



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

## Issachar Comments Papers

Expounding biblical concepts on the world scene today

# A New Season: A New Message

Winter 2012

The Lord has been speaking to me for some time about a 'new season' and a 'new message'. I've been growing in excitement but I've not dared to say anything to anyone (apart from Monica) in case it's just been my imagination, because for 25 years I've carried the same message and I have longed for a new message. In fact I have quite literally cried before the Lord time after time to relieve me of the burden of this message and give me a fresh mandate. But every time the Lord has said "*My grace is sufficient for you*".

### Warning

And I've just had to go on warning and warning of the coming 'great shaking', ever since we were first drawn to Haggai 2.6-7 in Israel in 1986. "*In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty.*" I have understood a little of what Jeremiah meant when he complained, "*Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.*" (Jeremiah 20.8)

### Inevitable

During a few days retreat in Cornwall in August this year the Lord spoke to me saying that the time had come: I could stop giving a message of warning because that message had now been received by large numbers of Christians. Even non-believers could see that the nations were being shaken in everything from the 'banking crisis' to the 'Arab Spring'. I could continue calling for repentance and turning, but I was to stop praying for the nation to be spared the judgement because it was now inevitable.

For much of my ministry I have felt an affinity with the Prophet Jeremiah. He spent 40 years of his life warning people that God would not defend the city of Jerusalem so long as it was filled with idolatry and immorality. The only hope was repentance and turning.

### Civilisation Crumbling

The word of the Lord to Britain and most countries in the Western world has been very similar, but it has not been heard or heeded. We have now reached the point where the foundations of our civilisation are crumbling, but many individuals will be saved in the coming collapse of the social,

economic and political structures of the nations.

God has never left himself without a witness and there are many people today who are listening to the Lord and who realise that we are very near to a great sea-change in world history when a tsunami of socio-economic change will sweep through the nations. For all of us this sounds a frightening prospect because everyone will be affected when God shakes the whole of his creation as he says in Isaiah 24.2, *"It will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor."*

### **Great Exposure**

We are so blinded by our highly secularised mindset that we do not even realise that it is God who is shaking everything. Most people think it is just coincidence that the great banking crisis has come along at the same time as fraud, corruption and deception are being exposed in the financial world and among politicians and leaders of the nations; that child sexual abuse is being uncovered; that there are social and political upheavals in every part of the world, and at the same time there are major disasters in the natural world, earthquakes and famines, hurricanes, storms and floods and droughts - all the things of which Jesus warned in Matthew 24. But these are sure signs that God is shaking the nations as he promised!

### **Blind Guides**

Even many Bible-believing Christians don't have their eyes open to the significance of events in our lifetime. But for those whose spiritual eyes are open, they are aware that God is speaking urgently to his people; not simply warning of the difficult days that lie ahead but calling them to what is probably the most significant task for believers in Jesus since the days of the early church - to be his witnesses in the times of turmoil we are entering.

It is therefore essential that we listen to what God is saying through his word and watch what he is doing today.

### **New Move of God**

The new thing that God is doing is drawing his people together in small groups for prayer, fellowship and study of the Word of God. In the past 10 years there has been a significant growth right across Britain of these small groups; most of them meeting in one another's homes. For example, in 2006 our Ministry initiated a month of evangelism in Cornwall. It was supported by many of the churches, but much of the success was due to the prayer support of a network of small groups across the County. There were 45 of such groups, all linked together to share their concerns for the County and to pray. Today their number has grown to 120. Many in these small groups have come together because they do not feel spiritually fed or supported in local churches.

### ***Koinonia***

This is the new thing God is doing which is similar to New Testament times - studying the Word of God together, supporting each other in fellowship, enjoying meals together and praying. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the Fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* (Acts 2.42) The key word is 'Fellowship' *koinonia*, meaning a group of people devoted to the Lord Jesus, fully committed to supporting each other in love, and only doing as he directed through the Holy Spirit. This kind of group will be of immense importance in the testing times that lie ahead and this is the reason why God is drawing together so many groups of committed Christians today.

