

**From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I. (Psalm 61:2)**

Long before the New Testament church was created, the Psalmist in a prophetic verse makes it clear that the church is to be the rock on which the Kingdom of God would be founded. The Lord expanded on this verse -

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

What kind of rock does God intend the church to be and what have we become? Is there any way out?

The bride in Revelation chapter 21 shows what the church was meant to be. This is the pattern which God’s people were meant to live, however imperfectly. One day it would become the perfect community in which all who have followed the Lord will spend eternity. Many churches in the world have fallen well short of this pattern and are living an ecclesiastical experience far from this truth. What is this pattern?

The God-centred church

From Revelation chapter 21 the following pattern emerges -

*** A beautiful church**

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

The church was and is meant to reflect everything that God is - the fullness which he intended for his creation. This fullness would include freedom to be the people he intended, forgiven from all that is passed, worship at his throne, service to his broken world and total conviction in an eternal destiny. The church was to reflect the beauty of its creative Lord.

*** A place worthy of the Lord**

God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

"Dwell" is the Greek word "Skane", which means "tent or tabernacle". The church is the framework of God's creation in which he has chosen to pitch his tent - the place he has chosen to come and be. Within the church creation can meet with the Creator.

*** Totally filled with God**

And God himself will be with them and be their God.

It's difficult for the church and its people to grasp this word. The Bible teaches that all the fullness of God dwelt in Christ. Revelation is teaching that all the fullness of God which dwelt in Jesus now rests in the church. This fullness unites the Creator at his church in a deeply powerful emotional and spiritual unity which is beyond words. By the grace of the Holy Spirit the church is able to experience this fullness every time it meets.

*** A place of perfection**

"I am making everything new."

The church will never be perfect, but should be always growing, always changing, always moving forward. as a living body. It should never stand still. Within this newness any and all of creation can find new starts, new directions and "the hope of glory."

*** A place of eternal destiny**

Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

One of the highest functions of the church is to demonstrate to the world the unity which creation can have with its Creator. This unity destroys the terror of death and opens up the possibility of eternal life freely given.

The broken church

Now comes a key verse for the church on earth to measure itself against.

It shone with the glory of God

Glory is the very nature of God. Any individual or group who claim to be of God must shine with the glory. Here is how Apostle Paul saw it -

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

The church must be changed into this glory by the work of the Holy Spirit.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Isaiah

Isaiah saw the glory, but unlike many in the 21st century church he did not lift his arms and dance. His reaction was far deeper.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:1-5)

For Isaiah the glory showed his failure. If the glory shone on the 21st century church would the same happen?

Are we a glorious church, or at least trying to be a glorious church? The glory comes when the church, with the cross at its heart, takes the role of a servant towards its members and its nation. As the servant church follows the servant master it has an inner glory, reflecting the glorious church it will be in heaven.

Isaiah gave the church a mirror in which it could see itself. Does the church see this?

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

or this -

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

His response showed that from his viewpoint he had failed miserably to even come close to what was needed. He has a public and painful conviction of his sin and failure.

A church cannot reflect the glory of God until it is convicted of its own sin and confesses. This process has to begin with the leadership with the conviction of its own sinfulness both personal, within the church and within the nation. The only hope is revival. Sadly the great sins stand in the way and few even understand them.

The sins of the church

The first great sin which the church must face up to is that it has not cared for the nation and consequently the nation has gone its own way. The church went after comfort and ease prosperity and success, and the nation has made this its goals. The central focus of the Lord, his cross and a passionate love for the nation he created has been lost. The size of this sin can only be understood when spiritual history is understood.

Africa protected the Lord when he was a baby. Africa protected the Lord from the violence of Herod and in the background Satan’s desire to kill the child Jesus. Satan has been taking out his anger on Africa ever since for its protection of Jesus.

There is a deeper issue. Satan feared that one day the Lord would raise up a nation which would break him. He feared that day and tried to destroy Africa before it could happen.

That child was Ghana. The destiny of Ghana was that it was to be a channel by which the spirit would flow into all West Africa, into wider Africa and into the world. The church in Ghana has not loved this child or protected it. The destiny of Africa is in danger because of the laziness and failure of the church.

This will bring the judgement of God on Ghana. it is a sin he cannot overlook unless the church is convicted of its sin and confesses. This process has to begin with the leadership with the conviction of its own sinfulness both personal, within the church and within the nation. The only hope is revival.

Second great sin of the church

If the great sin of the church is not was not to protect the nation the second great sin is not to be willing to bear the burden of the broken nation before the Lord. Caught up in success, achievement and pride churches failed to bear the agony of the Lord for Ghana in its heart all lifted before him. Success driven Fiesta religion leaves no room for seeing the agony of the land and no willingness to take up such a burden. After all what success is there in bearing a bleeding broken child to the Lord - one that has been broken by the neglect of the ones that try to bear it?

Is the church in Ghana and in the UK a mirror of the glory or has it become this picture?

The beggar

I saw a man, broken and hopeless. He was covered with scars and wounds. He was not beautiful, and no one loved him. To get his food, he sat in the gutter and begged. People passed by, laughing at him, spitting at him and beating him.

Then I saw the Lord come down the road. He stopped by the man and said, "What is your name?" The man replied "I have no name. I am a beggar. Please give me something."

The Lord asked again "What is your name?" The man replied "I once had a name. I once lived in a King's house. I was loved and cared for. I was expected to do so much. But I strayed from my father, and an enemy did this to me."

The Lord asked again "What is your name?" The man replied, "My name is Ghana." The Lord began to cry, because Ghana had been brought so low. He took the man in his arms and began to heal him.

These great failures point to the need for some radical change and the history of the church indicates that such changes are beyond it. There has to come a great outpouring of the Spirit to bring home the true nature of the failure and the potential of a new beginning walking a different path.

The only hope

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

There is only one hope left now and that is that the Lord will pour his reviving spirit on the nation. The church must pray that he will answer this –

"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"
(Psalm 85:6)

The Lord is ready and willing to do this because he loves his people. What holds him back? Sin stands in the way. The deep sins of the church, unrecognised or if recognised unconfessed holds back his hand. If this continues to be the case judgement will surely follow.

Looking at the situation in Ghana and the UK at the moment, the question which must be faced is this – has judgement already begun and is it too late for revival? My personal feeling is that in Ghana especially there is no willingness to face this question. This will lead to disaster - maybe it is already here.

Revival is the only answer now, but it is a very costly experience exposing the sin which is in the heart of the church and especially its leadership. This is the question that must be faced by every leader and then by the people -

“Am I willing to be convicted of my sin and allow that to be exposed to the Church of God so that revival fire may pour on the church and the nation?”

Few I suspect would be willing to do this. The consequence is simple. Revival will not come and judgement will come. Where is heard in Ghana or any nation the crying out of “Woe is me?”

NEXT WEEK - I will look at how conviction of sin can come and how it can change things.