshua, as he is about to enter. *"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you: do not turn from it to the right or the left, that you may be successful the Promised Land to: be strong and courageous you go.... Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it....then you will be prosperous and successful... have I not commanded you ..Do not be TERRIFIED, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."* After hearing the spy's fears, the people rebelled before God. They exclaimed, *"If only we had died in Egypt. Or in this desert"*

They People of Egypt wanted to experience the reproach and slavery of the place of bondage. I know how deceived we can become. How we aren't prepared to fight for the things of God. The road to God involves entering a narrow gate, where we have to make every effort, or agonise to get through. We choose to die in the wilderness or go back to these empty things that once brought us some comfort.

I recently went clothes shopping, in the pursuit of remaining young and trendy. I came across a surfers t-shirt. It had on it "Go into places where others fear to tread." In these days of fear, where darkness floods this nation are we going to be like the eleven spies and tremble or be like Caleb? God describes Caleb in *Numbers 13: "My servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me whole heartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendents will inherit it!"*

God is calling us to be Caleb's. Jesus stresses the need to have this type of spirit: God is calling us to seek him, throw off weights that slow us down. Some things we fear losing. To seek him with disciplines such as fasting, will result with opposition from things such as fear. "What if I lose too much weight, get ill, or don't have the time o strength?" "What will my family say or work mates?" Don't listen to fears and vain imaginations. Make them captive to the word of God and do what pleases God, not what pleases your pride. God has sustained me through times of fasting on field trips and busy family life and work.

YOU NEED TO BE SLIM TO GET THROUGH THE DOOR:

Recently I have listened to two sermons by Pastor Phil Gibson

from Wales and Pastor David Hamilton from Manchester. They both preached on *Luke 13v22 "The narrow door"*

These sermons have been very challenging....getting me out of the comfort zone talks. In this passage, a person asks Jesus "*Lord will only a few be saved?*" Before I write the answer Jesus gives, we can parallel the above question with one we could pose to the Lord in the time after the Israelite spies had come back from viewing the land.

"Lord will only a few enter the promised land? "

Jesus replied with the words:

"Strive to enter by the narrow door (force yourselves through it), for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able" (AMP: Luke 13 v24)

Other versions state this

"Try hard to enter in" (NCV)

"Do your best to go through the narrow door" (GNB)

David Hamilton says The Greek for Strive is the same word we get agonise. Agonise is a very strong word. The dictionary/Thesaurus says: to suffer great anxiety. Agonizing means unbearably painful, distressing, harrowing, racking. If you have seen the Mel Gibson film, the passion of Christ, one of the things that strike you is the agony Jesus went through so that we could be forgiven, redeemed and saved!! We are called to be imitators of Christ, to take up our cross and follow him daily. Allowing and keeping the old man on the cross, can be a painful experience. In the 18th Century, there was a Revival in America, with Jonathon Edwards as the main man. A book

examining revival describes the state of people in it "During the months when the revival was at its height, numbers of his hearers were under such conviction and in such distress that they cried out and wept loudly"

If the thoughts going through your mind are the above is only applicable to non believers, well David Hamilton in his sermon is of the opinion that the narrow gate illustration is not an Evangelistic address but aimed at believers because inverse 25 he says "you", referring to the disciples.

Revival is bringing alive what was dead. To be dead you have at least had to be alive at one point. We need to seek him, agonise, strive, allow God to break us to come into the place where we see Jesus. Those who endure to the end will be saved.

Some believers will not enter. Like the majority of the Israelites did not enter the Promised Land. It is not enough to simply say I trust in Jesus. There must be a striving, a struggle, doing our best, agonising, pain, a throwing off of weights and sins that easily entangle us so we can enter the narrow door, or enter in the gate to the sheep fold where we will meet face to face the great Shepherd. We need to do it before it is too late:

Deut 1 v45-46 "And you returned and wept before the Lord, but the Lord would not heed your voice or listen to you. So you remained in Kadesh, many days you remained there."

Luke 13v24 (NCV): "Try hard to enter through the narrow door because many people will try to enter there but they will not be able. When the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you can stand outside and knock on the door and say

"Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, "I don't know you or where you have come from." Then you will say, "We ate and drank with you and you taught in the street of our town." But he will say to you " I don't know you or where you come from. Go away from me, all you who do evil!" You will cry and grind your teeth with pain when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in God's Kingdom"

The Thompson chain reference bible states it (Kadesh) as a place called the "cross roads of decision."

