

Dated: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008

Ezekiel chapter 13 verses 9 -14.

- 9. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of My people or be listed in the records of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD .**
- 10. Because they lead my people astray saying 'Peace' when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built they cover it with whitewash,**
- 11. therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash, that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down and violent winds will burst forth.**
- 12. When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, 'Where is the whitewash you covered it with?'**
- 13. Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says; "In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury.**
- 14. So I will tear down the wall which you covered with whitewash and level it to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you will be destroyed in it, and you will know that I am the LORD.**

(Scripture taken from Narrated Bible in Chronological Order by F. LaGard Smith)

The prophet Ezekiel began his ministry in the year 593 B.C. "On the fifth month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile" (1:2) and his last prophecy occurs in the year 571 BC (Eze.29:17). Ezekiel's ministry was during the reign of King Zedekiah whom he opposed. It was a period of devastation.

The Prophet was against the treachery, politics and idolatry of his day and longed for theocracy and its obedience to Yahweh. It is presumed that after Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar Ezekiel was amongst the 8,000 captives that were brought to Babylon. Jewish tradition has it that Ezekiel was put to death, by the captives in Babylon, because he had boldly opposed their practices. Rather than repent, they bashed his brains out!

Despite his severe warnings, the Prophet was in fact, bringing a message of comfort from God - one of restoration and salvation, which ultimately found fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

In these passages, Ezekiel was warning about the false prophets of his day, who had taken upon themselves the prophetic office, without a specific calling from Yahweh. These false prophets had built a "wall" of flattery and deception, and had assured the Israelites, that God was not displeased by their lifestyles (Ezekiel 12:24; Jeremiah 14:14; Micah 3:5,7,11).

To further glorify themselves, these false prophets covered the 'rotting walls' with untempered mortar. In other words they provided false solutions from their own machinations. A similitude is found in the Gospel of Matthew 7:26, when Jesus Christ spoke of building a house upon the sand.

Divination was often employed. The manner in which the false prophets operated was quite extraordinary. Deuteronomy 12:31 informs us that the pagans burnt their children as an offering to their gods. Deuteronomy 18:10-11 - that they walked through fire, interpreted omens and communicated with evil spirits. These false prophets were 'people pleasers' they told people what

they wanted to hear, rather than what Yahweh had to say. Divination is detestable and prohibited in Deuteronomy 18: 9,12, 14.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Mark in chapter 13: 6, 21-23, records the warning Jesus Christ issued; “ **Many will come in My name, saying , ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many...for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible the elect.**”

King Solomon ruled over Israel around 971-931 BC and is the author of Ecclesiastes. In chapter 1: 10, he had wisely said; “Is there anything of which one might say ‘See this, it is new? Already it has existed for ages”. I ask, is there anything new today, in the year 2008?

False prophets abound everywhere, in every shape, manner, colour and creed! Yet humankind in the hope of having a better life, despite historical warnings and outcomes, continues to focus and depend on them. They look to horoscopes, fortune-tellers, so called ‘white witches, indulge in various cultic practices, the reading of palms and tarot cards to name but a few, all of which, is nothing short of divination. **All these things only profit the false prophets!**

Many people measure their worth in terms of being accepted by others. Success to them means money, power and control, celebrity status, being invited to elite functions, where in most instances and sadly, many a wall has been ‘plastered over with whitewash’. The name of God is taboo – to mention His name in these circles is profanity! Sadly, these people have chosen to worship wealth and live in a Godless society.

Yet, if we were to look into the Scriptures, we will discover not only prophetic redemptive history fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but also what the future holds for all of mankind. We discover God’s promises and the way to live an abundant, joyous and peaceful life, not only here on earth, but into all eternity! All God-given prophecy for the good of mankind is to be found in the Scriptures. Yes! Even when things are so awful and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel, there is comfort to be found in the living word of God!

