

ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE

"For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations , and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations....."Haggai 2:6-7

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MORE
I WILL
SHAKE**

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Revival Ministries Australia, PO Box. 2718, TOOWOOMBA Q.4350, Ph. +617 46130633
Location address: SHILOH Centre, 19 Russell St. Toowoomba, AUSTRALIA

Email: rma@revivalministries.org.au

Website: www.revivalministries.org.au

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Sacrifices Acceptable to God

2. Tithing and Giving in the Church Today

3. Feed your belly and fill your stomach - Ezekiel 3:3

4. Paul's charge to Timothy – 1 Timothy

5. The Commission

6. The Shaking and the Signet

INTRODUCTION

A time of great shakings

The year 2011 has been a time of great shakings in the earth. There have been shakings in the form of natural disasters, tsunamis caused by earthquakes at sea, earthquakes on the land, floods, droughts causing famine, and there have been political shakings in many nations especially in the Middle East and North Africa; as well there have been economic shakings of many nations including the United States of America. At the time of writing, violent rioting has broken out in a number of cities in England.

The kingdom will remain

The writer to the Hebrews, quoting from the book of Haggai, tells us that God has promised to shake the earth and the heavens: ***“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven” (Heb.12:26)***. The Scripture then says, ***“Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain” Heb.12:27***. This is because God is going to fully establish His kingdom in the earth, ***“We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (v.28)***. Notice that we are receiving the kingdom of God in the earth. This is exactly what Jesus instructed us to pray for: ***“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done” (Matt.6:10)***.

In the light of the serious shakings of even this year, 2011, what sort of people should we be and how should we respond? Scripture says, ***“Let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” Heb.12:28***. Then the Scripture says, ***“For our God is a consuming fire” v.29***.

The key words are **grace** and **fire**. Grace is God’s enabling power, enabling us to do His will; to grow up in Christ, even unto perfection. Fire speaks of judgement and the judgement is for the refining of the saints so that we will become more dependent upon grace.

The purpose of the shakings

What is the purpose of the shakings? The shakings are God’s judgement on those things which can be shaken; those things which man has constructed in disobedience and rebellion against God. What man has built throughout history began back in the book of Genesis. Cain built a city dedicated to unrighteousness (**Gen.4:17**). The people of the earth, after the flood, sought to build a city and a tower that would reach to heaven (**Gen.11:4**), seeking to make themselves independent of God.

At the end of the age, God is shaking all that man has constructed until only His kingdom remains. His judgement is as ***“a consuming fire”***! Therefore the judgements [shakings] are as fire, causing us to turn to God in full repentance and causing us to live a life that is worthy of the calling ***“with which we were called” (Eph.4:1)***. The pride and independence of man will be dealt with. The meek will inherit the earth (**Matt.5:5**).

Jesus said, ***“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt.11:29)***. The phrase *lowly in heart*, is the Greek word: *‘tapeinos’* and literally means *low to the ground; the word signifies low estate, lowly in position and power, humble*. We are all to learn from Jesus: ***“Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” (Phil.2:6-7)***. God became a man and dwelt

Once More I Will Shake

among us (**Jn.1:14**). We can only know God by knowing Him in the lowly state of Him having become manifest in the flesh; by meeting Jesus.

HOW ARE WE TO LIVE IN THESE DAYS?

➤ **Sacrifices of righteousness**

Firstly we need to practice living by faith, thus offering to God continually the sacrifices of righteousness, putting our faith in God, offering our whole bodies to Him and praising Him in every situation, being willing to share and contribute to the wellbeing of others.

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” Rom.4:3.

As we live by faith and walk by grace, we will inherit the promise made to Abraham; we will inherit the kingdom of heaven in the earth. Understanding the sacrifices that are acceptable to God, brings us back to a Scriptural understanding of how to live and walk in the grace.

➤ **Tithing and giving in the church today**

Secondly we are to become obedient to the Biblical practice of tithing and giving in the church today.

Tithing began with Abraham. Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, committed to tithing when he received a revelation of the house of God in the earth.

There is much contending today, even in apostolic and prophetic circles, as to the Scriptural reality of tithing. And yet tithing is the cornerstone of kingdom economics. This is God’s way of supporting and releasing the five-fold ministries to bring the church to maturity in these end times; these days of great shakings, thus building the house of God in the earth.

➤ **Feed your belly and fill your stomach**

Thirdly we are to truly be disciples of the word; then we will be disciples indeed and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (**Jn.8:31-32**).

In **Ezekiel 3** there is a strong exhortation for us all to be serious disciples of the word of God. If we are not serious disciples of the word of God, we will be shaken and we will fail to see the manifestation of His glory.

For the word of God to be manifest in us and to be spoken effectively by us, the word of God must be received by us.

➤ **Paul’s charge to Timothy**

Fourthly we are to return to the apostolic pattern and practice of the New Testament church.

Paul, as an apostle, patterned for us how to disciple, train and raise sons in the ministry. Such apostolic grace has been totally missing from much of the modern church. Ministers are given positions on the basis of academic qualifications, or simply filling a leadership position out of need. In the New Testament, Jesus raised the twelve to be as Himself, entrusting them to do the work of building the church. Paul’s emphasis in the first book of Timothy is on **doctrine**.

➤ **The Commission**

Fifthly the church is commissioned to bring all nations to the obedience of faith for the sake of Jesus’ name (**Rom.1:5**).

It is time to return to the Scriptures and to carefully discern and follow the pattern set by Jesus and so fully demonstrated for us in the ministry of Paul. It is time to understand and

Once More I Will Shake

to receive apostles and the grace that God is releasing to His whole church through apostles, enabling the whole church to grow up and become the vehicle through which God will demonstrate His kingdom in all the earth.

We are to raise sons who are beloved, faithful and true, enabled to do the work of the ministry, giving earnest heed to doctrine, and thus dealing with the false doctrines that hold the church in bondage.

➤ **The Shaking and the Signet**

Sixthly we need to understand what God is doing through the shakings and His answer in restoring apostles to the church, thereby enabling the proper alignment of the church as clearly set out in the New Testament.

There has certainly been many shakings this year [2011], and they continue. The global economy appears to be very volatile and political crises continue in many countries. The purpose of the shakings is that the people of the world turn to God. **This must begin with the people of the word, the believers.**

God is emphasising that all the answers we need are in His word and the very fact that God is restoring apostles to His church is a sign from God that He is going to complete His work in the earth. Jesus began the work of building the church by raising the twelve apostles.

Zechariah says, ***“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you” (Zech.4:9).***

At the end of the age, Jesus is completing the building of His church by raising many apostles, who are to minister as master builders, enabling all ministers and brethren to function in the mature church (**1Cor.3:10**).

Through the apostles and the raising of all the five-fold ministers (**Eph.4:11**), Jesus will bring His church to maturity, and through the church reveal His end time purposes: the manifestation of His government in every realm in heaven and earth.

SACRIFICES ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

Hosea 6:6 says that God requires mercy not sacrifice. From **Hebrews 10** we know that God no longer requires sacrifices of bulls and goats: *“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure”* Heb.10:5-6. Such sacrifices are not acceptable to God.

However we read in Scripture of some sacrifices that are acceptable to God, and these are the ones we want to look at.

1) SACRIFICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In **Psalm 4:5** we read *“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD [YAHWEH]”*. Putting your trust in God is the same as having faith in God. There is a sacrifice of righteousness to be offered and the key is to put our trust in YAHWEH, or to have faith in God.

When Moses was speaking blessings over the tribes of Israel in **Deuteronomy 33**, he said to Zebulun, *“They shall call the peoples to the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness”* (v.19). We are not only to come to a place where we offer a sacrifice of righteousness, but we are to call others to that place also to offer the sacrifice of righteousness.

At the end of David’s prayer of repentance in **Psalm 51:19** he says, *“Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness”*. David had come to true repentance, acknowledging his sin and putting his faith in God to deliver and restore him.

The sacrifice of righteousness can only be offered after we have come to repentance and been cleansed of all unrighteousness: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* 1Jn.1:9.

What is righteousness?

The Greek word for righteousness is: *dikaioσύνη* (*dik-ah-yos-oo-nay*) meaning – *just, the quality of being right. Broadly the word suggests conformity to the revealed will of God in all respects. It is both judicial and gracious. God declares the believer righteous, in the sense of acquitting him, and imparts righteousness to him.* {SFLBible, Word Wealth @ 2Tim.4:8}

Jesus is the LORD our righteousness

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied about the coming of a Branch of righteousness in **Jeremiah 23:6**: *“Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* – in Hebrew, YAHWEH Tsidkenu!

Jeremiah also prophesies that the bride church will be called by this name: *“And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* Jer.33:16. We are to be called righteous because we have been made righteous by Jesus!

Jesus became righteousness for us

Jesus is our righteousness, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* 2Cor.5:21. God has done His part.

Once More I Will Shake

Through Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and rising again from the dead, He has imparted to us His righteousness. We receive this by faith, by putting our trust in Him.

We have no righteousness of our own, ***“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one” Rom.3:10.***

Paul writes in **Philippians 3:8-9** ***“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law [our own efforts] but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”*** Nothing we can do will make us righteous; it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that we are made righteous.

