

**PACESETTERS**  
**OF**  
**DIVINE**  
**MINISTRY**

**LET US LEARN**  
**FROM THEM**

**JAMES YAMOAHA**

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## FOREWORD

It is gratifying to see one's student excelling in scholarship. This book was written by one of my students. The book, ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them***, can be considered a miniature Christian manual for life and ministry.

The book is about four biblical characters - Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul. The author, James Yamoah, amongst other things, presents the following about each of the characters - the background, encounter with God, transformation for ministry, achievements in ministry, and lessons readers can learn from each. Other important features of the book are the endnotes which give explanations to difficult and unfamiliar ideas, references and bibliography which serve as sources for further studies.

The book will be useful for the scholar and practical Christian minister. I therefore recommend this book for studies and ministry.

**Mr. Joseph Nsiah**

Vice President

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## **FOREWORD**

The greatest need of the church today is not new programs or more resources. The greatest need is for spiritually formed men and women. Men and women who by virtue of their continuous, unrelenting and intimate encounters with Christ are being transformed into His likeness, and so continue to draw from Him the transformative power by which they can change their world! Men and women who know their God, not just in the cognitive and intellectual sense, but knowledge in the sense of deep and intimate closeness of His friendship. Men and women who like Moses, like Isaiah, like Daniel and like Paul became transformative tools in the hands of God and pacesetters for God's people! That is the greatest need of the church today.

This book is about how exactly such pacesetters are made. And I am honored to recommend the insights. Having previously researched and written on the subject of the formation of divine agents of the Bible, admittedly in their historical and theological dimensions, I am convinced that the contemporary pastoral implications of this theme have for too long been neglected.

To put the matter bluntly, our generation has, perhaps out of complacency, naively assumed that the spiritual formation of believers was a matter of course, a thing that passively occurs in believers as the Holy Spirit independently works out Christ's purposes in our congregation without any intentionality from the Church. Where this slothful assumption

came from is for historians of Christianity to fathom; but the result has been almost devastating for Christian witness. Having failed to give this subject the intentional attention that Jesus, Paul and the first Christians gave to the formation of believers, is it any wonder that many sections of the church today exhibit shallowness of spiritual power and poor quality Christian witness?

The time for change has come. This book is an important contribution towards restoring to the church the ministry of the intentional formation of Christian disciples. And no one is as qualified to lead us to explore the dynamics of the intentional making of these pacesetters as James Yamoah. As Chaplain and Dean of Students of Ghana Christian University College, and as Lecturer in Old Testament and PhD candidate in the same subject, James has devoted his life to the educational and intentional spiritual formation of countless men and women training for the ministry and future business in the university. His daily life is consumed with the passion and practicality of the making of disciples.

James wishes to see Christ formed in the lives of these Christian youth who will soon be the leaders of our churches, businesses and nation. Accordingly, his thoughts on how God intervened in the lives of the great men of the Bible, and by His Holy Spirit transformed them, on how God prepared them for His service and of how these men yielded their all so as to be made channels of blessings and agents of divine power and transformation are worth paying heed to.

What is in here deserves the rapt attention of the Church of Christ.

**Dr. Annang Asumang**

Practicing Medical Doctor -England  
Professor in Biblical Studies  
South African Theological Seminary

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

There is no way that I can forget to appreciate the great contributions of people on whose shoulders the Lord had carried me through life. Such dependable persons have made tireless efforts to shape my life in one way or the other. If it is possible that the mention of them here will satisfy all the sacrifices they have made to bring me this far so be it. The tall list comprises my immediate and extended family; in-laws; educators; spiritual family; leaders, mentors and mentees, friends, etc., who are the fundamental tools of God for shaping my life from birth till now.

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A very important group worthy of appreciation also comprises the following; Rev. Charles Soso, all Ministers, elders, deacons and deaconesses, and entire members of Christ Resurrection Church, Ghana, whose tall list I cannot provide here. I can never forget to appreciate you and the galaxy of Christian leaders and countless number of friends and acquaintances in whose hands I passed to this humble height. Among these are Mr. Kojo Badu & Mrs. Gertrude De-Bruce Smith (Columbus, USA), Rev. Martin Obeng (Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra), Rev. Eastwood Anaba (Founder, Fountain Gate Chapel Int.), Mrs. Rosina Offei-Addo (USA), Ms. Cecilia Boateng (USA), Pastor Joseph Boakye Danquah, (USA), Dr. & Mrs. Okoh, Mr. Nii-Noi Adumuah (Former MCE, Adentan) and family, Mr. Opare Hammond (Former MP, Adenta), Pastor and Mrs. Dunyo (USA), Pastor & Mrs. Offe-Gyamah, Pastor & Mrs. Akosah, Pastor & Mrs. Yeboah-Mantey (Niger), Pastor & Mrs. DeJoy Amankwah, Mr. & Mrs. Amo-Larbi and Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Acheampong. Also included are the many friends in the Pastoral ministry, the youth I have mentored, especially my foster children, whose list is not here but embedded deeply in my heart. I appreciate God for placing you under my care during a certain stage of your lives and wish you the best of God's blessings.

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I would like to narrow the scope further down to my core family of Mrs. Florence Yamoah, whose comforting presence gave me the most needed encouragement to produce this work, and my children; Jemima, Emmanuel (who did a lot of the typing), and Joseph. Their interactive presence kept me awake to finish this project, and they constituted the immediate 'power-house' behind this book. I pray God's abiding presence with them eternally.

Above all, I am forever grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ for always being there for me in accordance with the promise, "...Great is His faithfulness," (Lam. 3:22-23). Amen.

**James Yamoah**

## **DEDICATION**

To my better half, Florence,  
and my closest companions; Jemima, Emmanuel, and  
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## INTRODUCTION

“...We are social animals, influenced at every turn by the “companioned example” of our associates, whose attitudes and values affect us profoundly.”<sup>1</sup> With this quotation as the backdrop, ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them***, leads its reader on a journey to self discovery and unlimited performance. The book is premised on the fact that nobody is born into this world by mistake; every person that passes under the sun is part of a perfect and divine plan of God. By special design of the Original architect of life, every person is considered a privileged player that excellently fits into an orchestra on the earth. As part of the whole then, it is incumbent on everyone to ensure that he/she justifies such an inclusion in God’s eternal plan.

Self discovery and unlimited performance can only be achieved when an individual knows the plan of the Creator for his/her life and ministry for which he/she is privileged to be called. With God in full control as the Master planner, He begins to unfold what is in store for the individual and in the end uses the person to execute His glorious plan. It is apparent then that God’s overall objective is to ensure that every person plays a specific role that will make His ultimate purposes excellently executed before that entity passes this life to the next. When such is done, the person has fulfilled God’s ministry for his/her life. That is, the person has satisfied the divine mandate that was set for him/her on this terrestrial ball.