We as a church are at the brink of a revival, the edge of the land of promise. We are at a crossroads of Kadesh where we can seek God with the whole of our hearts or rebel, fear and wander around the desert for 40 years.

EARTHQUAKE!

In Psalm 29, another key passage, which God has really spoken to me about local and nationwide circumstances.

In the last few years we have had unexpected earthquakes. This generation is experiencing very large destructive earthquakes. The birth pains for the second coming of Jesus. Again, we what happens in the natural can often symbolise the events going on in the spiritual realm.

Psalm 29v8 (NIV): "The voice of the Lord shakes the desert; the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh."

This is a fascinating verse, with so much prophetic meaning. However, as I read the word shake I was reminded of things God said to me just before a dark period in my life. *Hebrews 12* a passage dear to my heart mentions many times the word

shake. In the context of God being a disciplining loving father who desires we cast off sin and even good things that entangle us, we read

Hebrews 12v25(NIV): "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?" 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 "

The message version paraphrases the above verses: *The phrase "one last shaking" means a thorough house cleaning, getting rid of all the historical and religious junk so that the unshakable essentials stand clear and uncluttered.....For God is not an indifferent bystander. He's actively cleaning house, torching all that needs to burn, and he won't quit until its all cleansed, God himself is Fire!"*

God is shaking this nation. He has to do a work in our lives that shake all the non-essentials in our Christian walk. There are so many things, even blessings and good things that can cause us to stumble and be entangled God speaks to Ezekiel in Ezek chapter 3 about warning the righteous that have fallen because of a blessing that God has sent.

Ezek 3v20 "Again, if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and some gift or providence which I lay before them he perverts into an occasion to sin and commits, iniquity, he shall die "

In my own life, God gave me a gift, a major blessing. Yet, due to various factors like selfishness, provision of the flesh, turning them into idols, my blessing turned into an area that became sin and a stumbling block.

Hell and heaven are at stake. People stand at the brink of eternity. We are in the last days and we have to really consider our ways. We have to throw off all weights that will slow us down. God has many great things for us and for the lost.

God is shaking the nation. *Psalm 97v4 says, "His lightning's illumine the earth; the earth sees and trembles*

Psalm 60v2 (AMP) laments: " You have made the land to quake and tremble, you have rent it open; repair its breaches, for it shakes and totters. You have made your people suffer hard things; you have given us to drink wine that makes us reel and be dazed." The message interprets the above like this: *" You shook earth to the foundations, ripped open huge crevasses. Heal the breaks! Everything's coming apart at the seams. You made your people look doom in the face, then you gave us cheap wine to drown our troubles."*

The shaking, leads to the ripping open of huge crevasses. Hosea prophesies Chapter 6v1 *"Come let us return to the Lord, for he has torn so that he may heal us: he has stricken so that he may bind us up."*

Job 5v17 (AMP): Adds to this thought of being wounded: *"Happy and fortunate is the man whom God reproves: so do not despise or reject the correction of the Almighty (subjecting you trial and suffering). For he wounds, but he binds up: he smites, but his hands heal up."*

God would rather have us humble ourselves, dig up the hard ground, seek him to let him in a more gentle way refine and cleanse us.

Hosea 10v12(AMP): challenges us to *"Break up your uncultivated ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, to inquire for and of him and to require his favour, till he comes and teaches you righteousness and rains his righteous gift of salvation upon you."* The good news Bible puts the above like this:

"Plough new ground for your selves, plant righteousness and reap the blessings that your devotion to me will produce. It is time for you to turn to me, your Lord and I will come out and pour out blessings upon you" God wants to shake us up in our desert encampment and take us to the Promised Land. In the desert, we saw the miracles of manna and quail. We saw God faithfully feed us, sustain us through the dry and thirsty land. A place where God took us, to show us where our hearts are.

The Israelites went around the wilderness for 40 yrs. It was discipline.... The writer of the book of Hebrews seemed to have the exodus experience in the back of his mind. When he was writing **Hebrews 12v10(AMP):**

"But he disciplines us for our own good, that we may become sharers in his holiness"

The Israelites were disciplined in the desert. The purpose of the desert was to:

"For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12v11 AMP)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHAT WILL THE PROMISED LAND OF REVIVAL LOOK LIKE?

Gilgal. This article asks the question, are you at Gilgal? At Gilgal, you are at the start of the Promised Land. No longer were the Israelites in the desert, they were no longer receiving manna from heaven. **Joshua 5v11** *"states the day after the Passover that very day they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from this land: there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan"*

We need to all get to this place of Gilgal. We need to humble ourselves, seek God, turn from our wicked ways and wait for God to come heal our land. This land is plentiful.