Our righteousness is from Christ (Rom.5:17-21)

It is by grace that we receive the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ. ***“Through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (v.18-19).*** Adam’s disobedience brought condemnation and death to mankind; Christ’s obedience brought justification and life to mankind thus making us righteous.

Isaiah 64:6 refers to our righteousness as being like ***“filthy rags”***; but instead we have been clothed in His righteousness. ***“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” Isa.61:10.***

Our sacrifice of righteousness is having faith in Jesus

Psalms 4:5 said we are to put our trust in YAHWEH. This is the key. The sacrifice of righteousness we are to make is to believe and receive all that Jesus did for us at the cross. It is to receive the precious gift of salvation and to believe that His blood has cleansed us from our sin.

We are made righteous by the blood of Jesus. He shed His blood not only to forgive our sins, but also ***“to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn.1:9).*** This is full remission: not only are our sins forgiven, but we are made righteous.

Walking by faith

It is by faith that we are justified: ***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom5:1).*** It is by faith that we enter into righteousness, that is, into right relationship with God. And this faith gives us a standing in grace, ***“through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (Rom.5:2),*** which then enables us to glory in tribulations (v.3).

We are to enter into the fullness of all that Jesus has done for us. This is the sacrifice we are to make. Yes, we can believe in our minds that we are saved and that our sins have been taken away, but in the times of trouble and tribulation, are we able to offer the sacrifices of righteousness and trust in the Lord, knowing that He is well able to save and deliver us, no matter what we may be facing or going through. It is the grace that enables us to stand in the face of tribulation.

It is by faith that we offer our sacrifices of righteousness

We are to make a sacrifice

Let us look at the word 'sacrifice'. In **Deuteronomy 16:2** God instructed Moses ***"You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the heard, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name."***

The Hebrew word 'sacrifice' in this verse is *zabach* (*zah-vakh*): meaning— *to slay, slaughter, or sacrifice. Whereas sacrifice in English sometimes suggests merely an inconvenience or the giving of a costly gift, in Hebrew it involves the offering of a life.*

{SFLB Word Wealth @ Deut.16:2}

Sacrifice means the offering of a life: Jesus became the Passover Lamb; He gave His life so that we could be made righteous.

This brings us to the second sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

2) A SACRIFICE OF OUR LIVES

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" **Rom.12:1-2.**

We are to offer our lives to God as a living sacrifice. We need to die to our flesh life. This is a sacrifice of putting to death the things of the flesh; no longer my will; no longer my selfish desires; we are to deal with pride, with our own self-righteousness, etc.

It is no longer I who live

It is realising that ***"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"*** **Gal.2:20.**

Remember that because of the sacrifice of righteousness we have a place to come to. ***"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*** **Heb.4:16.** We need to come boldly and offer ourselves as that living sacrifice.

Offer your whole body

We are to offer our whole body. This involves every part of our being: physical body, soul life, including our mind, will and emotions, and spirit life. It is making Jesus Lord of every part of our lives.

As we offer our physical bodies we can choose to believe that on the cross Jesus has ***"borne our griefs [sicknesses] and carried our sorrows [pains]"*** (**Isa.53:4**). Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit: ***"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"*** (**1Cor.6:19**).

We are to ***"set our mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"*** (**Col.3:2-3**). We need to fill our minds with godly things. ***"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things"*** **Phil.4:8.**

Once More I Will Shake

This is how we offer the sacrifice of our lives, and **Romans 12:1** says that **this is an acceptable sacrifice to God**.

Our focus is on Jesus

We offer the sacrifice of righteousness, which is fully embracing all that Jesus did for us on the cross, putting our trust in Him. Our response is then to offer ourselves back to Him as a living sacrifice – offering our bodies. Our focus is now on Jesus, not on ourselves.

We are now able to offer the third sacrifice.

3) THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” Heb.13:15.

We are exhorted to offer a sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips. This means to speak out, to sing out loud, to make a joyful noise of praise unto God.

A sacrifice is costly; sometimes we may not feel like praising God, but it is at those very times that we need to begin to speak out praises to Him; to speak out thankfulness for who He is and for what He has done. If we will do this, our emotions will settle and we will experience His peace.

Give thanks to the LORD

“I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD [YAHWEH]” Ps.116:17.

“Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing” Ps.107:22. We are exhorted many times in the Psalms to speak out praise and thanksgiving to God. This is an expression of our faith, remembering what He has done and what He is going to do.

Thanksgiving = a sacrifice of praise

The Hebrew word for ‘thanksgiving’ is *todah* and means: *thanks, thanksgiving, adoration, praise. Todah is translated ‘sacrifice of praise’ in Jeremiah 33:11. {SFLB Word Wealth @ Ps.95:2}*

In this wonderful chapter of restoration the prophet Jeremiah says that there will again be heard *“the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever; and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD” Jer.33:11.* Let us be those who willingly bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD!

Offer prayers with thanksgiving

Paul the apostle also exhorts us in his writings to be thankful people. Even when we are making our requests known to God, we are to do so with *“thanksgiving” (Phil.4:6)*. The result of this will be that *“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (v.7).*

Once More I Will Shake

Those who are filled with God's spirit are able to offer this sacrifice. *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" Eph.5:19-20.*

Flowing out of our praise filled, thankful hearts, comes the desire to fulfil the next sacrifice.

4) A SACRIFICE OF SERVICE AND SHARING

The writer to the Hebrews says, *"But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" Heb.13:16.* It seems that to 'do good' and 'to share' are sacrifices which please God.

In Paul's letter to the Romans he exhorts them to be *"distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Rom.12:13).*

Jesus is our example

Jesus showed us how to serve. He said, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt.20:28).* Jesus is the greatest servant of all, and He gave Himself for mankind.

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" 1Jn.3:16.

At the Last Supper, Jesus washed His disciples' feet. He then said to them, *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn.13:14).* This is the heart attitude that we are to have: being willing to serve others gladly, even in a sacrificial way.

The early church had a deep level of sharing

In Acts 2:42 we read of the first works of the early church. *"And they continued steadfastly in ... the fellowship ...".*

This word 'fellowship' is the Greek word *koinonia* and means: *sharing, unity, close association, partnership, participation, a society, a communion, fellowship, contributory help.*

{SFLB Word Wealth @ Acts 2:42}

We see from Acts 2:44-45 that there was a deep level of sharing among the brethren in the early church. *"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need."* It seems people were willing to make this sacrifice, even to share goods and possessions with one another.

Sharing your faith

The same word *koinonia* is used in Philemon v6, and here it is referring to the sharing of your faith. *"That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."*

Once More I Will Shake

Sharing your faith can be a sacrifice. It may mean in some countries that you will lose your life! Sharing of your faith is honouring Jesus, as you are speaking out your testimony of what He has done in your life.

Sharing finances

Paul in his letter to the Philippians is praising them for their generosity. They had prepared a financial gift for him, which they sent to him by Epaphroditus.

Paul believes that the sacrificial gift sent by the Philippians will yield spiritual fruit in their lives, *“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” Phil.4:17-18*. Paul calls this an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God!

The sacrifice of giving is pleasing to God

Sharing produces a spiritual result

In **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**, Paul is again speaking in the context of financial giving, and he refers to such giving as ‘service’; *“For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ and for your liberal sharing with them and all men ...” (12-13)*.

Generous giving not only meets the needs of others, but also produces spiritual results: there will be thanksgiving to God and He will be glorified!

True sacrificial service brings glory to God

CONCLUSION

We have looked at four sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

- Sacrifices of righteousness
- A sacrifice of our lives
- The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving
- A sacrifice of serving and sharing

May we be willing to humble ourselves daily before God and to offer such sacrifices that are pleasing and acceptable to Him.

TITHING AND GIVING IN THE CHURCH TODAY

“But this I say: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity [by compulsion]; for God loves a cheerful giver” 2Cor. 9:6-7.

A general offering for a specific need

These Scriptures are in the context of a general offering that Paul was overseeing the collection of, among the churches he was responsible for. This offering had been announced more than one year previously (v.2), so that the churches involved had plenty of time to consider the offering and to consider their contribution.

“For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God” 1Cor. 9:12. This offering was to help the Judean saints who were suffering because of temporal needs. When offerings are given in the will of God, this leads to many thanksgivings to God. There is a release of joy and thanksgiving.

The material support of ministers

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul had spoken about the material support of ministers. Referring to Christian ministers and specifically apostles, he quoted from the law of Moses: *“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” (1Cor. 9:9).* Paul is clear that it is God’s will for those who *“have sown spiritual things”, to “reap your material things” (1Cor. 9:11).* Paul says it is our *“right” (v.12).*

Paul likens those who preach the gospel as fulltime ministers to the priests who served in the temple. He says, the priests *“who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar” (v.13).* *“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” 1Cor. 9:14.*

Paul’s instructions

So far in the two books to the Corinthians, we have found Paul addressing issues of financial giving. There was an **offering for needy saints**, which was collected over an extended period of time; and he gave **instruction for the support of ministers** and in the context he is specifically referring to apostles (1Cor. 9:1-6).

According to one’s ability

The offering that was received was to be *“according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2Cor.8:12).* We should take care not to burden the saints with continual appeals for finance. I have witnessed many times, the collection of regular Sunday offerings being administered in a demanding and controlling way. Offerings are to be freewill offerings, according to the ability of the giver, in obedience to God.

