



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

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The LORD said, "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

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Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades [death / the grave] will not prevail against it." Matthew 16:15-18

The importance of the Church in the world today

By revelation from God the Father, Peter made the public declaration that Jesus was not John the Baptist raised from the dead, nor Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets; Jesus is **'the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'** He is the Rock on which the Church would be built; "for no-one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid, and that foundation is **Jesus Christ.**" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The significance of this is that the Church, the Body of Christ, is built on the foundation of Jesus the Messiah – His teachings, His revelations, His life and example, His death for our sins, His resurrection and ascension to glory in Heaven. The Church comprises all those people, and only those people, who have been born again by the Holy Spirit, have faith in the one and only Almighty God, and are truly His followers (disciples).

By the power of God's Spirit in His people, we are to be salt and light in a world of sin and darkness. The world can never solve the world's problems. We might try to patch up our sinful ways, cover over what is wrong, ignore it, continue in it, or even legalise it because that's what most people want and how they want to live.

But it is "*righteousness which exalts a nation; sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). We are to pray for our leaders so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life *in all Godlikeness and dignity.*" (1 Timothy 2:2)

The Lord Jesus, working through His followers and building His Church, is the only eternal hope for our people.

Ask the Lord to lead you as you pray about the following:

To be part of the Church Jesus is building, we need to: (a) *know what His plans are;* and (b) *build according to His plans,* not 'do our own thing'.

Meditate and pray over what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 (below), applying it to your own life, the church you go to, the whole Church, and our influence in our country:

9. We are God's servants, *working together;* you are God's field, God's building.

10. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. *Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.*

11. For *no one can lay any foundation* other than the one that has been laid; that *foundation is Jesus Christ.*

12-13. If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – *the work of each builder will become visible,* for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done.

14. If what has been built on the foundation survives, *the builder will receive a reward.*

15. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

16. Do you not know that *you are God's temple* and that *God's Spirit dwells in you?*

17. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, for *God's temple is holy,* and *you are that temple.*

The power of forgiveness... the peace of being forgiven

Hurts need healing; wrongs need to be put right. This requires repentance and forgiveness.

To repent is to acknowledge wrongdoing, confess it and turn from it. To forgive is to pardon the person who has done wrong and to not hold onto unforgiveness. There is power and blessing in forgiving, and great peace in being forgiven. Overall, this brings healing between the forgiver and the forgiven one. It is also what God has done for us! (See Micah 7:18-19).

- **Let us repent** and **ask forgiveness** for what we have done wrong.
- **Let us forgive** those who have wronged us.
- **Let there be healing** for hurts we have caused, or been hurt by.

We need to pray for the above: for ourselves; for what has happened in our nation's history; concerning racial issues; things that have happened in churches and Christian organisations and work situations; with family, friends and neighbours; and so on.

The weakness of division... the power of unity

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)

There is strength in unity. The house built on rock stands in times of storm; the house built on sand is washed away because there is no unity between the grains of sand. There can be destructiveness in disunity, and strength in unity.

This is why Jesus prayed for unity between His followers, and so should we! (John 17).

- **Let us pray for unity** between people who stand for what is good and right [as God defines what is good and right!]
- **Let us seek unity**, do what we can to help bring it about; encourage it and endeavour to prevent division.
- **Let us seek healing** where there has been hurt through wrong divisions.

We need to pray for the above: for anywhere we may be causing division or are part of it; for wrong areas of division within our country, government, between races, within or between churches, Christian organisations and work situations; within families; and so on.

The foolishness of sin... the wisdom of righteousness

"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'."
"The wise in heart will receive commandments"
(Psalm 14:1 and Proverbs 10:8)

If there is no God, then what is done in the world is the result of people's arbitrary decisions – governments can make the rules they like, and change them whenever they like. But if we are wise we will listen to God's commandments and

obey them. This was the trouble with Adam and Eve – they didn't receive and obey God's commandment, and sin came into the world and has been with us ever since. And so have the results of this sin!

God, in His incredible wisdom and power, created the heavens and the earth, and even us! If we are wise we will listen to, and obey Him. To the degree to which a society does what God has told us, that society will be blessed; to the degree it disobeys, that society will be filled with problems.