## To Build and To Plant

Those who spend time listening to God are hearing about a 'new season and new message'; similar to the word Jeremiah received when the Babylonians began their siege of Jerusalem. At the beginning of his ministry Jeremiah was told that his mission was to *"uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant"* - four negative verbs and two positive. After 40 years of calling for repentance there came a turning point in his ministry when God said *"Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, declares the Lord."* (Jeremiah 31.28) The time for building and planting was now very near although the collapse of the old order had not yet happened.

## Look Beyond the Disaster

It is of great significance that this message came to Jeremiah when the Babylonians had already overrun most of the country but disaster had not yet fallen upon Jerusalem. God was saying - look beyond the disaster to the time of restoration. It was time to re-focus mission. As a sign of Jeremiah's absolute confidence that restoration would come he was instructed to buy a field in what was already enemy occupied territory. The word of the Lord was, *"I am about to hand this city over to the Babylonians"* which was followed by *"This is what the Lord says: as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. Once more fields will be bought in this land."* (Jeremiah 32.28 and 42-43)

The word of the Lord was that judgement on the wicked and idolatrous city was now inevitable. So it was time to look beyond the disaster to the new creative era when God was going to do something amazing among his people and bring Messiah. He was going to establish a New Covenant through which all those whose lives were committed to him would be able to enter a new and intimate relationship with God. The disaster would be the final act in tearing down the old structures of society and religion which were barriers preventing God from fulfilling his purposes. A new creative era was dawning, *"The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfil the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah."* (Jeremiah 33.14)

## Bigamous Marriage

This is what God is saying to us today - the time has come to look beyond the great shaking (which has now begun) to the time of restoration which is coming! God will then do an entirely new thing that is not dependent upon the old structures of the church which have become entwined with secular institutions. The church has drifted into a bigamous marriage with secular humanism, the spirit of the age, and this has distorted its presentation of the gospel to the world.

In the Fourth Gospel there is a telling phrase about the unbelief of the people: *"Even after he (Jesus) had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him"*. John adds, *"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God."*

## Bound by Religion

They were so bound by institutional religion that they were not open to what God was doing and therefore their eyes were blinded. This was exactly what God had said to Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry, a version of which John repeats as an explanation of this blindness among the religious

leaders of his day. *"He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them."* (John 12.40)

It was only after the death and resurrection of Jesus that these leaders were released from the institutional bondage of Temple religion. We read in Acts 6.7 of *"a large number of priests"* becoming obedient to the faith. While Jesus was still alive these men believed in him but they could not separate themselves from the institutional structures which held them in bondage. As Lesslie Newbigin said, *"There had to be a crisis, judgement, a breaking down and a building up, a dying and a new birth. In the end it is only through a new birth that a revelation can be received. And before there can be a new birth there must be a death. The Son of man must be lifted up."*

### Paradigm Shift

Today we have reached a crisis in the Western Church that is coinciding with a paradigm shift in world history. God is doing a new thing. He is shaking all the institutional structures which have become so corrupt that they are denying God's Truth. The climax of the great shaking is yet to come, but God will intervene in human history to save mankind from annihilation and destroying the physical world. The last time God intervened in human history was to send his only begotten Son, but although he came to the world which was made by him his own people did not recognise him. As Jesus himself said, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."* (John 3.19).

### Look to New Era

Today God is bidding us to look beyond the great shaking to see how he intends working out his purposes through a fresh move of the creative power of God. Through drawing together believers in small *koinonia* groups God is preparing his people to be able to stand when he removes his cover of protection from over the old corrupt institutional structures including the church and he is also planting a field in the new Kingdom era which will emerge out of the ashes of destruction.

The new era will be marked by the presence of the Lord among his people like the freshness of a spring morning. They will be cleansed and purified through the dark night of travail but will rejoice in the new birth they see around them as the Lord reveals his glory among his beloved ones. So God is reassuring his people that he will never leave us alone, but he will be with us through the times of turmoil which we can already see on the horizon. The times of restoration and refreshing are assured as God reveals his great love and his purposes to the world.

Out of the shaking will come a great spiritual awakening.

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