We should respect the integrity of God’s people to give as they are able, and not be challenging them every time an offering is taken.

Receiving offerings

Ministers who are announcing and receiving offerings should be careful not to make many ‘promises’ to the people, but to be straightforward with the brethren. If there is a need,

Once More I Will Shake

share the need; if the offering is simply for the upkeep and running of the local church then be straightforward about that.

Giving is by faith

It is unreal to promise God's people that every time they give they are doing something that will bring them prosperity. It should be obvious to the minister that if the same people are coming to the meeting every Sunday, whether they are prospering or not.

**Tithes and offerings are to be given in obedience to God by faith,
not to attain to some promised state of prosperity.**

HOW WERE THE MINISTERS TO BE SUPPORTED?

It is not clear how ministers were supported, unless we accept that tithing was and is a normal practice in the New Testament church. Paul referred to his support coming from the Philippian church. He said, *"Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only"* Phil.4:15.

We do not know the nature of this support that Paul received:

- Was it tithing that the Philippian church had received?
- Was it regular offerings or a special offering?
- Was it a tithe of the tithe that the church sent to Paul?

We are not told, but we are told that it was *"a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God"* (v.18).

Double honour

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine" 1Tim.5:17. In this context Paul quotes from the law about the ox being able to eat as it treads out the grain, and says: *"The labourer is worthy of his wages"* (v.18). These Scriptures are talking about paying ministers and especially those ministers **who labour in the word and doctrine**.

[The elders in the New Testament fulfilled the role of pastors.]

Again we ask the question: How was the money provided in the local churches for the support of ministers? Was tithing the normal practice of the New Testament church?

In the first church

In the early chapters of Acts, there was no lack of giving. Brethren *"sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need"* (Acts 2:45).

"Nor was there any among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" Acts 4:34-35.

Barnabas was one of those who *"having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (v.36-37).

The apostles received the giving and were responsible for the administration of using the giving for the welfare of the whole church, but we also know from Paul's comments in **1 Corinthians 9** that the apostles were also supported through the giving of the brethren, even to the extent of being able to take a believing wife along with them (**1Cor.9:5**).

Once More I Will Shake

This giving in the first church apparently was far and beyond a tithe, for in the references given, it appears everything was given as an offering, when land or houses were sold.

The incident in **Acts 5** is not concerning how much was given but that the husband and wife, *“agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord”* (v.9), by lying to Peter about how much they had received.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GIVING

The widow's mite

“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how people put money into the treasury. And many rich put in much.

Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites which make a quadrans.

[A quadrans was one quarter of a denarius; a denarius was a labourer's daily wage.]

So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood’” Mk.12:41-44.

The treasury

The widow and others were putting their money into the treasury. Apparently this was a public offering and there were *‘13 chests shaped like trumpets’* [SFLB page 1374, footnote v.41]. The Scripture says *“many who were rich put in much”* (v.41). Jesus, sitting opposite the treasury, was able to see what people were putting in to the chests. This money was for the upkeep of the Temple, the house of God in that day.

Giving liberally

Jesus said, *“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you”* Lu.6:38. This Scripture is applied liberally to include giving of finance, but its context is that of judging one another and alternatively, forgiving one another. Jesus wants us to be generous to show mercy and forgiveness in relationships.

The principle of generosity is clearly enshrined in this saying of Jesus and can be applied to any area of giving, including financial.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT TITHING

In **Matthew 23** Jesus is speaking to the multitudes and to His disciples. The whole chapter is a strong condemnation of *“the scribes and Pharisees who sit in Moses' seat”* (v.1). **But it is addressed to His disciples.** This is important because in **verse 23** Jesus addresses the practice of tithing and clearly approves of the practice and in the context, is telling His disciples that tithing continues.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” Matt.23:23.

This is an amazing verse! Jesus said that the weightier matters of the law are justice, mercy and faith. Even faith is at the core of the law! How often have we misunderstood the law of God; and not understood that the law is the Torah, the teaching, the instruction of Moses, received from God, **teaching us how to love God and how to love our neighbour.**

Once More I Will Shake

In the context, Jesus is referring to tithing being a practice under the law and that it is not to be left “*undone*”; but tithing is to be practiced in the greater context of justice, mercy and faith, by the disciples.

A fulfilment of the law

In **Matthew 5**, as well as giving us the blessed attitudes that we should seek to emulate in our lives, Jesus also gives us a new covenant application of the commandments (**Matt.5:21-30**). He said, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil*” v.17. The point to understand is: what is the fulfilment of tithing since Jesus has come.

“*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will be no means pass away from the law till all is fulfilled*” v.18. It is not for us to proclaim that something should no longer be done because we are no longer under the Law. We need to understand the fulfilment of all things in Christ. And we need to understand how Christian ministers and ministry are to be supported in the Christian community.

“*Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*” v.19. Tithing was commanded under the Law; therefore we must take care before we proclaim tithing as no longer an inherently blessed practice.

The promised blessings

Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, addressed the issue of tithing and revealed the wonderful blessings that are promised by God to those who tithe. Is it correct to say, ‘Those blessings were for those who tithed under the law’? Countless millions of God’s people have proved that those same blessings are released by God today to those who tithe by faith (**Mal.3:10-12**). Actually Jesus said that faith was at the heart of the law and therefore even under the Law, tithing was by faith, as that was the only way to receive the blessing.

But tithing preceded the law and in a sense transcends the law as something of ongoing worth, even as justice, mercy and faith transcend the law and are eternal expressions of Godliness in society.

TITHING BEFORE THE LAW

The first mention of tithing is in **Genesis 14:20b**. Abraham gave to Melchizedek “*a tithe of all*”. This was in response to Abraham meeting “*Melchizedek, king of Salem who brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High*” **Gen.14:18**. This Melchizedek then blessed Abram in the name of God Most High. In response to the blessing, Abraham gave him the tithe.

In terms of the Old Testament, Melchizedek is like a mythical figure. He is mentioned in **Genesis 14** and the only other time, in **Psalms 110:4**, “*The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’*”.

The reference in **Psalms 110** is in the context, a reference to Messiah, who would “*sit at YAHWEH’s right hand*” (v.1). In the Old Testament this Melchizedek is linked to the Messiah.

Whom did Abram meet?

Jacob became a tithing man

Once More I Will Shake

When Jacob dreamed in the place that he named Bethel, he saw visions of God and heard His voice in the dream. When he awoke he proclaimed,

- ❖ *“How awesome is this place!*
- ❖ *This is none other than the house of God,*
- ❖ *and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen.28:17).*

Jacob then set up the stone as a pillar and proclaimed the name of the place Bethel, which means ‘house of God’.

Jacob then said

- *“And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house,*
- *and all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” Gen.28:22.*

Jacob declared that he was going to be a tithing man from that time on. His commitment to tithing was because he had a revelation of the living God and a revelation of the house of God.

Jacob committed his tithe in the context of the building of the house of God.

MELCHIZEDEK

Melchizedek is next mentioned in the Scriptures in **Hebrews 5:6 & v10**. These references tell us that the Son, who is Christ, has become High Priest, *“according to the order of Melchizedek”* (v.10), thus fulfilling the promise in **Psalms 110**.

High Priest

Melchizedek is again mentioned in **Hebrews 6:20**, confirming that Jesus has become *“High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”*.

Like the Son of God

Then in **chapter 7** we have a wonderful exposition of Melchizedek: *“without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually”* (v.3). Melchizedek is like the Son of God.

King of Righteousness

He is a king and a priest; his name, Melchizedek is translated ‘king of righteousness’. There is only One who is the King of Righteousness: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah prophesied His name *“by which He shall be called: YAHWEH TSIDKENU, the LORD our Righteousness”* (Jer.23:6). This is a Messianic reference to Jesus the Messiah.

King of Peace

Melchizedek is also *“king of Salem, meaning king of peace”* (Heb.7:2). Isaiah refers to the Messiah as *“the Prince of Peace”* (Isa.9:6), and God revealed Himself to Gideon as **YAHWEH SHALOM**, the LORD our PEACE (**Jud.6:24**).

Pre-incarnation appearance?

Melchizedek is a pre-incarnation appearance of the Son of God, that is, an appearance of God in human form in the Old Testament. Abraham, the father of the faith (**Rom.4:16**), gave his tithe to Melchizedek, the king priest, who represented God Most High (**Gen.14:19-20**).

TITHING TODAY

The significance of tithing in the New Testament is attested to in these verses in **Hebrews 7**. The writer is explaining to us the revelation of ‘Who Melchizedek is?’

Abraham tithed to Melchizedek

One of the important points that is emphasised more than any other fact given about Melchizedek, is that Abraham tithed to Melchizedek. Because Abraham is the father of Levi, through Isaac and Jacob, and because Levi became the ministers under the Old Covenant, the Scriptures says, *“Even Levi who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him” (v.9-10).*

Tithing under the Law was for the priests

As the ministers of the Old Covenant, the sons of Levi had *“a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they come from the loins of Abraham” (v.5)*. Tithing under the law was primarily for the support of the priests, the ministers.

The writer to the Hebrews is showing us that while tithing was a required practice under the law, specifically for the upkeep of the ministers, Abraham’s tithing to Melchizedek shows us that tithing is something much greater than a requirement of the law.