Psalm 81v10 stated that *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it"*

God's intention is we leave Egypt and get to the Promised Land, a place where there mouths would be filled!!

Deut 8v7: *"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and*

springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates a land of olive trees and honey "

Deut 6v10 *"When the Lord your God brings you into the land...a with large flourishing cities you did not build, house filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant-then when you eat and be satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery"* (NIV)

To help us get understanding and see the big picture, to see a standard we should aim for, two examples of promised lands are the ministries of Jesus found in the gospel, and the ministry of the disciples in the book of acts

Why does he want to feed us abundantly, well **Ezekiel 36v30 (AMP):** *"I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that you may no more suffer the reproach and disgrace of famine among the nations."*

AT GILGAL, IT'S TIME TO DRINK WINE: IT LEADS TO BEING FAMOUS



The Promised Land will be a place flowing with new wine and vineyards producing lots of grapes. One picture the bible uses to describe the Holy Spirit is a wine/ grape. Joel 3 says God will pour out his Holy Spirit on all flesh. **Ephesians 5v18** exhorts us to not get drunk on wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit. After 40 days fasting, seeking God, humbling himself and being

faithful in the desert Jesus went back to his home area:

"Then Jesus went back full of and under the power of the Holy Spirit into Galilee and the fame of him spread through the whole region around about."

In Revival under the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus will be made famous in our local communities. Another way of saying is, being filled with the new wine will result in God getting the Glory!!

The Promised Land is a land where God will be made famous and get the Glory. The Glory of the Lord will be seen all around the earth. Luke warmness, backsliders, unsaved, those at ease, those who fear, those who don't love, the proud: In these peoples lives God does not get the Glory. God intentions for the promised land are: ***Ezekiel 20v6 "On that day I lifted up My hand and swore to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt to a land that I searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is an ornament and a glory to all lands."***

This new wine will bring Power: Power is the ability to do work. God is powerful: Transformed lives, transformed communities and families. The gospel needs to be preached with power:

1 Thess 1v5: "Our Gospel came to you not simply by words, but with also power, with the Holy Spirit and deep Conviction" (NIV)

I Cor 2v4 "My message and preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (NIV)

Peter preached just after Pentecost and those listening: ***"they were cut to the heart" (Acts 2v38 NIV)***

People said this of Jesus after he prayed for a demon-possessed

person: ***"All the people were amazed and said to each other, what is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil Spirits and they come out." (Luke 4v36: NIV)***

The power of the new wine: ***"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared every thing they had. With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all. There was no needy person among them." (Acts 4v32-34 NIV)***

Gods deep desire is that we are so filled with power of the new wine, we live transformed lives, preaching and living the gospel (the presence of God is so real in our lives, the fruits and ministry of the Holy Spirit) with such power, people are convicted, convinced, cut to the heart and repent.

Another aspect of Gods power that will be so evident in revival and show God's Holiness is his discipline.

Psalms 90v11 "Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as fear that is due to you."

Just after Acts 4 where everyone is sharing and in unity, along comes the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They lied to God, keeping back some money they had made when they sold property. Both were struck dead. ***(Acts 5v1-11). The result was "Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events"*** God is not to be messed with. Sin of pride got Satan chucked out of heaven. Sin got Adam and Eve chucked out of the Garden of Eden.

God's cloud of kindness and mercy protects and leads us. Yet, God cant draw near to us and dwell in his living temples in the way he so desires.

In my own life, I often see I have a form of Godliness but deny its power. I don't share the gospel like Paul and Peter, the church today is not like that of Acts where there is no needy people among us, I don't Love as deeply as I should. Lets measure ourselves against the word of God and not those around us. The following verses from ***2 Timothy 3v1-5***, describe unfortunately much of the body of Christ: Words in brackets are other words other translations use)

"There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves (self absorbed, self centred) lovers of money (covetous, money hungry, inordinate desire for wealth), boastful (arrogant, self promoting), proud (stuck up, contemptuous boasters), abusive (profane, blasphemous, scoffing, crude, coarse), disobedient to their parents, ungrateful (unthankful), unholy (irreligious, or not be the kind of people God wants), without love (cruel, unkind, without natural affection), unforgiving (refuse to forgive, truce breakers), slanderous (gossip, trouble makers, accusers), without self control, brutal (fierce) , not lovers of the good, (loose in morals and conduct, hate what is good) treacherous (betrayers), rash (reckless) conceited (swollen with pride) lovers of pleasure (lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements) than lovers of God-

v5...having a form of godliness but denying its Power...Have nothing to do with them. (GNB: "They will hold to the outward form of our religion, however, reject its real power," NCV: "They will act if they serve God but will not have its power.")