Let us pray for a godly and righteous people – people who have come to faith in the Lord, who follow Him and His ways, who are wise and who are blessed by Him, His grace and His goodness!

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What is even worse is that frequently those who have been involved in one move of the Spirit have opposed and even persecuted those who are involved in the next move of the Spirit. It is usually those involved in the last move that most strongly oppose the new move.

Denominations are formed when God moves on but some people (those who have chosen their stopping place) have stopped still. We need to realise that **a** truth is not **the whole** truth!

Christ has said "I will build My Church" (Matthew 16:18) and Paul says that He will return for a Bride that is one of "splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ... holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). Could it be that Christ could have returned early in the first century (as the early Christians appear to have expected) had it not been for the fact that the Church did not go on to perfection, but turned back; and now, 2000 years later, God is still restoring it to the glory He always intended for it to have?

QUESTIONS

1. What are the principal lessons in Ezekiel 47:1-12 as they apply to the Church?
2. How can we be sure that we always move on with God and do not stop short or lag behind what He is doing?
3. How can we discern a genuine move of God's Spirit in contrast to a fleshly human movement, or a Satanic deception such as the origin of most cults and extreme "Christian" groups?
4. What does Acts 3:21 mean?
5. What are some of the truths God has been restoring to the Church, (a) over the last 500 years? (b) over the last 50 years?
6. How and why do denominations form?



REVIVE US AGAIN!

13 Revival – the Past

Ezekiel 47:1-12

This vision which God gave to Ezekiel can be applied both to our own individual Christian lives, and also to the life of the Church as a whole.

Water (v.1) is a type or illustration of the Holy Spirit, and of life (see John 4:13-14; 7:37-39; Joel 2:23; Isaiah 44:3). All that God is doing in the Church today He is doing by His Spirit, and it is bringing new life to people, and to the Church. But there is also another spirit at work in the world today, and it is most important that we discern between the two.

The water of God issues from the Throne in the Temple (v.1, 12). We need to make certain that all revelation we receive comes from the Throne of God, that it has His authority, and that it is totally consistent with His Word. Strangely enough, God is not revealing new truth; He is merely uncovering truth that has been “hidden” in His Word for about 2000 years or more, and much of it we are only just beginning to see again! (Compare this with the recovery of the Law during the reign of Josiah, in 2 Chronicles 34:14-33). Old truth, that has been buried, ignored or forgotten, is being restored! However, this does not mean that we are to be gullible and accept everything; we should test all things by God’s Word and the Spirit, and hold fast only to that which is good and of God.

In God’s dealings with us He first leads us into ankle-deep water, then He takes us further into knee-deep water, then into water that is up to the waist, and finally into water that is so deep, so swift and so strong that it cannot be passed through – we are borne up and carried along by the mighty flow of the Spirit of God (v.3-5).

The tragedy is that so often we stop short of this and say “This far and no further!” In all that God desires to do for us, there is a very real danger of us getting to a stopping place where we refuse to go any further with God and enter into all that He has for us.

Some people stop before ever going to Church; others go to Church but stop short of committing their lives to Christ. Still others are prepared to receive Christ into their lives but refuse to make

Him Lord of every area of their lives. Others stop short of being filled with the Holy Spirit; others will not go on to maturity or sanctification, or entering into their ministry.

May God forgive us for our stopping places! May we, like Ezekiel, go on and on and on with God, into the depths of all He wants to show us, and do in and through us. As Jesus said to His disciples, “Launch out into the deep!” (Luke 5:4)

The same danger faces the Church. History shows us that time and time again the Church has stopped short of what God has wanted it to do. Denominations have formed because God has moved on but some people have stopped still. Like the Israelites of old, we need to stop only when the cloud stops, and move on when the cloud moves on (Exodus 40:34-38). We should not move ahead of the cloud, nor lag behind it when it moves on, for there is protection, warmth and guidance where the cloud is. May the Church always move with the Spirit of God, and never hold back. May it go deeper and deeper with God until it is borne along by the swift, strong, powerful moving of His Spirit, and accomplish all He desires it to.