Melchizedek – a type of Christ

“Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils” (v.4). Under the law the Levites received tithes from their brethren, but Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, the King Priest, who appeared to him, who gave him bread and wine and who blessed him.

The Levitical priests who received tithes from their brethren were mortal men, and as men were subject to death. Melchizedek, as a type of Christ, *“having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Heb.7:3)*, is an immortal being – he represents Christ. In type, Abraham was tithing to Christ.

We are the children of Abraham by faith and so our tithe is given to the King Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ. We tithe to one much greater than our brethren. We do not tithe to a man, but we tithe to the Lord Himself.

A testimony

Some of our support comes through the mail. I was blessed recently to receive a letter from a sister we know well, and who lives very far from Shiloh centre in Toowoomba. She gave us news of herself and her husband; she shared their prayer needs; and finally said, ‘I am including my tithe to God’. I was impressed that she had such an understanding of her tithe.

Tithing is by faith

Tithing for the New Testament believer is by faith, not by commandment. The tithe is given to God according to revelation: that Jesus is the great High Priest and the reigning King. The One we tithe to is the Son of God, who remains a priest forever.

Tithing included looking after widows ...

The tithe, the first tenth of all increase we receive, belongs to the Lord (**Deut.26:12**). According to the Law, the tithe in the third year was given *“to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow” (v.11)*. It is interesting to note that the first church gave precedence to the care of widows (**Acts 6:1-4**); that Paul gave instructions regarding the care

Once More I Will Shake

of widows (**1Tim.5:3-16**); and James promotes the virtue of looking after widows and orphans [fatherless] (**Ja.1:27**).

Do not eat the tithe

The tithe was holy: *“I have removed the holy tithe [hallowed things] from my house”* v.13.

We are not to use the tithe on our own needs: *“I have not eaten any of it”* (v.14).

Tithing releases blessing

As a result of faithfully giving the tithe as God directed, the giver was then able to pray, *“Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people and the land”* (v.15). Tithing by faith in obedience to the word of God releases blessing.

We can pray with authority and expectation for God’s blessing. God says, *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it”* (Mal.3:10).

*God is speaking afresh regarding tithing.
Let us be careful not to dismiss tithing
as being “under the law”
and thus rob not only God,
but rob His people of bountiful blessings
and cause there to be a famine
for the word of God in the church.*

“FEED YOUR BELLY AND FILL YOUR STOMACH” Ezekiel 3:3

It is very important that we are fully disciplined and properly trained in the word of God to be able to effectively and fruitfully do the work of the ministry. Let us draw from the commissioning of Ezekiel to understand more of how we can be prepared for God to send us and to use us in the work of discipleship in these last days that we live in.

The commissioning of Ezekiel

In the first chapters of the book of **Ezekiel**, Ezekiel, who was a priest, is being commissioned to be a prophet. He saw visions beyond the veil; he saw God manifest in very complex and awe-inspiring visions; he heard the voice of the Almighty and he saw the throne, **“with the appearance of a man high above it” (Eze.1:26)**. Ezekiel summed up the vision saying, **“This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD [YAHWEH]” v.28**.

By the Spirit

In **chapter two**, Ezekiel said, **“The Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me” (v.2)**. Notice that it is only by the Spirit that we can relate to and experience God, and be able to obey Him. It is not by words only. In these days with the availability of the internet, there are many who are speaking many words, but there are few who are reporting fruitful ministry that is changing people’s lives and transforming the people of God to become **“the church of the living God” (1Tim.3:15)**.

The Spirit of God is the agent of transformation in our lives to change us into the image and likeness of Him who called us. **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” 2Cor.3:18**.

Sent to a rebellious people

God warned Ezekiel that the people he was to be sent to were, **“a rebellious nation” (Eze.2:3)**, **“impudent and stubborn children” (v.4)**. God told Ezekiel, **“Do not be afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words ... do not be dismayed by their looks” (v.6)**. God was speaking about His people! How similar is the church today?

Then God showed Ezekiel **“a scroll of a book ... and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe” (Eze.2:9-10)**.

EAT THE SCROLL

In Ezekiel **chapter three**, God told Ezekiel, **“Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel” (3:1)**. There is order in this command:

- Eat this scroll
- Go
- Speak to the house of Israel

Many want to go, and do go, before they have received the word themselves. There is **a necessary period of discipleship and training whereby we receive the word of God** and the word becomes part of us. Then when we go, we will be speaking the message of God’s word.

Once More I Will Shake

The message of the word of God will transform, even if the message first has to **“root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down”**; and then the word preached will **“build and plant”** (Jer.1:10).

Recently I have been reading a book published in 1941 and the author said then, that the main problem in the church world-wide was that, *‘The Christian church has for centuries failed to take seriously and carry out fully the Great Commission.’** At a training day at SHILOH for the apostolic company recently, I shared a message on this theme: *‘The Great Commission remains unfulfilled today’*. We have work to do!

* {Israel and the New Covenant by Roderick Campbell}

Go and make disciples

This is the great challenge of today: to motivate the church that meets on Sundays and often one other time per week, to take seriously the command of Jesus **to go and make disciples**. In reality most of the church is functioning in disobedience to Jesus.

We are building ‘churches’, not making disciples. Millions of dollars are being spent on church facilities while the nation slips inevitably into anti-Christ laws and government, and the mission to the nations is largely ignored.

The pure word is like honey

Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll. God said to him, **“feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll”** (Eze.3:3). We need to fill our ‘belly’ with the word of God. Unless the word of God gets inside of us and is digested fully so that it becomes part of our life, it will not be possible for **“rivers of living water”** to flow out of our **heart** [also translated as *innermost being*, and as *belly*] to give **drink** to the thirsty who are coming to Jesus (Jn.7:37-38).

Even as Ezekiel could only receive the word and be lifted up and enabled to speak the word by the Spirit, so Jesus, when He was speaking of **rivers of living water** flowing out from the innermost heart of believers, was referring to the **giving of the Holy Spirit** (Jn.7:39).

Ezekiel said that the scroll, as he ate it, **“was in my mouth like honey in sweetness”** (Eze.3:3). The Psalmist said that the **statutes, commandment and judgements of the LORD** are **“sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”** (Ps.19:8-10). [See also Psalm 119:103].

The word transforms

“The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” Ps.12:6. When we return to the Scriptures as they are written, and teach and preach the pure word of God, the results are amazing.

We testify that in many nations, we have seen many ministers and Christian leaders transformed as they receive the pure word of God. Too many still go with a denominational or partisan message, but I promise you, if you will return to the pure word of God and only speak the word, Jesus will be revealed as the only true God, who manifested in the flesh, and the brethren you speak to, will be revived in their faith and the church will begin to be transformed.

GO AND SPEAK

“Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak My words to them” Eze.3:4.

Ezekiel was sent to the house of Israel; our primary task today is to reach the church of Jesus Christ in all of its various, separated parts (v.5-6).

Once More I Will Shake

Once we have received the word of God and we have been soundly taught, having the foundations of the faith properly laid in our understanding, then we are able to be sent.

In October 2010, Janet and I were privileged to sit with Tony Fitzgerald, an international apostle who leads a large international family of apostolic churches. Tony summed up the mission that he has been labouring in for over 30 years, as ***DISCIPLE AND SEND***. Tony as an expatriate Australian is now sending missionaries back into Australia. Hallelujah!

God strengthens and forearms us

Ezekiel was being sent to the house of Israel, people who spoke his language, but God warned him that they would not listen to the word of God. God said, ***“All the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted” (Eze.3:5-7).***

God said, ***“Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads” v.8.*** The face is the reflection of the soul of man and God was going to strengthen Ezekiel’s character so that he would not flinch when he saw the faces of people who were fighting against the word of God, expressing their impudence and hard-heartedness.

The forehead is the hardest part of the head and it is often where we are attacked by oppressive, negative forces. God said, I will make your forehead ***“like adamant stone, harder than flint” (v.9).*** God was teaching Ezekiel how to withstand attacks that would come when people refused to receive the word that he was to deliver.

In teaching us on the armour of God, Paul instructs us to ***“take the helmet of salvation” (Eph.6:17).*** The helmet obviously protects our head, including the forehead. The helmet of salvation suggests that our head is fully covered by the reality of salvation which is made known to us through the doctrines of the Scriptures. The helmet of salvation, refers to our being steeped in the word of God and able to stand against all attacks of the enemy.

God makes a way

In the experience of many years of international ministry, we have learnt these lessons of standing strong and unflinchingly, because often the word of God is resisted by some of the pastors and leaders. However we are glad to testify that in seven weeks of ministry in five African nations in May/June of 2010, we were received everywhere we went. God had given us a *rhema* word from **Hebrew 10:5-10**. The word was simply ***“a body you have prepared for me” (v.5),*** and this is what God did. He went before us and prepared a body of leaders in every place who received us as messengers of God and received the word which God gave us to deliver.

The Spirit lifted him up

Ezekiel was now ready to go. God reminded him again to receive ***“into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears” (Eze.3:10).***

God has promised that He will write the word on our hearts (**Jer.31:33 & Heb.8:10**). We need to hear the word with spiritual ears. Jesus often said, ***“He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt.13:43b).***

“Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: ‘Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place’” Eze.3:12. Now the Spirit comes and

Once More I Will Shake

empowers Ezekiel to do the work of the ministry! He heard the voice of God: *A great thunderous voice!* [Compare this to **Ezekiel 1:24**].