Challenging isn't it? Do you see the desperate times we are in? We need God to have mercy on us.

Let us not be like the Church of Laodicea: ***"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So because you***

are lukewarm-neither hot or cold-I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched. Pitiful, poor, blind and naked." (Rev 3v15-17 NIV)

Jesus began his powerful ministry with the poor, wretched, blind and naked. In the gospel of Mark Jesus was sitting and eating with tax collectors and (notorious) sinners. The Pharisees were shocked he could do such a thing. Jesus went on to tell them *"Those who are strong and well have no need of a physician, but those who are weak and sick..."* (Mark 2v17 AMP)

He then went on to tell them about garments and wine skins. *"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is lost and bottles destroyed; but the new wine is to be put in new wineskins."* (Mark 2v22 AMP)

I understand that he is linking the tax collectors/ notorious sinners to the new wine skins. The Pharisees are the old wine skins!! We desire the new wine, yet are we ready to receive it? We have to ask God to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the mind. We have all got a bit of Pharisee in us. We have to become humble, not proud, broken, prepared for God to bend us, be flexible and soft hearted.... then *"A new heart I will give you and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 36v36 AMP)

In the Promised Land, the fruits of the Spirit will be so evident: *"For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a*

peaceable fruit of righteousness

AT GILGAL, TIME TO GO SWIMMING:

"A land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills;"

There are many references to water in the bible. Ezekiel 47 describes a vision. Ezekiel was asked to follow the Lord. Ezekiel describes a river coming from a temple. Ezekiel went through waters, ankle deep, then waters knee deep, then the depth of his hips. He then came to a river and it was too deep to walk through, in fact waters to swim in: The passage says the waters will pour out towards the dead sea.... *"And when they shall enter into the sea (of putrid waters), the waters shall be healed and made fresh"* (v8 AMP)....

v9 *"And wherever the double river shall go, every living creature which swarms shall live. And there shall be a great number of fish, because these waters go there that may be healed and made fresh; and everything shall live wherever the river goes"*



"Middle eastern fisherman"

I noticed the AMP in v9 uses the word "double" In revival many double portions of Gods Holy spirit will be given to the fishermen to bring in the catch The living Holy Spirit will be poured out. The dead comes alive, many people especially in

cities and town and will be healed and saved!! Keeping with the theme of increasing numerically and sheep:

Psalm 144v13 says: "Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields"

When God pours out his living water:

"For I will cause the captivity of the land to be reversed and return to be as it was at first says the Lord. Thus says the Lord of Hosts: In this place which is desolate, without man and beast, and in all its cities there shall again be dwellings and pastures of shepherds resting their flocks." v13 (NCV): *"Shepherds will again count their sheep as the sheep walk in front of them*

Bob Dunnett former vice principal of Birmingham Bible institute in hid book on Revival says:

"Not only did the day of Pentecost see the people so deeply wounded with conviction that they felt physically stabbed in the heart, but it also saw no fewer than 3,000 affected and all at one and the same time. It was a day of brokenness and loud cries amongst the crowd"

Back to that vision of Ezekiel: v12 *"And on the banks of the river on both sides, there shall grow all kinds of trees for food;.....each tree shall bring forth new fruit every month because their waters come out of the sanctuary, and their fruit shall be for food and their leaves for healing"*

In the Promised Land, there will be a new level of intimacy with God. We need to seek God in the sanctuary.

Psalm 114v2 states: (NCV) "When Israel went out of Egypt, the people of Jacob left

that foreign country, Then Judah became God's Holy place; Israel became the land he ruled"

KJV, NIV say, "Judah became God's Sanctuary"

Where do we find the source of these living waters? We will find them in the sanctuary.

In the desert, are we seeking God like our lives depend on it? Are we hungry for God? It will take dedicated seekers who enter into the sanctuary that will open up the dam.

A classic psalm, number 63 (NIV):

"O God, you are my God. I earnestly seek you, my soul thirsts for you. My Body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and Glory..."