In pursuit of such a glorious goal, and to ensure excellent results, it is incumbent on a person to learn from those who are enrolled in God's hall of fame and heroes/heroines of faith. The reason is that we can be positively influenced by the examples of those who have treaded the path of service to God. Such people are the pacesetters in ministry. When this is done, the person can also be a pacesetter for posterity. However, the onus rests solely on individuals, and failure to take this initiative has led to many wasted lives. As a result, many lives have already been wasted without any meaningful achievement for God, with some still treading that path. The good news, however, is that not everyone will follow that line of emptiness to the grave. You might be one of the exceptions. This is because God has a way out for you by which you will reach the expected end. This is the purpose for this book.

*Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them* is designed with you in mind. Pacesetters here define those characters whose steps in life, rate and rhythm of movement have become the footprints worthy of emulation. They are those whose walk and service to God and their generation can be used as the pathway to excellence in the destiny of every person. These Bible heroes are just a sample of the many that have demonstrated profound success in the fulfillment of their God-given mandate and have become the pacesetters of divine ministry. Their exploits span the books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible characters whose lives are lessons in the book are: Part I, Moses; Part II, Prophet Isaiah; Part III, Prophet Daniel; and Part IV, Apostle Paul.

Specifically, Moses sets the pace as a prospective prince who denounces a prestigious position in the world in order to identify with a lowly but chosen race. Isaiah sets the pace as the most probable candidate for longest serving prophet of God in biblical Israel. On his part, Daniel sets the pace as one who from youthful years dedicated his life to God and served without blemish to the end in public administration. Last but not the least; Paul sets the pace as a persecutor of the body of Christ who later converted and no doubt became one of its greatest defenders in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

For all these pacesetters, a background to their lives and call by God precedes their ministry and lessons to be learned from them. Each of the selected characters shows some peculiar traits in his approach to the divine call which can inspire the reader to aspire to achieve success in his/her mandate on earth. Now that they are counted among the 'cloud of witnesses' they are urging you to have a positive mentality that, with God in your boat, you can sail through this life successfully by withstanding every storm and finally arrive safely at the glorious shore. This book expected to bless every reader by spelling out a general pattern of spiritual transformation that these key bible characters and others went through to reach success. This pattern involves the following: a vision of Christian life, the intention of God's kingdom-mindedness, and the means to model the character of the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill God's will for your life.

The book will open up discussions that will challenge every mind to dwell intelligently upon God as presented in the scriptures. It is to help the reader gather more than

enough lessons from these Bible greats who were able to engage their divine assignments and fully satisfy God's ultimate plans for their lives. The book will help persons who have accepted God's call and desire to fulfill such a divine will for their lives effectively.

Above all, when the reader accepts the challenge and pursues the lessons and applications in the study, the inner person will be motivated to drive him/her beyond ordinary limitations in order to fulfill his/her destiny. In the end, the book will inspire the reader to a deeper relationship with God that will culminate in a meaningful worship of Him in faith, true joy, peace, and hope at all times. Christian leaders of various groups who use this book will be blessed with spiritual insights to also share through teaching, preaching, or any fruitful way by which God's word comes to bless people. Yes, **we need to learn from the pacesetters of divine ministry.** Be prepared to do it now!

# PART I

## LET US LEARN FROM **MOSES**

# CHAPTER 1

## THE BACKGROUND OF MOSES

The history of the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is told in the Bible in great consistency right from the beginning. One of the greatest revelations from such is how Moses was transformed from a prince of Egypt (because he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter) into the prophet of God. Consider the following passages of scripture that describe Moses as a prince: Exodus 2:10 and 2:11-14 respectively read: "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses..." (NAS).<sup>2</sup> This was how Moses ended up in the royal corridor of Egypt. The scriptures continue:

Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and...he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew...he struck down the Egyptian and...he went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? (NAS)

While Hebrews 11:24 has this to say on the same issue: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin..." (NAS). These passages show

clearly the position of Moses as he grew up in the land of Egypt. The following passages describe Moses as a Prophet of God in Israel: Deuteronomy 18:18 reads: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him." Then also Deuteronomy 34:10-12 reads:

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt-- to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

These scriptures reveal that there was a purposeful transformation of Moses from a prince of a worldly nation, Egypt, into a Prophet of the LORD, the God of Israel.

But there are certain key areas of the biblical records for which equally great controversies surround. Some of these controversies are as a result of the lack of enough evidence to support arguments in their favor. Of particular interest is the lack of enough archaeological evidence concerning the life of the Israelites in Egypt, and the events of the Exodus. Overall, however, biblical history can be harmonized with Egyptian history...<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless; critics are very quick to use the inadequate archaeological evidence as reason to doubt the authenticity of the Bible. One such issue which remains a jig-saw in the story of Moses in Egypt is the Pharaoh's daughter who discovered him at the bank of the

river and adopted him to become a Prince in Egypt (Exod. 2:1-10). Such is the importance attached to Moses' role as a Prince that when he declined the noble position the Bible credits it to him as a step of faith and he is listed among God's heroes/heroines of faith. Therefore, the importance of the evidence that surround the identity of the Pharaoh's daughter in the current debate cannot be overemphasized.

This chapter and the next reveal who this daughter of Pharaoh was and establishes the reasons why Moses, after growing up as a Prince of Egypt and a possible heir apparent to Pharaoh's throne finally ended up as a Prophet of the Most High God.

### **The issue of Joseph in Moses' story**

The biblical account of Moses' presence in Egypt begins by looking at the circumstances that led to the migration of the Israelites to that land. This is closely linked to the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 which I believe is still under very critical investigation by both biblical scholars and Egyptologists with an interest in the Old Testament. It is apparent that any attempt to trace the life of Moses may be incomplete without reference to Joseph. But there seems to be a total lack of agreement between Bible scholars and Archaeologists in this area, especially, with regards to the dating of these events. One of the scholars writes:

Supporters of a 12th Dynasty date for the Joseph Story begin their arguments with a strict literal acceptance of the Biblical chronology of the Exodus and Sojourn. 1 Kings 6:1 is seen as dating the Exodus to ca. 1446 BC, and Exodus

12:40 is seen as placing the entrance of Jacob and his family into an Egypt where Joseph holds high office under the reign of Sesostris III, ca. 1876 BC. Joseph's career as an Egyptian governmental official would thus begin under Sesostris II and would continue into the reign of Sesostris III.<sup>4</sup>