Ezekiel saw the glory of the LORD

The voice said *Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!* This is an amazing confession. God had already revealed Himself in amazing visions to Ezekiel. Now the word of God is confirming that the glory of YAHWEH would come *from His place* and go with Ezekiel to carry out the mission. How awesome is this!

We are reminded of Moses in **Exodus 33**, interceding with God, *“If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here”* (v.15).

The Commission of Jesus to us

When Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations, He said, *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (**Matt.28:19-20**). The Commission that Jesus gave to the apostles, and through the apostles, to the whole church, is to go and make disciples. This is the only way that the church, which always refers to the members of the church – the people – can grow to maturity. The work of the church is much more than evangelism; is much more than getting people saved.

The obedience of faith

The work of the church is to *“believe in Him whom He sent”* (**Jn.6:29**). An aspect of faith that we often overlook is obedience. James teaches us that without obedience, which is the work of faith, there is really no faith (**Jam.2:17-22**).

So what is the work of faith that Jesus gave us to do? *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (**Matt.28:19**). To be able to do this, we need to be disciplined first. We need to **eat the scroll!** There are no shortcuts to being an effective witness and minister of Jesus Christ.

Necessary training

As we travel the nations and observe what is happening in our own nation, we see that many who are even in ministry leadership positions are not adequately trained for the work of the ministry. Many have very little training and others have a denominational training which can easily lock up the person’s understanding of the Bible into denominational teaching only.

The great need today is for all of us to humble down and study afresh the word of God. This includes receiving apostles – truly **sent ones** – who are able to lay the foundation of Biblical doctrine in our understanding and disciple us in the word of God.

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

1Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1Tim.1:1a). It appears there is only one kind of apostle after all: an apostle of Jesus Christ! Actually there are no horizontal or vertical apostles in the Bible; there are no *marketplace apostles*! But there are apostles of Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS AN APOSTLE?

An apostle is *one sent*! An apostle is one sent on behalf of another with the authority of the sender to successfully fulfil that for which he is sent, and to fully represent and make known the sender.

Jesus told the twelve when He first sent them out: *“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives the One who sent Me” Matt.10:40.* They were to represent Jesus and make His Father known in so doing.

Later Jesus told them, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age” Matt.28:19-20.* They were to make disciples, thoroughly, and in all generations, until the end of the age.

How is one an apostle of Jesus Christ?

Apostles are called and chosen by Jesus Christ. There is no Bible School to attend and graduate from.

- The twelve were appointed by Jesus after He *“continued all night in prayer to God” (Lu.6:12-13).*
- Matthias was chosen by God through the casting of lots. The other disciple, Joseph, qualified in that he had been a faithful disciple of Jesus from the beginning, but God chose Matthias for the office of apostleship at that time (**Acts1:21-26**).
- Paul and Barnabas were called by name by the Holy Spirit through a prophetic word as they ministered to the Lord among the teachers and prophets at Antioch. After the ministering elders had laid hands on them, they were *“sent out by the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:1-4a).* From that time they were called and known as apostles (**Acts14:4,14**).

WHO IS JESUS?

If one is an apostle of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, then as an apostle, one must be able to reveal who Jesus is. The divinity of Jesus has been downplayed and even lost in much of modern, and even traditional Christendom. An apostle of Jesus must preach again the mystery of godliness:

*“God was manifested in the flesh
Justified in the Spirit
Seen by angels
Preached among the nations [Gentiles]
Believed on in the world
Received up in glory” 1Timothy 3:16*

Once More I Will Shake

The angel revealed to Joseph that the birth of Jesus was the fulfilment of the prophecy by Isaiah, ***“Behold, the virgin shall be with Child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated God with us”*** (Matt.1:23). Jesus was God in the flesh!

John in writing his gospel declared:

- ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and God was the Word [more literal]”*** John.1:1.
- ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”*** Jn.1:14.

An apostle of Jesus must know who Jesus is and preach the truth concerning the manifestation of God in the flesh. Jesus declared, ***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”*** (Matt.28:18).

What does it mean to call Him Christ?

The angel of the Lord told the shepherds, ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”*** (Lu.2:11). For the next thirty years of Jesus’ life, His being the Christ was an unknown reality. It was not until after His baptism, and His receiving of the Spirit without measure, that Jesus started to become known as the Christ, [Christ being the translation of Messiah].

After Andrew and John had met Jesus, Andrew went and found his brother, Simon Peter, and said to him, ***“We have found the Messiah”*** (Jn.1:41). When Nathaniel met Jesus, he declared, ***“You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel”*** (v.49). His recognition of Jesus as King, came out of Nathaniel’s belief in Messiah. In calling Jesus King, he was recognising Him as the Messiah.

Apostles need to preach, as the early apostles did: ***“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”*** Acts 5:42.

Philip the evangelist grew up under the apostles and when he went out to preach, ***“He preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”*** (Acts 8:12). Philip understood both who Jesus was as ‘God manifested in the flesh’ and ‘that Jesus is the Christ’.

An apostle by the command of God

“By the commandment of God [according to a command of God], the Saviour of us, even Lord Jesus Christ, the hope of us” 1Tim.1:1b. [This is a more literal translation from Interlinear Greek-English New Testament third ed. Jay P. Green]. Paul said he was an apostle by a command of God. Paul had no doubt about his ministry calling! Paul had no doubt about his appointment as an apostle (1Cor.12:28).

If one is called to be an apostle, one needs to know the calling and appointment is from God. As in Paul’s day, today there is questioning and contention concerning the appointment of apostles by God. It seems that Paul had to state his case, ***“for which I was appointed ... an apostle – I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying”*** (1Tim.2:7). So today it is incumbent upon apostles to declare their apostleship and to do the work of the ministry of the apostle.

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE

Paul's primary concern as an apostle was for doctrine: *"That they teach no other doctrine"* (1Tim.1:3). He was concerned that Christian preachers do not *"give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith"* (v.4). Fables are stories with some minimal reference to the truth.

The study of genealogies is putting emphasis on the family tree – a very popular pastime currently in the West – but all of this is of no true worth. Scripture says, *"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Gal.3:29). Our relationship with Jesus Christ is what is important, not whether we are Jew or Gentile.

Paul is clear: if we preach and teach the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), we will be fulfilling the commandment that the Lord gave: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age"* Matt.28:19-20.

Religious practice

Because some have strayed from the true doctrine and *"have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law"*, they speak without understanding and they *affirm* that which they do not know for sure (1Tim.1:6-7). One may wonder if the Jewish practices being promoted by some today as being necessary are part of what Paul is condemning.

The law is good

"The law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless, for ungodly and for sinners ..." 1Tim.1:8-9. The law is not an issue for true believers because we walk in the fulfilment of the law because the Holy Spirit Himself, dwells within us, and *"will put My laws in their [our] mind and write them on their [our] hearts"* (Heb.8:10).

The law is for the unrighteous

Paul says the law is for the *"unholy and profane, ... for fornicators and sodomites ... and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine"* (1Tim.1:9-10). The law is part of the teaching. The Hebrew word for law is *torah*, and this word means: *the law, the teaching, the instruction*.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" 2Tim.3:16.

The apostles' doctrine, which is the teaching that Jesus commanded in the Great Commission, is the New Testament application of the teaching of Moses, and the fulfilment of it (Matt.5:17-18). It is no longer to do with outward observance or ceremonial significance, but it is to result in:

- *"love from a pure heart*
- *love from a good conscience*
- *love from a sincere faith"* 1Tim.1:5

The law is a tutor to bring us to Christ

The law was given to us as a tutor until *faith came*: *"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* Gal.3:23-25.

DOCTRINE IS ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

Paul says that sound doctrine is *“according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God”* (1Tim.1:10-11). Doctrine is only sound if it is in accordance to the gospel. Jesus Himself preached the gospel. This means that everything taught by Jesus in the Gospels is the gospel, as well as that which was taught by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, of course including Paul. Sound doctrine is according to the gospel that is written. Therefore our teaching must be according to that which is written.

Doctrine is entrusted to apostles

Paul said that the gospel *“was committed to my trust”* (v.11). This is a serious responsibility that Paul accepted from the Lord. Apostles today need to come to maturity in Christ and accept the responsibility of preaching and teaching the pure doctrine of the Scriptures.

Sons can be given the charge

Paul wrote to Timothy, *“a true son in the faith”* (1Tim.1:2). Elsewhere Paul calls Timothy, *“my beloved and faithful son in the Lord”* (1Cor.4:17).

- Timothy was **loved** by Paul; they enjoyed the blessing of a father/son relationship through the gospel.
- Timothy was **faithful**: Paul said, *“who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church”* (v.17).
- Timothy was **true**; that means he would preach and teach the truth. Oh how we all need to raise beloved, faithful and true sons in the Lord.