Where the pure, fresh water from the sanctuary enters the salty, stagnant waters of the Dead Sea, the water becomes fresh (v.8). The Church should be bringing life to a dead and dying world; everything should live where this river flows (v.9). The early Church had a tremendous effect on the world around it, until even a non-believer had to admit that it had turned the world upside down! (Acts 17:6). Does the Church do this today?

The reason the Dead Sea is dead, and contains no animal or plant life, is that it constantly takes in, but never gives out! That is the quickest way to “die”, either as an individual or as a Church! We should be bringing freshness and life to people. God forbid that we should stagnate or stop short of all that He wants to do or reveal! And may we pass on what we have received, rather than keep it to ourselves!

Some will not receive this message. For one reason or another there will be those, like the seed on the hard and rocky ground (Matthew 13:18-22) who will not receive what God is saying, but will stop short and refuse to move on. These will eventually dry up and bring

death; they are the stagnant swamps and marshes which refuse to become fresh; they are to be left to become salt for they will not receive what the Spirit has to say – and too much salt kills! (v.11). There is no life in the Dead Sea because of its extreme saltiness; only the Spirit brings life, the letter kills (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Will we receive what God has to say? Will we move on with His Spirit, or have we already found our stopping place? If we will hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church, and move with Him, then we will be like the trees which are planted by the river, whose “leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail. They will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing” (v.12). May we not be like stubborn Jerusalem, over whom Jesus wept, saying “How often I would have ... *but you would not!*” (Matthew 23:37).

History of the Church

Revival: The Church was ‘born’ about the year 30 AD, and began to grow in a time of revival (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14)

Heresies: Within a generation heresies had started to creep into the Church. Some of the books of the New Testament were written to counteract these heresies. For example, Colossians was written against the Judaizers who were trying to amalgamate Christianity and Judaism, and return to the keeping of the Old Testament law. 1 John was written against the Gnostics who held that all flesh is evil and therefore Jesus did not really come in the flesh; He was only a spirit. These heresies began about 60 AD.

Decline: During the 2nd and 3rd centuries the Church went through a time of great persecution, and declined especially after the time of Constantine (320 AD) when Christianity became the state religion and was forced upon both believers and unbelievers alike. Union between the Church and the Roman empire began, and while persecution decreased, nominal Christianity increased.

Apostacy: From the 4th to the 15th century, during the Dark and Middle Ages, the Church on the whole (although there were some notable exceptions) went through a time of spiritual decline and apostacy – far, far different from the Church in the book of Acts, and even from the Church as we know it today. Many doctrines and traditions of men were accepted even though contrary to the Bible; the spirituality of

the Church declined as it became increasingly political, and religion became formal, ritualistic and often superficial; personal faith in Jesus Christ and personal Christian experience and commitment were superceded by loyalty to the Church as an institution; there was little personal prayer life by most people – most prayers were formal (liturgical) prayers said in church, or confessions made to a priest; Bibles were rare and most people could not or did not read them (only priests were permitted to interpret them).

Reformation: Then, in 1517, the Reformation began, as prophesied by Peter almost 1500 years earlier.

Acts 3:19-21

“(Jesus) Whom Heaven must receive until the time for establishing (or, the time of restoration of) all things which God spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from of old” (v. 21).

Over the last few centuries, since 1517, God has been restoring truths to the Church which had been “lost” (or, rather, neglected). These truths are all in His Word – they were spoken or written many centuries ago by God’s holy prophets and apostles – but we have yet to see the full restoration of all of them. Bit by bit over these last few centuries these truths have started to be restored to the Church. Each denomination began by restoring some truth to the Church; the tragedy has been that we have been so slow to learn, and worse, that often we have gone back on what God had shown previously. Like waves of the sea on an incoming tide, as each successive wave goes further than the last, so it should be with the restoration of the truths of God’s Word – each “new” move should both incorporate all that went before it, as well as going further, so that the Church progresses to the place that God longs for it to have. Thus each successive wave of God’s revealed truth should go further than the last one.

Unfortunately most of the Church has been like the waves which come in, only to roll back, so that while the tide slowly comes in overall, much new ground is being lost by a return to the former way of things. Progression has been very slow for this reason. Also, when the Church has held onto a doctrine with a “This far but no further” attitude, it has fossilised into a denomination and become a hard, inflexible wineskin.

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