The position of some scholars is that Joseph's career fits biblically and historically well in Dynasty 12. The reason is that there appears to be a growing consensus on the Middle Kingdom date for the Joseph story, though with some slight differences in the date. Dyke is convinced that the story begins with the reign of Amenemhat II when he states, "Joseph went to Egypt when this man was on the throne".<sup>5</sup>

The Bible tells us that when Jacob and his family migrated from Asia to Egypt at the invitation of Pharaoh, they were settled in "the land of Rameses" and that they became property owners there (Gen. 47:11, 27). Wood believes that the earliest evidence for Asiatics in Egypt is at a city called Rowaty (the city that was later named Rameses), and occurs in the late 12th Dynasty (mid 19th BC). He states, "At that time a rural settlement was founded...It is highly possible that this is the first material evidence of Israelites in Egypt. It is the right culture in the right place at the right time."<sup>6</sup>

The story in the Bible continues that the Israelites enjoyed their stay in Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and were fruitful so they multiplied and increased in number until they became exceedingly great and filled the whole land of Egypt. That period would be peaceful, as well as prosperous for the Israelites, since they had access to all they needed.

This would definitely be as a result of what Joseph had done in saving the land of Egypt from famine and his position as next to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Their number could have been about two million, if the total male population from a census conducted at Sinai few months after their exit from Egypt was anything to go by. During that census recorded in Numbers 1:45-45, 'the Israelites' post-exodus male population over 20 years old summed up to 603,550, not including the 22,000 Léville males of Num 3:39. When women and children are added, they would have well exceeded 2,000,000.<sup>17</sup> But how long were the privileges that catalyzed their rapid growth in number going to last? It was only a matter of time.

### **The “new king” and the birth of Moses**

After a period of time, the Bible says that Joseph and all the generation that went to him in Egypt died. Then a new king who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt (Exod. 1:8), and the life of the Israelites took a different turn. From this point, just as scripture says, they were perceived as a threat to the security of any government and their presence was becoming a nuisance to the whole land. This issue of the “new king who arose in Egypt” is a subject of great debate among most Bible scholars. It may mean that the Egyptian king Joseph served had died and another of the same dynasty or a different dynasty had ascended the throne. It could even mean that this new king was a non-Egyptian. Scripture says that this “new king” did not know Joseph (Exod. 1:8; Acts 7:18).

It appears that the "new king, who did not know about Joseph" was a foreigner. Many scholars agree that near the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Egyptian government collapsed under the influence of the Hyksos, and that the period of their domination of the Nile Delta was the 17<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Wood describes them as a Semitic people from Syria-Palestine, who took up residence in the Nile and eventually ruled Egypt for some 108 years, from 1663-1555BC (15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty).<sup>8</sup>

Their interruption of Egyptian history may have come as a surprise since they appear to have filtered into the land on a very gradual move, most probably from the north-eastern part of Egypt. One scholar refers to them as 'Desert Princes' or 'Shepherd Kings' and gives the date of their rule as 1663-1570BC.<sup>9</sup> Being foreigners from a place where survival is by warfare, they would be experts in battle and they most likely seized the throne by force of arms. Dyke sees the new king as a usurper and explains that the biblical image fits a Hyksos king. According to him, the use of the phrase 'arose over' always points to a usurping in the Bible in contrast to 'raising up' (1 Kings 11:14). Therefore, he refers to them as *hekaw Khasut wat*, (a term which is probably in reference to the Hyksos leaders, so people translate it, "foreign leaders") and also as *A'amu*, (the term for Syrio-Palestinians).<sup>10</sup>

They occupied the northern part of Egypt (Lower Egypt) and probably established their capital at Avaris. They are likely to have been a major force during that time because Merrill writes that, "By 1730 BC, at least all of Lower Egypt was firmly in Hyksos' hands...There they

maintained rule... (ca. 1580)."<sup>11</sup> The Hyksos domination of Lower Egypt is calculated to have lasted for about 108 years through some five kings. Perhaps the Hyksos destroyed all the information about Joseph and some of their predecessors when they overthrew local Egyptian authority, a practice which is known to have been common during that period.

Destruction of major records of predecessors is a demonstration of lack of acceptance. The phrase that is used to describe the relationship between the "new king" and Joseph is 'did not know' (from Heb. *yada*), which could be translated as "not having factual acknowledgement, knowledge, or approval." The phrase could also mean the new king did not approve of Joseph or he did not have any past information on Joseph. In practical terms, the Egyptian Pharaohs would not forget what Joseph had done for them in saving the whole land and making them the owners of it for which reason they were obliged to treat the Hebrews well.

Therefore the logical conclusion regarding a king who would mistreat the Hebrews is to take such a "new king" as not having Egyptian origin. And this new king over Egypt could only be a foreign (enemy) king, most likely of the Hyksos who were on record to have invaded the land some time earlier. Additionally, it is not likely that the title "Pharaoh" was applied to this "new king" in the records of the Egyptians. Hoffmeier writes that the absence of Pharaoh's name in the exodus narratives is a normal practice in New Kingdom inscriptions...<sup>12</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that the Hyksos kings feared an alliance between the native Egyptians and the Hebrews, since they were probably in the minority as against the strength of the Hebrews. An Egyptian Pharaoh did not have to entertain such a fear since the Hebrews were quite insignificant compared to the Egyptians. The Bible records that this new (Hyksos) king began the program of forced labor for the Israelites, making bricks for building projects and all kinds of work in the field, including the building of cities: "Pithom" and "Rameses" were built by the new slaves (Exod. 1:11-14).

### **The New Kingdom dynasty and the Israelite slaves**

While there appears to be no difference between the "new king" (of the Hyksos) and Pharaoh which are mentioned in the Bible account of Exodus 1:8 ff, Egyptian history clarifies the issue. Clayton classifies all the rulers of ancient Egypt from Dynasty 0-31, and gives them a ruling period spanning 3150-332 BC.<sup>13</sup> The many different dynasties, each consisting of one or more rulers, showed many striking characteristics depending upon the challenges which were peculiar to their time. One of the interruptions in the chronological accounts is the usurpation of power by the Hyksos whose period coincided with the presence of the Israelites in Egypt, and who also enslaved them (the Israelites). But using biblical chronology and tracing the period of the date of the Exodus by the long sojourn also puts the presence of Moses and the Israelites in Egypt in the New Kingdom period of Egyptian chronology.