THE WHOLE LETTER IS PAUL’S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

- ❖ In **CHAPTER 2**, Paul charges Timothy concerning **prayer** in the church. Prayer is to be offered for all men and for kings and those in authority: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (v3-4). Prayer for the nation is essential.
- ❖ In **CHAPTER 3**, Paul sets out qualifications of overseers and deacons as the young apostle was responsible for such **ordinations**. He reminds Timothy of the most important foundation and pillar of the truth: the **mystery of Godliness** (1Tim.3:15-16). This foundational tenet of apostolic doctrine has been too often ignored.
- ❖ In **CHAPTER 4**, Paul warns of the **great apostasy** to come in the latter times. He again exhorts Timothy to **give attention to doctrine**. *“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed”* (v.6).

“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (v.13). It is good to read Scriptures. All of our teaching should be clearly opening up the Scriptures. Expository teaching [unfolding Scripture verse by verse, bridging the language, cultural and historical gaps between the time of the Scripture being written and today] is rare in the churches today. Too many sermons are really motivational talks. One does not need a Bible to follow them.

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (v.16).

Once More I Will Shake

❖ In **CHAPTER 5**, Paul is teaching sound doctrine:

- Respect for elders (**v.1**), and honouring elders, rewarding them financially and especially those *“who labour in the word and doctrine”* (**v.17**).
- Paul gives instruction regarding the treatment of women *“with all purity”* (**v.2**).
- care of widows (**v.3-16**); this must be very important as Paul devotes so many verses to instructing Timothy about the care of widows.

❖ In **CHAPTER 6**, Paul continues teaching sound doctrine:

- The honouring of masters (**v.1-2**);
- For Paul, sound doctrine is speaking wholesome words and avoiding *“useless wranglings of men”* (**v.3-5**).
- He exhorts Timothy to *“pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness”* (**v.11**).

He finally commits to Timothy’s trust the
responsibility of sound and pure doctrine in the church
(1Tim.6:20-21).

THE COMMISSION

GRACE AND APOSTLESHIP

We have received grace and apostleship

“Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name” Rom1:5. The word apostleship can also be rendered *commission*. The way that we fulfil the great Commission (**Matt.28:18-20**) is through grace and apostleship. Nations will be positioned to *hear* the word of the Gospel when apostles are sent to them and received. This is a work of God’s grace. He goes before us, opening the doors.

It is important to obey Jesus in the great Commission. He said, *“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt.28:20)*. It is the commandments that Jesus gave us that we are to teach. Jesus came to fulfil *“the Law and the Prophets” (Matt.5:17)*, showing us how to fully keep the law in that sense. We are to teach the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets in Christ Jesus. And we are to be doing this until He comes, *“Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt.28:20)*. It is done by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of the Lord working within us.

There are no limits

There are no limits to the commission! There are no boundaries, except what the LORD allows. See **Acts 16:6-10**. In these verses God guided Paul and the team to go where the door was open, preventing them from going where the door was not yet opened – it opened in the province of Asia later. Ephesus was in Asia.

Not a network but an apostolic ministry serving the nations

The apostleship that we are serving in by grace is not so much to preach a gospel of salvation and plant new churches, but to go as a servant ministry to ministers and churches in the nations. Our goal is not to establish new churches; it is not to start another network, which can easily become another division in the body.

Our goal is to build up the body and specifically do that by meeting with pastors and ministers in seminars and conferences, short term schools; and developing relationships with the ones that God joins.

We are part of a ministry that is called by Jesus to make disciples – this is a service to the nations worldwide.

The joining of brethren to us is not the same as joining a network; it is not to join an organisation in any way; it is to grow in a mentoring and fathering relationship when God grants such relationships. We are sent to the nations to teach the word and to father the brethren in the Gospel.

Every nation is to be reached

In **Galatians 2:7-8**, we read that Paul’s apostleship was to the Gentiles and that Peter’s apostleship was to the Jews. What is our apostleship? It is to go to all nations; to reach every nation on the earth with the word of God, just as Jesus commanded. While our ministry is to the Gentile nations, we hope that one day God will take us to Israel to preach to the ‘circumcised’.

Once More I Will Shake

The need for training

God is willing to use everyone who is willing to go, but before we go, we need to be trained. Jesus made many disciples but He did not send them out to minister until they were trained. **“Disciple and send!”** is how one apostle put it. Discipling includes training. The work is to **disciple, train and send out and to continue to father those in the ministry work.**

It is time to volunteer

God will open the door for you! There is room for everyone who is willing to be disciplined and to serve. God is calling for people who will be **“volunteers in the day of His power”** (Ps.110:3). Now is the day of God’s power! You are invited to join in the Commission – the apostleship!

There is fruit of apostleship

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said, **“If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”** 1Cor.9:2. I can only effectively release apostolic grace to those who receive me as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Those who receive me become the **seal** or **proof** of my apostleship in the Lord.

There must be fruit in the lives of the brethren that the apostle ministers to. The fruit is spiritual children being raised up into meaningful ministry in the Lord. God blessed Adam and Eve to **“be fruitful and multiply”** (Gen.1:28).

Preparing disciples to minister

Our sphere grows as Christ the Lord sends us. God keeps opening doors internationally, and within Australia. In our home base we concentrate on training and equipping, releasing brethren to function in their area of gifting. To this end:

- we provide training where every member who wishes is trained, being given opportunity to learn to teach and share the word
- we function in house churches which we see as the Biblical configuration of the church and in the smaller house meetings, every member is able to participate and contribute, even including children.
- we equip people to minister by the Spirit and to function in the spiritual gifts
- we train people in the practices of reaching people in the community

What is the work?

The work is great! The work is the harvest. The harvest is in every nation and many countries have already opened up to the ministry of apostleship. Many of the ministers in the nations are hungry for more.

1. Harvest speaks of maturity; so the work of the harvest is bringing all the saints to maturity. This involves discipleship and training.
2. The harvest is the harvest of righteousness: this is the sons coming to maturity as they grow up in the world where Jesus has planted them (**Matt.13:37-43**).
3. It is a harvest wherein every member is fitted and functioning (**Eph.2:21; 4:16**).
4. The harvest is the work of preaching, apostleship and teaching the Gentiles [all men] in faith and truth (**1Tim.2:7**).

A BELOVED, FAITHFUL AND TRUE SON IN THE LORD

The Apostolic ministry is being restored in our day so that there can be a generation of Beloved, Faithful and True sons in the Lord. The heart of a true apostle is to raise sons to God. The purpose of spiritual fathering is to bring sons to maturity in Christ so that they can be sent out into the world to represent Jesus, our Father (**Phil.2:19-24**).

- **Beloved** - Paul said of Timothy, *“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you who is my beloved...son in the Lord”* (**1Cor.4:17**).
Beloved speaks of relationship – when Jesus was baptised the Father spoke from heaven saying, *“This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”* (**Matt.3:17**). Paul had a love for Timothy as a father in the Lord and they shared a close relationship. Paul says of Timothy that *“as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel”* (**Phil.2:22**).
- **Faithful** - *“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you who is my...faithful son in the Lord”* (**1Cor.4:17**). Timothy remained faithful in representing Paul in the Lord – they did the family business together (**Phil.2:21-22**).
Paul could trust Timothy to *“remind you of my ways in Christ”* (**1Cor.4:17**). Timothy was not coming up with his own ways but was faithful to Paul as a father in Christ having *“carefully followed his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith....”* (**2Tim.3:10**).
- **True** - *“To Timothy, a true son in the faith”* (**1Tim.1:2**). Timothy was a **true** son. He was raised up by Paul to teach the truth and to be faithful to preach the pure Word of God.
True sons *“teach no other doctrine”* (**1Tim.1:3**) but like Jesus they are able to say, *“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me”* (**Jn.7:16**). True sons teach the apostolic doctrine – the Word of God.
“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love in Christ Jesus” **2Tim.1:13**.

Discipled, Trained, Sent Out

Timothy was a good disciple who was well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium (**Acts16:1-2**). He had been taught the Word of God and had a good testimony. When Paul met him, he saw that this young man was called to serve in the ministry and needed to be trained (**Acts16:2-3**). Timothy was willing to leave everything for the call of God and go on team with Paul and learn the apostolic ministry. Eventually Paul was able to send him out as a *“beloved and faithful son in the Lord”*.

Beloved, faithful and true sons will be preaching and teaching Jesus as the Christ (**Acts 5:42**), *“contending earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”* (**Jude 3**) and will **not** be preaching *“any other gospel”* (**Gal.1:8**).

THREE AREAS TO ADDRESS

1. The Prosperity Doctrine has bankrupted the Church

In recent times there has been much teaching emphasising that God wants all His people to be rich in worldly terms. People have preached that we can name what we want and

Once More I Will Shake

claim it in the name of Jesus. There has been a misguided understanding of the inheritance our Father wants to give us and it has caused the Church to be bankrupt spiritually.

Jesus told the Church in Laodicea, ***“So then, because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked”*** (Rev.3:16-17).

True wealth is having the Word of God ***“dwelling in you richly with all wisdom”*** (Col.3:16). True spiritual riches is coming to the revelation of ***“the riches of His glory”*** (Col.1:27), ***“attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”*** (Col.2:2-3). This is what makes us rich and able to manifest the knowledge of God’s glory in the earth!

2. The Imminent Rapture teaching has left the Church without vision

It has been the case that many nowadays are preaching an imminent rapture of the church out of the world to escape tribulation. People have not been taught that ***“tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”*** (Rom.5:3-5).