I would like to draw attention to two very tragic and heartbreaking events that occurred in the United Kingdom. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, horrified Londoners were able to watch on television, a five hour stand-off between the police and Mark Saunders, a barrister, aged 32. In the eyes of society he had everything going for him. A successful career, a wife who was also in the legal profession and an expensive home in the elite area of Kings Road. Beneath all that ‘plaster’ he was in fact a person in desperate need. Tragically, the police shot him dead in the prime of his life, in the refuge of his own home, not as such, for a crime he had committed, but for being a broken person. Society had failed him.

Another profoundly sad incident that occurred in August of this year was that of the millionaire Christopher Foster. He killed his teenage daughter, shot his wife, then set alight their entire fleet of cars, the horses and their beautiful home, before shooting himself. What seems so senseless was the fact that his ‘friends’ whom he had been partying with only hours before, did not have a clue to his state of mind. Foster not unlike Saunders, had successfully ‘plastered over’ and was unable to withstand the onslaught. Their ‘crash’ was not only massive, but terminal.

In Phillipians 2:3-4, we recall the words of the Apostle Paul; “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interest of others.”

**Many cry “peace” when there is no peace.**

These past few years have seen – Tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, acts of terrorism, war, innocent people being murdered not only on the streets, but in the sanctity of their homes, governments in disarray, corrupt politicians and traders, and the invasion of immoral material into the privacy of homes via emails. More recently, the collapse of major financial houses, resulting in a global crisis and the ongoing damage is yet to be felt. More and more people are resorting to drugs and alcohol and this has been reported to be at its highest known level.

Morality and respect has been blown away by the winds of ‘change’. Children as young as 12 years of age are sexually active and into drugs and alcohol. Teachers ‘fear’ to chastise pupils in case they are attacked. Many Schools have ceased to preach the Gospel, because it is politically incorrect and in the case of the private sector it may result in the loss of fees. **The world is in spiritual poverty.**

These past weeks have seen billions of dollars wiped off world markets. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew 6:19 are so true when he told us to invest in heaven where nothing can steal or destroy! It is indeed thought provoking to hear that governments have invested billions and trillions of dollars to reinstate the Institutions, when a small percentage of this money, could have lifted the destitute in the world well above the poverty line. Wealth in itself is not a sin, used wisely it becomes a blessing not only to self, but to others.

**Peace they cry... they lie! Where is their peace? Men are powerless when God moves!**

King Solomon was renowned for his wisdom and wealth. The first book of Kings 10:7, categorically informs us that his wealth exceeded the expectations of the Queen of Sheba and in 4:30-31 that his wisdom surpassed that of all the people. Ecclesiastes 1:14 records that Solomon in all his wisdom, set his mind to explore and had seen everything under the sun and realised it “*all is vanity and striving after the wind*” He noted in Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 that wisdom, true peace and joy can only come from God.

The Gospel of Mark 8:36 records the forceful words of Jesus Christ; “**For what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?**” The Apostle Paul had this to say in 1 Timothy 4:8; “*...godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*”

Isaiah uttering the words of God, in the second half of 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, prophesied thus; “*no more gloom for her who was in anguish...the people who walk in darkness will see a great light...For a child will be born to us; And the government will be on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.!*” (Isaiah 9:6).

**Jesus Christ is true Peace! Jesus Christ is the Promise!**

In the Gospel of Mark 4:35-39 we are told of the time when Jesus demonstrated His power over nature, as only God can do! Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee, when a storm

struck. The disciples panicked, as they were tossed in the tempest, and feared they might drown. The men in the boat were experienced fishermen. They were followers of Jesus; they loved Him and had given their lives for Him. Yet when confronted with the storm and despite Jesus being physically with them, they were full of fear. When they cried out to Him, Jesus rebuked the wind and sea, instantly the wind was stilled and the sea calmed.

Our Lord Jesus did chide His disciples for their lack of trust in Him. The disciples were not without faith; it was just that at the time, fear prevailed, but note they **cried out to Him!**

Trust and faith are key words! The Apostle Paul was a man of great faith. He too went through a storm and was shipwrecked, but throughout he endured in quiet faith and trust in Jesus. He safely landed on the island of Malta and God's name was magnified (Acts 27-28).