King Ahmose, the first (Pharaoh) of the New Kingdom, is believed to have been the one who defeated the Hyksos and drove them back into the region of Palestine. Two scholars make mention of the expulsion of the Hyksos who by 1570 BC controlled only the Northern part from Avaris in the Delta and the reunification of the kingdom under Ahmose which mark the beginning of the New Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Veith also gives an indication of this when he writes that Ahmoses (the moon is born) ruled from 1570 to 1553 BC as the first Pharaoh of Dynasty 18 or New Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> This means that when the Hyksos were eventually driven from Egypt most probably back to Palestine, Lower and Upper Egypt were once again united, and the stage was then set for other historical landmarks to unfold.

Contrary to expectation that the Egyptian Kings would be favorable to the Israelites because of Joseph, this might not have been the case. For, after the Hyksos had been driven away, it is most likely that the Egyptian Pharaohs of the New Kingdom continued with the forced labor policy begun by the Hyksos. According to Merrill, King Ahmose who began the New Kingdom dynasty so much hated the Hyksos that he might have pre-judiciously related them (the Hyksos) with the Israelites.<sup>16</sup> No wonder, the Israelites came under intense oppression during this period, according to Exodus 1:9-11. But the more they were oppressed the more they increased and spread to fill Egypt (vs. 12). Because of this rapid growth in the population of the Hebrews, other measures became necessary. The Bible records Pharaoh's instruction to the midwives of the Israelites to kill any male born at birth, which failed to work, (Exod. 1:16-21), and an

order to all his people that any Hebrew male that is born must be thrown into the Nile (Exod. 1:22). It was during this period that Moses was born, according to the Bible.

There are major differences in the date that different scholars give for the birth of Moses. This is due primarily to the different dates given in the chronology of the Egyptian Pharaohs to which most Egyptologists do not agree. Nevertheless, Israel's exodus from Egypt in 1446 BC fits with the chronology of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs in Egyptian records.<sup>17</sup> Most probably, the discrepancies occur as a result of inclusive or exclusive dating procedures. For example, the following are some of the New Kingdom (18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties) dates that have been proposed:

- Birth of Moses: 1526 BC under the reign of Thutmose I.<sup>18</sup>
- Flight of Moses to Midian: most likely 1486 BC during the reign of Thutmose III, when Moses' foster mother, Queen Hatshepsut, 'who ruled between 1504-1484 BC'<sup>19</sup> might have been overthrown.
- Exodus: It occurred in 1446 BC under Amenhotep II.<sup>20</sup>

The issue of which of the kings (or Pharaohs) gave the command for Hebrew male born children to be thrown into the river is also hotly debated among some Bible scholars. For example, Amenhotep I (1548-1528) is mentioned by one of them as the very likely king who carried out the oppressive measures of Ahmose against the Hebrews, and that it is entirely possible he was the Pharaoh who made the decree that all the male infants of the Hebrews should be slain.<sup>21</sup> However, some scholars still hold that Thutmose I was the pharaoh who issued that decree. Girls were permitted to live for the probable reason that they posed less

of a threat to the security of the state in contrast to the boys who were seen as a potential threat because they could decide one day to seek their freedom by joining enemies of the state in revolt, or seek means to gain power.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has delved into the background of Moses, tracing it from the role of Joseph in Egypt and the circumstances that necessitated the migration of the family of Jacob (also called Israel) to Egypt. Issues relating to the New Kingdom dynasty, the enslavement of the descendants of Jacob, i.e., the Israelites, and the “new king” at the birth of Moses have also been mentioned. With these issues firmly established, other issues of importance, particularly the birth of Moses and his link to the throne of Egypt through Pharaoh’s daughter would be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MOSES BECOMES PRINCE OF EGYPT**

Moses was the son of Amram and Jochebed, and a descendant of Levi in the 4th generation (Exod. 6:16-20), of the family of Kohath (vs. 18–20). He was born in Egypt, probably Goshen in the year 1526 BC. He was the third of three children born to Amram and Jochebed. Miriam was the eldest followed by Aaron who was born three years before Moses, (Exod. 7:7; Num. 26: 59).

#### **The birth of Moses**

Moses' birth signified that the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt had come to an end and that God was ready to bring to pass His redemption plan. A few years before Moses' birth, Thutmose I (1539-1514 BC) issued a decree that all male children be thrown into the Nile, (Exod. 1:22). But at his birth, Moses' mother 'saw that he was a fine child, so this is what she did: "She hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket...she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him" (Exod. 2:2-4).

Most readers may admire the bold step that Moses' mother took. Her effort to preserve Moses alive is mentioned in Hebrews 11:23 as an act of faith. This implies God was using the parents to save the child because he was destined for a future assignment. Definitely, it is an action

many women dare not take, “By putting Moses in an ark of bulrushes and placing him on the bosom of the Nile, Jochebed was complying with the letter of the law that required male children to be offered in sacrifice to the Nile.”<sup>22</sup>

The daughter of Pharaoh visited the river bank to bathe and through one of her maidservants, discovered the child in a basket floating on the river. Realizing that it was one of the sons of the Hebrews which had been placed there, she had pity on the child. Through the suggestion of the baby’s sister who was at the scene, a Hebrew woman was sent for and given the child to take care of at the expense of Pharaoh’s daughter. The record continues that when the child grew the woman presented him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and “she named him Moses, because she said, “I drew him out of the water.” (Exod. 2:5-10). If the Bible calls Moses a Prince of Egypt, then it follows that this daughter of Pharaoh became a “king” in the whole land of Egypt. But what is the proof? The subsequent section will provide a lead into the issue.

### **Background of ‘the daughter of Pharaoh’**

Pharaoh Ahmose (the “moon” is born) who ruled from 1570 to 1553 BC as the first Pharaoh of dynasty 18 was followed by Amenhotep (“Amun” is pleased), from 1553 to 1532 BC. He was the father of Thutmose I. Thus Thutmose I was the third pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty. It is quite interesting at this point to note that many Egyptologists almost agree on the list of the kings but show vast difference in the dates they assign each one. Thutmose I came to the throne as a result of his marriage to Queen Ahmose, and

their first child was Hatshepsut. She was most probably the “daughter of Pharaoh I” who appeared in the records relating to the New Kingdom dynasty. There is, however, evidence that Pharaoh Thutmose I and his wife Queen Ahmose had another daughter, Neferubity, of whom little is known.<sup>23</sup> It appears the role of the first daughter overshadows much information about any other child. It is possible she died quite early in life or that she was overshadowed by her influential elder sister. Hatshepsut married her stepbrother Thutmose II as arranged by her father.

As a Princess and daughter of a powerful Egyptian king, Thutmose I, and therefore the one from the royal line, Hatshepsut became queen consort when she married her half-brother, Thutmose II. But one source reveals that, “the marriage of Thutmose and Hatshepsut failed to produce a male heir; instead they produced another daughter, Neferure.”<sup>24</sup> This situation probably compelled Thutmose II to look elsewhere for a male child.