The rivers of living water that will be poured out will feed the multitudes to the point of satisfaction. Its time to go deep sea diving and ask God to immerse us, all over. We need to wait on God like the disciples in the upper room to receive power from on high and to become powerful and effective witnesses. I quote two examples from those in the Welsh revival and the great awakening in America in the 19th century

Keri Evans: "I was baptised with floods of living, mighty transforming power for ½ hour. The experience was so marvellously invigorating and renewing, that I sought it again the next day with the same result"

Charles Finney: "I was converted on the morning of Oct 10th. In the evening of the same day and on the following morning, I received overwhelming baptisms in the Holy Ghost. I found myself endued with such power from on high that a few words dropped here and there to individuals were the means of their immediate conversion"

God does not pour his Spirit on anybody. Jesus was called the Lamb of God. When he was baptised in the river Jordan the heavens were open, Holy Spirit came down on the Lamb of God like a dove. Doves are birds that are "little fretful bird, a clean bird, a picky bird and will not settle on anybody" (R. Godwin). However, the dove will only settle and stay on a lamb: Pure, meek and ready to be sacrificed.

I have mentioned a classic Psalm 63. It talks about being satisfied in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I am sure Jesus meditated on this passage when he was in the desert for 40 days. He would also trust in the promises of Isaiah 58 the passage about fasting. Fasting is one discipline that helps us to seek God and be satisfied *Isaiah 58v11 "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail"*

AT GILGAL: SWEET LIKE CHOCOLATE HONEY

"A land of olive trees and honey"

There is something so pure and tasty about honey. The word of God links itself with Honey:

The writer of *Psalm 119* says: *"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth"*

God meets with the prophet Ezekiel and he showed him a scroll

Ezekiel 3v2-3 "I opened my mouth and he caused me to eat the scroll. And he said to me, son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it, and it

was as sweet as honey in my mouth"

If you have ever read Ezekiel, you will discover the scroll (the words in the book of Ezekiel) mainly comprises of God's judgements and warnings to Israel and surrounding nations

Psalm 19v10 (NIV): The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb... by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

This article is about focusing your attention on God's agenda. God's heart is to speak to us tenderly in the desert. To say look over the horizon towards the Promised Land. However, with the hope of blessing, I hope you take on the warnings, because by doing so it will bring great reward, being sweeter than Honey. God says the same in *psalm 81v13-16:*

"If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies... But you would be fed with the finest of wheat, with honey from the rock will I satisfy"

"Eat Honey my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste." (Proverbs 24v13 NIV)

AT GILGAL, OLIVES HAVE TO BE CRUSHED:

A Land of olive trees: The promised land will be a stage in the Christian church where the honey, the word will truly satisfy, change lives, anointed, setting the captives free. The land will also be very abundant with olive trees. Just like wine, and water, being anointed with Olive oil is symbolic of being anointed in the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 52v8 "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God"

Psalm 23v5 "You anoint my head with Oil" (NIV)

In the book of Zechariah, There is a vision where *"I see a solid gold lamp stand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left"*

The Olive trees supply the lamp stand. The Holy Spirit is the fuel supply for our lights to shine. *"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, Children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."* Phil 2v12 (NIV)

The good shepherd will anoint our heads with oil in a way that sets us apart to fulfil God's purposes. Oil is used to anoint, or to set apart, give authority to and enabling of those who God wants to do to do a task.

Just after Jesus spent 40 days preparing for his ministry, fasting and praying he came out full of the power of the Holy Spirit and went and proclaimed that he *"was anointed to preach good news to the poor"* To be anointed!! And how much we need the anointing, it costs. It is given to those who are prepared to seek God.

Oil for the light. In Spurgeon's meditations on this verse he says *"My soul, how much thou needest this for thy lamp will not long to continue to burn without it,"* He then remarks that not every type of oil can be used for these lamps. Only the best olive Oil. *"Pretended grace from natural goodness, fancied grace from priestly hands, or*

imaginary grace from outward ceremonies will never serve the true servant of God...he goes to the Olive press of Gethsemane, and draws his supplies from Him was crushed therein. The oil of Gospel grace is pure and free from lees and dregs."

Jesus paid the price. The cost for us is to lay down our pride, humble our selves, consider and change our ways and strive, agonise to enter the narrow door to the cross where we find grace. Only with us crying out to God for mercy and strength can we do it.