Being a Christian does not guarantee a life of luxury or one free from sickness, loss of job, physical death, bereavement or being untouched by the current crisis. The storms of life will touch us, but no storm is too great for Jesus to calm. Our Lord spoke to the elements and they submitted to His commands.

Jesus expelled demons, healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the poor and forgave sins. He can and does speak calm and peace into our pain, our addictions, our illness and all forms of despair that prevent us from leading a victorious life. We may not currently have wealth or are even experiencing ill health, but what is within our grasp is "*peace that surpasses all understanding*" (Phillipians 4:7), something that neither money nor health can buy!

God is not only able, but is willing to calm the storms of our life. Circumstances may not change immediately, but what does happen is that our perspective on life changes. As Jesus Himself said, nothing is impossible with God (Mark 10: 27). He loves us and longs to gather us into His arms, but we seem to be unwilling! (Matthew 23: 37).

Jesus calls all who are weary and heavy-laden to go to Him and He will give them rest. Jesus' kind of rest goes far beyond anything we can comprehend, it is a deeply rooted divine sense of comfort and security (Matthew 11:28-30). Against the realms of destruction Jesus said; "**I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly**" (John 10:10). Not just little snatches of temporary happiness, but a fulfilled life in every sense of the word.

Sin is when we draw away from God. The acts of transgressions against God are the essence of sin. It is mind blowing to even try and comprehend that instead of killing and punishing us for our sins, Jesus died for us. He made the ultimate atonement for us and paid the price, so that we may be forgiven and have our debts cancelled forever (Colossians 2:14). From that Cross – nailed to the Cross - He poured out His love upon a guilty world!

The Cross was not a defeat but a victory! – Jesus defeated Satan and death. As Jesus said, Satan is the father of all lies whose main purpose is to steal, kill and destroy (John 8:44). God is longing to reach out and rescue us, longing to pour out His love upon this hurting and broken world. The Apostle Paul, who had experienced a major transformation in his life, was able to say that **In Christ alone is to be found the fullness of life** (Ephesians 3:13-21).

There is nothing in the works we have achieved or hope to achieve that merits God's grace and favour. All we need to do is to draw near to the mercy seat of God, with a heartfelt desire for mercy, by means of repentance, seeking His forgiveness and asking God to come and take hold of our lives.

**Jesus is our Peace**, and He has already effected our reconciliation with God (Colossians 1:20), thus, we are able to *"draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16).

God is not in retirement! He is living and active! We have not been left as orphans, Jesus promised to send us the Holy Spirit, as another Comforter (Advocate) to guide and instruct us. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and assists and intercedes for us in prayer (John 16:7-13, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20; cf. Zechariah 12:10).

We are told to be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication and with thanksgiving, we make known our needs to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ. (Phillipians 4:6-7).

Fervent heartfelt prayer lifts us spiritually into the presence of God. God wants the best for us – knowing His will for us is the key to leading a victorious life. We achieve this by talking and listening to Him in the stillness of faith and trust as we make known our needs. In one word PRAYER!

God does not expect us to use fancy words; He knows our hearts and our desires. When we develop a living and close relationship with God, our desires are actually His will and perfect plan for our lives.

Jesus Christ issues this invitation; **"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me"** (Revelation 3:20).

Let us pray:

*LORD, we thank you that you hear the prayers of those who earnestly seek you. In Jesus' name, we lift up to you the friends and families of Mark Saunders and Christopher Foster and the many others who have lost their loved ones tragically and needlessly, we pray LORD for healing in their lives and in our lives that all sorrow may turn to peace and joy as only You can give. We pray for restoration and revival of your people, particularly in the areas where Your Name is unmentionable, immorality is trivialised and the sacredness of life ignored. We pray for the provision of world leaders whose minds and hearts are set on You and Your precepts. Lord Jesus you are our peace, please come into our lives and equip us in every good thing to do Your will, that we may be pleasing in Your sight. We thank you Lord Jesus for all you have done for us. Amen*