### **The rise of Hatshepsut to power**

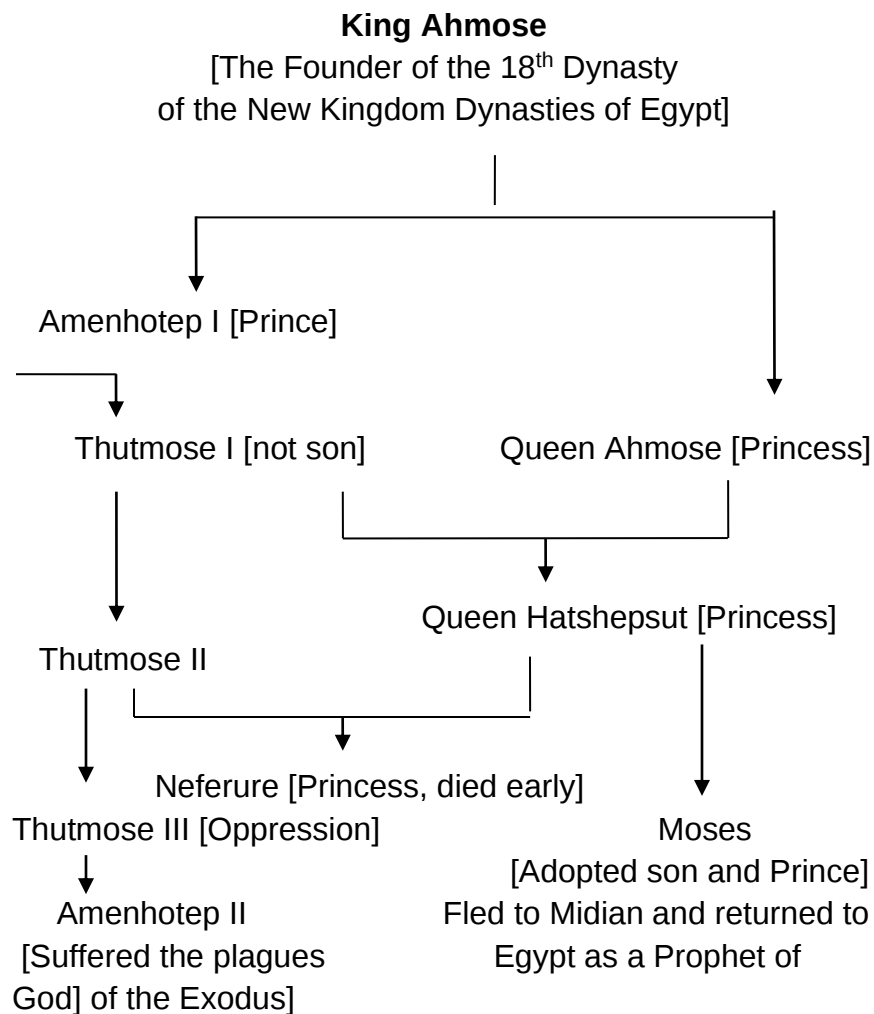
After her father's death, her husband Thutmose II became pharaoh, but Hatshepsut was a very influential woman and was the one who wielded the real power. Since Thutmose II did not have a son with her, when he died a few years into his reign, succession according to Egyptian tradition passed to Thutmose III, a son of Thutmose I by a lesser queen. Because of Thutmose III's young age, Hatshepsut became regent of Egypt, “...Her self-appointment to the rank of coregent probably met with little or no opposition within the royal court.”<sup>25</sup> The issue of her

regency may be as a result of the step son being quite young and therefore inexperienced to handle the affairs of the kingdom. It is likely that this was a practice of Egypt. During that time 'it was rare but not unprecedented for a queen mother to assume the regency until her young son came of age.'<sup>26</sup> But behind the scene, she was using this move as an excuse to seize power.

In reality, the ultimate focus of Hatshepsut was to ascend the throne so she went ahead to execute her plans. Truly, *her* royal lineage could not be challenged. She was the only child of Thutmose I and his great royal wife, Queen Ahmose. This made her a 'king's daughter' and a 'king's wife,' both important titles in the royal hierarchy. It is also likely that she was quite close to the throne even when her father was still ruling, and therefore had developed the idea of ascending the throne of the highest office with time. To be able to succeed her husband, she had to concoct a plan that would make her acceptable to the people and at the same time satisfy their process for selecting a ruler.

This was exactly what Hatshepsut did, "At the time of Thutmose II's death, she invented a supernatural birth story for herself and also claimed the throne by claiming co-regency with her father."<sup>27</sup> This was a step that would by all means push her step-son away and offer her a firm grip on the throne of the land. That would be the only way to ensure her prominence after the demise of her husband. Once she set her eyes on the throne, she was ready to do everything within her power to seize it, and she claims her father's support for the throne. It is on record that "Hatshepsut, being

the daughter of Thutmose I, wrote in her inscriptions that her father appointed her heir to the throne.”<sup>28</sup>



**A proposed chart to show Moses' position as a Prince  
of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the New Kingdom of Egypt**

The next move was to claim the support of the gods. Supported by an oracle of Amun at Thebes, a cult faction elevated Hatshepsut to the throne not only as regent, but she was regarded as the wife of Amun at Thebes. This was made possible by the use of a legend. According to the royal birth legend that reveals the divine ancestry of the king, who was already selected “in the egg”, the earthly queen conceives the future king from a god. Thus Hatshepsut’s mother was a martial queen and her father the god, Amun.<sup>29</sup> During the Old Kingdom their god, that is, the national deity, was Horus or Re, but during the New Kingdom it was Amun.

Emphasizing her royal and divine origins meant that Hatshepsut endeavored to legitimize her claim to the throne. Thus, the succession of the young Thutmose III, son of a concubine of Thutmose I, who had to be designated the royal heir could not be accomplished. Grimal writes that she had herself crowned as king, with the complete title: Maatkare (‘Maat is the ka of Ra’), Khnemet-Amun-*Hatshepsut* (*‘She who embraces Amun, the foremost of women’*).<sup>30</sup> Thus, she jointly reigned with her step-son for more than two decades during the early part of the New Kingdom when Egypt was the most powerful land in the eastern Mediterranean.

She is believed to have ruled from about 1479 to 1458 BC and is only one of six women who ruled as kings in ancient Egypt. This, however, was against the fact that she would still be considered a usurper. However, she had still managed to deal with the possible threat of Thutmose III, the heir apparent to the throne. It is speculated that she appointed him the commander of the national army. If it were

so then that step would have worked against her in later years.