We have to stop playing games and come to the cross where we will see Jesus what he has done and receive this pure oil. Lets us not be like Israel in Hosea: *"She said, I will go after my Lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink."*

AT GILGAL, TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES:

The best is yet to come: The reproach was rolled away, Joshua had an encounter, or lets say a day of visitation: *"Now when Joshua was near Jericho he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked "Are you for us or for your enemies?" Neither he replied "But as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come" Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence and asked him "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"" Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is Holy." And Joshua did so.*

The place of Gilgal leads to an encounter with the living God. Remove your sandals because you are on Holy ground.

Pslam 114v2 states: (NCV) "When Israel went out of Egypt, the people of Jacob left that foreign country, Then Judah became God's Holy place; Israel became the land he ruled"

The Holy of Holies, God's Holy Place, His sanctuary. In my walk with God, I have always known God is with me. 7 years into my Christian walk, I got baptised in the Holy Spirit. That opened up a whole new world. I began to understand what it is to draw near to God and be in his living presence. On several occasions, I knew I had entered his Sanctuary, his Holiest place: For most of my life as a living temple, I had only remained in the outer courts. In the sanctuary is where intimacy and the presence and glory of God is most intense and real. I only tasted it. God's desire is for us to dwell in his sanctuary, enter his rest, and walk in his presence on a permanent basis:

Heb 4v11(AMP): "Lets us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest (of God, to know and experience it for ourselves) that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience (into which those in the wilderness fell)"

Holiness is essential. Hebrews 12 makes several references to it: *Heb 12v14 (AMP): "Strive to live in peace with everyone and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will ever see the Lord"*

The Jameson, Fausett and Brown Bible commentary when referring to Moss's encounter with the Burning bush and Gods command to take off his sandals states that *"with them the removal of shoes is the confession of personal defilement and conscious unworthiness to stand in the presence of unspotted holiness"*

Many verses in the word stress the importance of defilement and dealing with it.

Hosea 5v3 (NCV): " Now that Israel acts like a prostitute, it has made itself unclean"

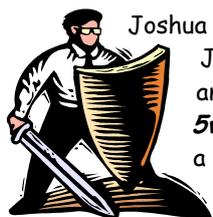
Isaiah 53v11(AMP) "Depart go out from there (lands of exile). Touch no unclean thing! Go out from the midst of her (Babylon): cleanse yourselves and be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord"

2Cor7v1 (message) "Lets make a clean break with everything, that defiles or distracts us, both within and without. Lets make our entire lives fit and Holy temples for the worship of God"

1 peter 4v8 (AMP) "Come close to God and he will come close to you. Sinners, get your soiled hands clean; (recognise that you have been disloyal) wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts (of your spiritual adultery)"

Ezek 36v25: "For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will clean you"

GILGAL: DOUBLE EDGED SWORD



Joshua encountered Jesus at Gilgal and In *Joshua 5v13*, Jesus had a sword in his hand...

In *Revelation 2v12*, it describes Jesus as someone who wields a double-edged sword. God is speaking to a church in Pergamum

that is told to repent because of sexual immorality and following false teaching. "*Repent! Or else I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth"* (Rev 2v16 AMP)

"Let the sword strike twice, even three times. It is a sword for slaughter -a sword for great slaughter, closing in on them from every side...so that hearts may melt" (Ezek 21v14-15)

Hebrew 4v12 (AMP): "For the word that God speaks is alive and full of power; it is sharper than any two edged sword... exposing and sifting and analysing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the Heart.

2 Chronicles 20v2 (NIV): If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgement, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us"

This double-edged sword: One edge is God's mercy. The other edge is God's judgement. "*Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you will be cut off.*" (Romans 11v22: NIV) This article has now come to the end. We have gone on a journey. God brought the Israelites from a mess and took them to a place where they would be a message to the other nations... How God is mighty, Holy, Loving and just. In my own life, God has turned my mess and in his discipline he remembered mercy and given me a message. To finish off I leave you this message:
Ezekiel 33v1-4 (AMP):

"And the word of the Lord came to me saying: speak to your people and say to them, When I bring the sword upon a land and the people of the land take a man from among them and make him their watchman, if when he sees the sword coming upon the land, he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning and the sword comes and takes him way, his blood shall be on his own head. ...But he who takes warning shall save his life"

Let us march on out of the wilderness, and choose to go into the promised land of God's mercy and goodness.

KEY PASSAGES/BOOKS TO READ:

Psalm 29
Joshua 1-4
Hebrew 12
2 Chronicles 20v1-30
Joel
Hosea
Psalm 44
Psalm 77
Matthew 24
Isaiah 58
Luke 13v22-25
Acts 1-2
Luke 3 v21- Luke 4v36

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