It is through suffering and tribulation that we enter the glory! The vision and destiny of the church is to enter the glory! Paul says ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”*** (Rom.8:18).

The glory to be revealed in us is ***“Christ in us, the hope of glory”*** (Col.1:27). The hope of the gospel is not an imminent rapture out of tribulation but that through suffering God ***“will perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you”*** (1Pet.5:10) and ***“conform you to the image of His Son”*** (Rom.8:29).

The work of the ministry is to bring the disciples to maturity.

3. Fear of anti-Christ and One World Government preaching has intimidated the Church

Many who love to share “end times” teaching have a focus on an anti-Christ ruler and specialise in prophetically interpreting newspaper clippings of world events leading to a fear of the devil taking over the world. **The apostles did not preach the Anti-Christ – they taught and preached Jesus as the Christ** (Acts5:42).

In the times of the early church there was a one world government called the Roman Empire. They also had a string of anti-Christ emperors who had many Christians killed for their faith. In the midst of this system, the apostle Paul and his companions had this accusation against them: ***“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too”*** (Acts17:6). This was because they were ***“acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus”*** (Acts17:7).

God is raising a victorious, militant, bold and glorious Church in the earth! We are not to fear the devil but to have faith in the Word of God. We are to be obedient to make disciples, baptise and teach. Jesus will be with us to the end of the age as we do this (Matt.28:19-20), and the ***“earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”*** (Hab.2:14).

Let us preach Christ.

TIME FOR REFORMATION

God has appointed an order of ministry

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that ...” (1Cor.12:28). God’s church has an order that is set in place to release it to function in accordance with God’s plan. When apostles are restored, *“the whole counsel of God” (Acts20:27)* is again made known and all the ministries then have an apostolic foundation to work from (**Eph.2:20**), so that we are all participating in the work of the Commission.

There are many who use the title ‘apostle’ today, but are not doing the work of the apostle. Some apostles who are very gifted, have sponsored exclusive networks that divide the body again.

The 2-fold task of the apostolic ministry

- i) **To make known the sender.** Apostles are ones **“sent forth”** to fully represent the one that sent them. Jesus as the Apostle of God (**Heb.3:1**), revealed and made known the Father who sent Him. He said, *“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father” (Jn.14:9)*. When Jesus sent out the twelve He said, *“He who receives you receives Me, and He who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” Matt.10:40*. The Apostolic Commission is to reveal and represent Jesus, the Sender. In so doing the Father will be revealed.
- ii) **To build the House of God.** The apostolic work that Jesus came to do was to build the house of God. He said, *“I will build My church” (Matt.16:18)*. The apostles he raised up were foundation stones in the building of the house. The apostle Paul said that he was given grace as *“a wise master builder”* and that he *“laid a foundation” (1Cor.3:10)*. The only foundation is the revelation of Jesus the Messiah (**1Cor.3:11**). Now, Jesus has given the five-fold ministry for the *“edifying [building up] of the body of Christ” (Eph.4:11-12)*.

An example of the church functioning in apostolic order

Cleansing and purification brings increase

In **Acts 5** we have the sobering story of Ananias and Sapphira ‘lying against the Holy Spirit’ and losing their lives in the presence of the church meeting (**v.1-10**). The result of this was that *“great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things” (Acts 5:11)*. This led to a fresh release of signs and wonders and powerful ministry through the apostles and *“believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14)*.

We must obey God rather than men

As a result of the increase of believers, the apostles were thrown into prison but were dramatically released and commanded by an angel to *“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:17-20)*. This led to another trial before the high priest and the council and finally the apostles told the council, *“We ought to obey God rather than men” (v.29)*.

Preaching daily

When they were let go, they continued in the ministry, and *“daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus the Christ [Messiah]” (Acts 5:42)*.

Led to multiplication

This led to the number of **disciples multiplying** as the word was being released by the apostles (**Acts 6:1**).

Dealing with a practical concern – Acts 6:1-7

There arose a complaint among Greek speaking Jewish widows, who were being looked after by the church, and the complaint was brought to the apostles (**v.1**).

The twelve apostles knew that they should not leave the ministry of the Word for the practical business of serving tables. Today we would call it welfare ministry (**v.2**).

There are two ministries mentioned:

- i. **ministry of the Word of God**
- ii. **ministry of serving tables.**

Others are to be appointed to the work of practical ministry – v.3

Those who are called to the five-fold ministry should concentrate on the ministry of the word of God, and appoint others ***“over this business”*** of serving tables.

The apostles saw the need for more ministers to be appointed – ministers that they could ***“appoint over this business”***.

The **apostles were bringing order** and the requirements for these new ministers were that the men had to be ***“of good reputation*** [their lives had changed], ***full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom”***.

Prayer and the ministry of the word

The apostles knew that they must ***“give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”*** (**v.4**).

- **Prayer** is relationship with God – through prayer we open ourselves to the Spirit of God for Him to release ***“wisdom and revelation”*** (**Eph.1:17**)
- **Ministry of the Word** – flows out of prayer, by the power of the Spirit

Deacons were ordained

Seven were chosen and brought to the apostles so that they could **set them in place** as deacons through the laying on of hands (**Acts 6:5-6**).

A fresh release came to fulfil the commission – Acts 6:7.

As a result the church **received grace to fulfil the commission**:

- ***“Then the word of God spread,***
- ***and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,***
- ***and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith”***

A fresh revival broke out in Jerusalem!

***This is grace and apostleship at work bringing
nations to obedience to the faith (Rom.1:5)***

***The Church that is set in apostolic order
will be released to fulfil the Great Commission!***

THE SHAKING AND THE SIGNET

THE HOUSE OF GOD IS TO BE BUILT

Haggai was a restoration prophet sent to the people who had returned from the Babylonian exile to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah and the one responsible for the work. His co-worker was Joshua the high priest. The work on the house of God was stalled and the remnant people who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of God had become sidetracked, away from the work, and were concentrating on their own priorities, building their own “*panelled houses*” (**Hag.1:4**).

The Church is broken down

In **Haggai 1:2-4** the LORD of hosts is bringing a correction and a challenge to His people regarding the building of His house [temple]. God’s people had become focused on their own needs and had forgotten that God’s house was “*in ruins*” (**v4**). No one was interested in building God’s house. Likewise today, many are busy building something for themselves but they are not building the house of God.

Consider your ways

The LORD says, “*Consider your ways!*” (**v.5**). Five times in this short book, God challenges His people to consider their ways [**v.5, v.7, v15, v18 twice**]. Maybe this challenge to ‘consider’, to ‘stop and take heed’, is actually a call to repentance. The call is going forth to God’s people today: is what you are doing in your personal and family life and in the life of the church where you fellowship, giving priority to the commandment of Jesus? Jesus said, “*Go and make disciples*” (**Matt.28:19**).

God’s glory will be in His house

In **verse 6** the LORD is telling His people that they are not prospering as they should be. They have been putting in a lot of effort but with very little or no reward. Many today are working hard in the ministry, but not seeing any fruit from their labours; or putting much effort into having a ‘successful’ ministry but still seeing people become frustrated or disillusioned. The LORD again says, “*Consider your ways!*” God is calling His people to come back to his original purpose, which is to have a dwelling place in the earth which will be full of His glory. He instructs His people to “*build the temple [house], that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified*” (**Hag.1:8b**). God told Moses in **Numbers 14:21** “*but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*”.

Disobedience brings judgement

Because of the disobedience of God’s people to build His house, God judged His people. “*You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away*” (**Hag.1:9**). Why? “*Because of My house that is in ruins*”, says the LORD. God called for the drought as judgement on His people (**v.10-11**).

THERE IS A REMNANT RESPONDING

God is looking for a remnant people who will hear His voice and obey His instructions. “*Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him..*” (**v12**). The people heard the word through the voice of the prophet; the one God sent to them. Likewise

Once More I Will Shake

today God is raising and sending apostles to speak forth His word, instructing His people **how to conduct themselves in the house of God (1Tim.3:15)**.

God is raising a remnant in our day and the remnant is made up of those people who have embraced the call to grow to maturity, and thus take responsibility to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord.

His Presence is with the remnant

There are a remnant people who have heard the call and are responding. Many may feel they are disqualified; many may feel that the work is too great; that the church is too divided and broken to ever become the glorious body of Messiah in the earth; but God promises His people ***“I am with you” (Hag.1:13b)***. God wants His house to be built and He has promised to be with us: ***“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt.28:20)***.

It is by the Spirit that we work

Then the LORD ***“stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel ... and the spirit of Joshua ... and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God” (Hag.1:14)***. The house of God can only be built in full cooperation with God. ***“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it” (Ps.127:1a)***.

The house of the Lord today is the church (1Tim.3:15), and the house belongs to Christ: ***“Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are” (Heb.3:6)***. Jesus is building His house, His way, according to His pattern. It is not the denominational way! It is not the independent way! It is not the Pentecostal way! It is according to His pattern revealed in the Scripture.

Once again a spiritual stirring is happening to awaken God’s people, even as happened in the days of Haggai, to come forth as a remnant people and to be part of the building of His house in the earth today. God’s house is a spiritual house and it will be built ***“not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6)***.