Hatshepsut was regarded as a pharaoh who was interested in building projects even though there are very few structures to show presently. This may have been as a result of calculated plans to remove all memories of her, since she was always regarded as a usurper. This notwithstanding, there may be some few archaeological findings to her memory like her mortuary temple complex believed to be at Deir el-Bahri. It is believed that this was a place of great significance to the early Thutmose rulers and Hatshepsut chose it as the site for her funerary temple. By this choice as a place of her burial, Hatshepsut no doubt counted herself among the kings of ancient Egypt.

It is also possible that she would always identify with project and plans of the Thutmose in order to legitimize her claim to the throne. And this is exactly what is portrayed by her temple building at Deir el-Bahari. Writing on the temple, Schulz comments that “the northern hall tells of the divine descent of Hatshepsut and of her being chosen king by her father Amun-Re” and believes that “it may have been prompted by a desire for additional legitimacy, in order to justify Hatshepsut’s claim to the throne and her co-regency with Thutmose III.”<sup>31</sup> Although the idea of the divine birth of Pharaoh is attested to from the Old Kingdom onward, this is believed to be the earliest pictorial representative of it. As the daughter of Thutmose I and the wife of Thutmose II, it is also expected that she would continue the cult worship of the national deity, Amun-Re, so that she would court more support for herself and secure her rule.

In all, the period of rule of Hatshepsut Maatkare is believed to have been peaceful. She is given a total reign of about 22 years by the ancient author, Manetho.”<sup>32</sup> Not much is known about the circumstances that led to her death. May be she died as a result of Thutmose III’s full assumption of power and the disappointment she suffered subsequently. However, a common practice known as *Damnatio Memoriae* – the “damning of memory;” was applied to her after her demise. This was a common practice in the ancient world where a person’s name and records, especially that of a previous leader or enemy, is systematically removed from history or not mentioned so that the one is completely forgotten. The objective is that, “If you leave their names out, they fall from memory, and consequently, from existence.”<sup>33</sup> But a lot of speculations abound to the effect that the period of peace that characterized her reign might have made her an excellent Pharaoh.

The attack launched by Hatshepsut’s ‘enemy’ to erase her from memory succeeded in defacing most of the things she did, particularly, her building projects. It is believed that even her burial temple was not spared. Though Thutmose III is fingered by a number of scholars for the attack on her step-mother for usurping power and trying to sideline him, others think differently. One scholar notes:

According to most Egyptologists, this massive effort to destroy all records of Hatshepsut was launched by Thutmose III...But several factors weaken the theory that Thutmose III was the perpetrator...Amenhotep II was the sole culprit in the campaign to destroy Hatshepsut's

image...and one legitimate motive for Amenhotep II to have committed this act is Hatshepsut's rearing of Moses as her own son in the royal court (Acts 7:21). After the Red Sea incident, Amenhotep II would have returned to Egypt seething with anger, both at the loss of his firstborn son and virtually his entire army (Exod 14:28)...<sup>34</sup>

Not only did Hatshepsut's 'enemy' try to obliterate her memory and cast her into total oblivion, the attempt also succeeded in covering or destroying obvious evidence of the presence of the people of Israel in Egypt. Thus the remains of the presence of Jacob's descendants in Egypt still appear quite inconspicuous. Nevertheless, not all evidence of Hatshepsut's reign could be erased.

### **Archaeological evidence of Hatshepsut's reign**

In spite of deliberate attempts to destroy the records of Queen Hatshepsut from the annals and monuments of Egypt, some evidence of her rulership still exist. For example, the tomb of this female Pharaoh was largely cleared, but some grave furnishings have been identified, and Bickerstaff writes about some discoveries to this effect.<sup>35</sup> Bickerstaff also quotes Joyce Tyldesley in her book *The Female Pharaoh*, as making the following comment:

The remainder of Hatshepsut's funerary equipments is now lost, although a draughts-board and a throne (actually the back and legs of a couch or bed), said to have been discovered from the Deir el-Bahari cache and presented to the British Museum by Jesse Haworth in 1887, have been identified as belonging to Hatshepsut on the basis of a

wooden cartouche-shaped lid said to have been found with them...<sup>36</sup>

Currently, there seem to be renewed interest and ongoing effort to unearth more evidence to establish the authenticity of Hatshepsut in the history of Egypt.

### **‘King’ Hatshepsut or Pharaoh’s daughter**

The issue at stake is whether there is any relationship between the “king’s daughter” who later ascended the throne of the Pharaohs of Egypt as “King Hatshepsut” and the biblical Moses, the prophet and deliverer of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt. The reason is that there is not much evidence of any female who wielded such power as she, to be bold enough to raise a slave to such a higher status.

Before one can establish any link between King Hatshepsut and Moses there should first be a link between this King Hatshepsut and Pharaoh’s daughter. The question is could this “king’s daughter” be the same as “Pharaoh’s daughter” mentioned in the biblical book of Exodus 2:5-9? Yes, the forgone discussion that seems to trace the root of Pharaoh’s daughter no doubt establishes the fact that she was the Princess who became ‘King Hatshepsut Maatkare of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of the New Kingdom of Egypt. It is quite strange that anybody would not draw a link between Pharaoh’s daughter and Hatshepsut if the events of the exodus really occurred in the New Kingdom era of Egyptian history. Indeed, a lot of arguments have been advanced to link Hatshepsut to the Pharaoh’s daughter who adopted

the biblical Moses, and these are based upon facts from Egyptian culture.

One scholar sees a valid case for the theory that Queen Hatshepsut, one of the pharaohs of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt, was actually the princess who in her youth drew Moses out of the water and adopted him as her son in 1527 BC.<sup>37</sup> Such a conclusion has been arrived at by other researchers in the subject. One may have to consider some of these statements from the scholars on the debate, in order to help his or her judgment. For example, Harbin mentions a popular theory that states that "Hatshepsut was the princess who found Moses floating in the Nile, which has been largely debated by Egyptologists and Biblical scholars."<sup>38</sup> The conclusion appears definite; Hatshepsut is the most qualified candidate as the one who, as daughter of Thutmose I, adopted Moses as a prince of Egypt, in accordance with Exodus 2:1-10.

There are other details that cement the obvious relationship between Hatshepsut, who was the Pharaoh's daughter, and Moses such as the floating child at the riverside, the issue of Moses' name, and the issue of adoption in Egypt during the New Kingdom era. Some of these have to be established in order to give credibility to the relationship between the Queen and the princess and Moses. And there exists some internal evidence from scripture to that effect. The good news is that archaeological work is believed to be ongoing to unearth some of the vivid artifacts in order to enhance the presentation of this subject. But until future evidence show otherwise, Hatshepsut would remain the Pharaoh's daughter who rescued Moses.

### **The cultural setting of Exodus 2:1-10**

Evidence from the Egyptian culture is something worth giving some consideration to here, because most people are identified by their culture. This is the next area that some scholars would want to shift the discussion for evidence and support. Hoffmeier takes the discussion to critical heights when he mentions that scholars have been concerned with assessing the merits of a Hebrew borrowing, and have missed the small details in the text that are undeniably Egyptian.<sup>39</sup> Indeed there are a lot of trivial details in Exodus 2:3-4 which should be of much interest to the studies of Egyptian cultural background.

The mention of these trivial details confirms that the storyteller has intimate knowledge of the event. These are things which others, without “inside information,” would not know. He asserts that a careful reading of the Hebrew text of the birth narrative reveals that a number of words used are of Egyptian origin: “And when she could hide him no longer, she took for him a *basket* made of *bulrushes*, and daubed it with bitumen and *pitch*; and she put the child in it and placed it among *reeds* at the *river’s bank*.” He indicates that the italicized words are of certain or possible Egyptian etymology.<sup>40</sup> The cultural setting of the story of Moses in Exodus is a powerful link between this man, the deliverer of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity, and the history of the New Kingdom of Egypt. It is a strong tool in the defense that Moses’ attachment to the throne of Egypt as a prince (Heb. 11:22), through Pharaoh’s daughter, has enough Egyptian background.

### **Baby Moses at the river-side**

With all of the other details given in Exodus 2:1-10, it is significant that Amram and Jochebed are not specifically named as the parents of Moses. Comberiate sets the tone for a discussion with the statement that the key phrase “*qara shem*” is only used to state that Moses was specifically the son of some unnamed man and woman in Exodus 2:1, who named their son, Moses.<sup>41</sup> This may mean that the identity of Moses’ parents was covered for a purpose unknown at that moment. Anybody could have found him and taken him as their child. For as long as the child would live the mother would have achieved her purpose.

Why was the princess up in the Delta? Was it a practice for the princess or princesses to bathe in the river? Though the royal family resided in palaces near Karnak, which was close to Thebes, the capital, and is quite removed from the Delta, Schultz and Seidel state that the members could travel far to the Lower Egypt region, because, “the military training of the prince and especially heir to the throne was conducted in the Memphis region.”<sup>42</sup> There is however no clear historical evidence of daughters of the kings coming to the river to bathe. Therefore, many reasons may be speculated here. It is very likely that she was going through a religious purification process. However, the visit of Pharaoh’s daughter to the river “to wash herself” (Exod. 2:5), may also have been a ritual ablution designed to secure these supposed benefits for her.

Additionally, since she had set her eyes on the throne and would later claim it, it is possible she was considering a supernatural birth story for herself by going to the Nile to

bathe. It is equally plausible that she might also have found Moses during her purification for reigning as Pharaoh (the 'king') and gone ahead to lie about the supernatural birth of Moses. However, Nisbett believes that the appearance of Moses, floating in his little ark of bulrushes, as if he were a gift from the Nile god in answer to her prayers, apparently impressed her as a happy omen.<sup>43</sup> It is not ironical that the baby landed in a noble hand because the child's mother saw him as a good child and therefore was not prepared to allow him to be destroyed. The God of the Hebrews was behind it.

#### **The issue of Moses' name: who gave it?**

There are other issues in the 'Moses - daughter of Pharaoh' episode that also need consideration. For example, the Bible statement that, she named him "Moses," saying, "I drew him out of the water" (Exod. 2:10) seem to present two possibilities of who did the naming: the mother or Pharaoh's daughter. But most Bible scholars agree on the later on the basis of the meaning of the name. If we take Pharaoh's daughter as doing the naming, then the princess is claiming a supernatural birth for Moses who she might also have found during her purification for reigning as the next Pharaoh. The idea of making Moses a child 'born of the Nile' gives an implication of what the Princess would do in future, to hatch a divine ancestry both for herself and the would-be 'Prince.' As expected, when she finally gained control of the throne under the name of Hatshepsut Maatkare, and not having a son of her own, Moses became a Prince in the land.

The fact that the name of Moses has a strong background of the royal family of the New Kingdom cannot be overemphasized. The meaning of the names of the Egyptian royal family shows that they were very careful in picking names. Pharaoh's daughter was very mindful of the name she gave to the Hebrew child she adopted. Nisbett has this to say about the naming of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter:

Moses, (Heb. and Aramaic, Mosheh), "one drawn out," probably based on the Egyptian *ms* or *msw*, "child," "son," "the one born of." The Egyptians incorporated the word *msw*, "mose," into royal names such as Ahmose, "the one born of (the moon god) Ah"; Kamose, "the one born of the (deified soul) Ka"; Thutmose, "the one born of (the scribal god) Thoth"; and the common name Ramose (later Ramses), "the one born of (the sun-god) Ra." In everyday life, these names were often abbreviated to "Mose." Similarly, the name Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses may originally have included the name of some Egyptian deity.<sup>44</sup>

There appears to be growing consensus among some Bible scholars concerning the linkage between Moses' name and the kings of Egypt. This has arisen possibly in light of ongoing debate about the real relationship between Moses and Hatshepsut, who no doubt is considered to have been the Pharaoh's daughter of Exodus 2:1-10. Those in favor of the debate posit that Moses' name clearly shows Egyptian origin. One of such scholars is Hoffmeier who reveals a widespread agreement between the root of the name of

Moses and the Egyptian word *msi*, which was a common element in theophoric names throughout the New Kingdom (e.g. Amenmose, Thutmose, Ahmose, Ptahmose, Ramose, and Rameses)."<sup>45</sup> These are clear links of Moses' name to original names of Egypt's pharaohs, meaning that the name no doubt originated from that background.

### **Adoption of Moses**

It was incredible that during this time of the racial hatred of the Hebrews that Moses, also a Hebrew, would be adopted so easily. The issue of whether adoption was a feature in those days, even as far as to the royal house, is worth considering. But the story of Exodus 2:1-10 clearly reveals that it might have been a common practice during that period in Egypt. The picture of Moses in Exodus 2 being taken to the court by a princess where he was reared and educated, according to Hoffmeier, is quite consistent with emerging information about the royal nursery in the New Kingdom, the only period for which there is evidence of foreigners being included in this royal institution.<sup>46</sup> In support of this practice by the royal house, Argubright quotes Josephus as writing about Pharaoh's daughter that having no children of her own; she adopted him as her own. Thus the princess took the child as her own, hiring his own mother as his nurse.<sup>47</sup>

The question that one may ask is why an Egyptian Princess would adopt a Hebrew slave child if not for a very important reason. Merrill comments thus: "It is very tempting to identify Hatshepsut with the daughter of Pharaoh mentioned in Exodus 2:5, for her age at the time would fit

the situation perfectly as would her boldness in rescuing a Hebrew baby and rearing him within the very palace of the king.”<sup>48</sup> Moses was put under royal Egyptian tutors in his training as a royal prince and heir to the throne. Egypt, no doubt, had a powerful civilization during this period of time, and could easily pass for the center of attraction to the then known world. They were quite advanced in science, all forms of skills and craft, knowledge in writing, etc.