The glory of the latter house shall be greater

In Haggai 2:3, the prophet asks, ***“Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now?”*** We have the testimony of the church in the Book of Acts and could ask a similar question. Or maybe we have seen some wonderful things in our own life-time in the Lord and we thought ‘this is it’, only to see that particular move fade away.

But the promise is: ***“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts” (v.9)***. Restoration is happening! Now is the time to ***“be strong ... and work” (v.4)***.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven He gave a commission to His disciples, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ...” (Matt.28:19-20)***. This is the work we are to do; to make disciples. If we are doing this, He has promised to be with us.

THE SHAKING

God has given us His Spirit to empower us to do the work He has commissioned us to do; ***“My Spirit remains among you; do not fear” (Hag.2:5)***. Much is happening in the world today that is causing many to fear. God does not want His people to fear, but to see His purposes in what is happening. ***“For thus says the LORD of hosts; ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts” Hag.2:6-7***. All of creation: heaven, earth, sea and land; all nations, will be shaken, so that they will come to Jesus.

A glorious house will be built

God is serious about His house being built; God is serious about all the nations coming to Him, through Jesus Christ. The Psalmist said, ***“All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name” Ps.86:9***.

Isaiah prophesied, ***“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow to it” Isa.2:2***.

The church is the house of God (**1Tim.3:15**), and God’s house will be glorious, ***“that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot of wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” Eph.5:27***. God will have a glorious church built in the earth, but for it to come forth we must pass through the judgements.

The judgements are:

- **For refining**

The judgements are a refining. God wants His people to be a holy people set apart unto Him. In **Haggai 2:11-14** the prophet is teaching that holiness cannot be caught, but unholiness can. We are to be a people who are set apart, not touching the unholy things, ***“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1Pet.1:16)***.

- **To stir up God’s people to work**

The shaking and the judgements are to stir up God’s people to do the work of building His house, and to draw the attention of all people to God. No one can control natural disasters. Even governments are powerless when widespread protest movements arise in the nations. We are living in a time of great trouble. Truly the shakings, even since the year 2000, have been shocking and alarming.

- **Unprecedented in severity**

So many things have happened from the 9/11/2001 attacks in USA to a recent flood in our own city, here in Toowoomba, Australia. Toowoomba is a city set on a mountain top. Naturally one would think it would be impossible for Toowoomba to be flooded on a mountain top, without any major water course running through it. And yet on January 10th 2011, our city experienced the most horrendous flash flooding, that seemed to come from nowhere; it gathered strength so quickly, with water running up to seven metres deep and scores of metres wide, such as had never been seen before.

The house is built of living stones

The house is built stone upon stone (**Hag.2:15**). These stones are living stones, ***“being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pet.2:5)***. The foundation rock is Christ Himself (**1Cor.3:11**).

Once More I Will Shake

Now is the time to work, to plant and to build. If we do this then God will bless us as we work with Him (**Hag.2:19b**).

THE SIGNET

The final verses of **Haggai (2:20-23)** warn of continuing shakings. Through this God will destroy all opposition to His rule. Man's kingdoms will be overthrown and destroyed (**v.22**). The word of God confirms this promise:

"Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven" (Heb.12:26).

"Yet once more", indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb.12:27).

"We are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken"; therefore we are to serve God ***"acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb.12:28).*** In other words, as the shakings and judgements continue, the members of His body are to do the work of the ministry, which is to make disciples.

Zerubbabel as a type

According to Strong's Concordance #2368 Heb., a signet comes from a word meaning *a signature ring*. It is also translated in the Old Testament as seal. In the context of **Haggai 2:23** and this short prophetic book, God says, ***"In that day I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, and will make you like a signet; for I have chosen you," says the LORD of hosts.***

Zerubbabel is to fulfil his ministry as the one charged with the **rebuilding of the house of God**. He was the governor; the one with the leadership responsibility for the building of the house.

A type of Christ

Zerubbabel is a type of Christ in that he is in the godly line of David and is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in **Luke 3:27**. In His designated ministry as the one responsible for the building of the house and the one with governmental authority, he is a type of Messiah, as prophesied by Nathan in **2 Samuel 7:12-13**.

A type of the apostle

Zerubbabel is also a type of the apostle. An apostle is one sent by the Lord to represent the Lord and make Him known and to fulfil the apostolic task, which is, to build the house of God. We learn from **Zechariah 4** that Zerubbabel would ***"bring forth the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it'" (v.7)***; this refers to the completion of the building of the walls of the house.

Zechariah 4:9 declares ***"the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house [temple]; his hands shall also finish it."*** Jesus is the One who laid the foundation of the church (**Matt.16:18-19**) and Jesus is the One who will also finish the building of the church (**Eph.5:26-27**), which is the house of God. Again we see the type of Christ in Zerubbabel, but we also see the apostolic ministry foreshadowed.

Like a signet

In the context of Zerubbabel being the leader and the minister responsible for the completion of the house of God, God said, ***"I will make you like a signet"***. Zerubbabel in his designated ministry given to him by God, and chosen by God to be that minister, will be **like a signet**.

As Zerubbabel went about fulfilling his ministry, he was as God's sign that the work would be completed. Zerubbabel is not taking the place of the Holy Spirit, or of Jesus, but he

Once More I Will Shake

is the representative of the LORD God, and when people saw Zerubbabel and heard him, they were able to be reminded that through them God would complete the work.

Likewise Jesus raised and sent apostles and told them ***“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me”*** (Matt.10:40).

A sign that the church will be built

The emergence of apostles in these latter days is like God’s signet, that is, God’s signature or sign that the church will be built in the earth today in the midst of the serious shakings that are happening all over.

God is sending apostles forth with a clear word that pastors and ministry leaders in cities and nations are receiving and responding to. The foundations of the church are strengthened and the leaders can begin to build. As a result of receiving an apostle they can now see the way forward. God seals the word by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who receive an apostle and they are transformed by the word.

Now is the time for apostles to go forth

Worldwide, the church is active. Ministers everywhere are pressing in, but often not knowing the way forward. God is raising [choosing], appointing and sending apostles to bring to the church the knowledge of the revelation of His will for the church; in other words showing the way forward; showing the way to build.

In that sense apostles are like a signet. They come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; they speak His word; they give understanding by the Holy Spirit of what God is doing. This comes by opening up the word, by laying again a true foundation and making known the master plan as it is revealed to the apostles.

Apostles are as or like a signet, a signature ring, sent by God and bearing witness to the one who sends and bringing afresh the ***“teaching and preaching [of] Jesus the Christ”*** (Acts 5:42), and laying again the only foundation that can be laid, ***“which is Jesus Christ”*** (1Cor.3:11).

Apostles are a ‘sent’ ministry

There is no way that apostles are ever anything more than apostles, sent to represent and make known the Lord Jesus Christ and to do the work for which they are sent. The apostles have a key role to play in bringing the church to completion or maturity (**Eph.4:11-16**), to bring the revelation of the mystery as given by the Holy Spirit (**Eph.3:2-5**), and to be a reliable foundation ministry on which the church can be built into the only cornerstone, which is ***“Jesus Christ Himself”*** (**Eph.2:19-22**).

The work is by the Spirit

Zerubbabel, being like a signet, in no way usurps or replaces the work of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Haggai, the Lord sent a prophet to them and the Scripture says, they believed the word of the prophet (**Hag.1:12**); then the Lord sent the Spirit to stir them up and enable them to do the work (**1:14 & 2:4-5**). They could only do the work by the Spirit, and the work was to build the house of God. The work was to be done in obedience to the word of God that they had been reminded of through the prophet.

The work was **‘the Father’s work’**, and the work today is to build the house of God, apostles being the master builders (**1Cor.3:10**).

The work is to plant and to build

The work is to plant and to build, but not until there is some rooting out and pulling down; even some destruction and throwing down (**Jer.1:10**). Paul says “***For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building***” (**1Cor.3:9**). The work is to plant in the field as God’s fellow workers; the work is to build the house of God as God’s fellow builders. The Father’s work is for us to plant and build as He leads, instructs and makes the way open.

DAYS OF GREAT SHAKINGS

Applying the Old Testament to the New

In these days there are great shakings. **Hebrews 12:26-27** quotes directly from **Haggai 2:6**, applying the warnings of the shakings in Haggai to today – the New Testament world. We are not wrong to follow apostolic New Testament hermeneutics [biblical interpretation] as exemplified for us by Jesus and the New Testament writers. **Hebrews 12** illustrates for us how to interpret and apply Old Testament prophecies, thereby opening up understanding of what God is doing today, through the Old Testament types and teaching. The writer to the Hebrews directly applies what Haggai prophesied to what God is doing in these days through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is at work in the midst of the shakings

The shakings seem to be increasing. The word of God is being fulfilled and in the midst of the shakings God is sending forth His apostles with a clear foundational and revelational word that strengthens the church and enables the church to grow toward maturity. In that sense apostles are like a signet, sent by God to announce, proclaim and encourage the people of God to know that God is at work; to know that the shakings are for the purpose of turning the nations to Jesus Christ; and that it is time to check our foundations; that Jesus is building His church and it is to be built according to the Scriptural pattern.

*“In that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will take you,
Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the LORD,
and will make you like a signet [ring];
for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts”*

Haggai 2:23