It was during this time that Moses, “as a Prince of Egypt,” was tutored in all these areas of knowledge. This is confirmed by the scriptures in Hebrew 11:22 that Moses was instructed in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” It is only with the support of some authority and for a very good purpose that Moses would be raised as such. He was definitely being groomed to possibly become the next king, a step that could be achieved through the machinations of Hatshepsut.

### **Chapter summary**

The birth of Moses and the issues surrounding his adoption and nurture as a prince of Egypt have been discussed in this chapter. Of particular importance is the identity of the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I and Queen Ahmose. She was no doubt the woman who ruled Egypt between 1479 and 1458 BC, under the title of, ‘King Hatshepsut Maatkare.’ The next chapter will look at Moses’ rejection of the princehood and the circumstances that caused him to run from Egypt to Midian.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TURNING POINT FOR MOSES

In the previous chapter, the link between Pharaoh's daughter and Moses was firmly established. It is reechoed by the position of one scholar who presents a bridge between Moses and the Pharaohs of the New Kingdom. He mentions that the Hebrew, *moseh*, is an active form which corresponds to the Egyptian word *mose*, meaning "son" or "child," and thus concludes that, "before becoming Israel's deliverer, Moses was a foster son of the princess."<sup>49</sup> "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses..." (Exod. 2:10, NAS). This background also affirms Moses' position as a prince of Egypt mentioned by the scriptures above (cf. Hebrew 11:22).

Moses' transformation from his position as a Prince of Egypt to a Prophet of Israel is a process that demonstrates God's greatness over all situations of life and is a proof that the destiny of all persons is in His hands. Pharaoh's daughter had adopted Moses in order to raise him as a prince to succeed her father. By doing so under the very eyes of the father is also an indication that she had his approval for both the adoption and the overall plan behind the move. Moses, regarded as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, became a prince because his 'mother' was ruling as 'king' Hatshepsut Maatkare of Egypt.

As an Egyptian prince he received training in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. This might have courted the jealousy of Thutmose III. The Bible mentions in Acts 7:20ff that Moses was a prince in Egypt until he was 40 years old, "At that time Moses was born...Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." No doubt, Hatshepsut was carrying out a perfect plan to raise Moses to take the throne as the next Pharaoh of Egypt. Veith writes this on the subject: "Moses grew up as a foster child in the house of Pharaoh, and Thutmose I had no sons, so upon his death in 1508 BC, Moses could have become pharaoh, but he declined."<sup>50</sup>

### **No more a Prince of Egypt**

What might have been the reason for a one-hundred and eighty degrees turn of destiny in the life of Moses; a turn from "a prince of Egypt who was heir to Pharaoh's throne" to "a first class prophet of the God of Israel?" Well, the immediate cause might be conjectured by many scholars and Bible interpreters, since scripture is quite silent on it. Whatever it is, the fact still remains that God orders certain circumstances of life that will open the door for the process of transformation of his chosen vessels to come to pass. In the case of Moses two situations facilitated the process.

Hatshepsut thought she had a perfect prince and heir to the throne of Pharaoh in Moses. Then suddenly, and probably to the utmost disappointment of Hatshepsut, Moses rejected the "princehood." The rejection was due to reasons which perhaps may have been known only to

Moses. Somehow he had become abreast with the actual facts that he was not an Egyptian but a Hebrew. This realization most likely began to have a great influence on him and led him to begin identifying with the Hebrew, as revealed by Acts 7:13: "When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites." This position is supported by Hebrews 11:24, which says: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

At this stage, it is possible he renounced his heirship to the throne of Egypt. He rather chose the course of affliction by identifying himself with his true descent. He esteemed identification with God and his people more worthwhile than riches and power! It is possible that it was after Moses' refusal that, Thutmose II, the husband of Hatshepsut, had the opportunity to become Pharaoh, and even after his death, again, Moses could have become Pharaoh, but he refused so Hatshepsut herself became the next Pharaoh. There might, however, be another reason for the rejection of the throne by Moses though it seems very remote. This might be due to an existing rivalry between Moses and Thutmose III, who probably married Neferure, the only true daughter of Hatshepsut and Thutmose II,<sup>51</sup> (because Thutmose III was the son of Thutmose II through a concubine), and was fast gaining a lot of grounds as the next Pharaoh.

There is yet another circumstance that opened the door for the transformation of Moses to begin. This has to do with the development between Thutmose and his step-mother, 'King Maatkare Hatshepsut.' After enjoying the

throne for some time, the closing years of Hatshepsut was rather a sad one. It is very possible, though not surprising, that while Hatshepsut was 'king' (Pharaoh) of Egypt, she treated Moses and even the Israelites with favor (because of Moses). But such a treatment clearly was to the disapproval of Thutmose III, her step-son (son of Thutmose II) who was also heir to the throne. Since Moses had also been raised up as a Prince, it is safe to assume that there was some rivalry between the two. Records show that by 1488 BC, six years prior to her death, Thutmose III had taken over the mantle of the kingship and all official records of Hatshepsut begun to suffer.

Following the death of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, who is believed to have been in command of the army in Memphis assumed the throne and his immediate action, demonstrated a calculated revenge on her. Among his many moves was the fact that "he terminated the festival cult in her funerary temple and also overturned her statues... Her sanctuary inside the temple at Karnak was also dismantled."<sup>52</sup> Most probably, there is not much information about Hatshepsut in the Egyptian records of their kings. It may be as a result of *Damnatio memoriae*.

The attack on Hatshepsut qualify as one of the best and probably the most grievous form of revenge taken by Thutmose against his step-mother for keeping the throne from him for so long. But Wilson writes that "while numerous theories abound, most contemporary Egyptologists agree that the effort to delete any evidence of *Hatshepsut's* rule had something to do with Thutmose III's concerns about the succession of power after his death," and she concludes with

this question: "Was there some threat to the legitimacy of his own son, Amenhotep II, who in fact did succeed him?"<sup>53</sup> Definitely, this might be a major reason why Moses' position as a 'prince' was under threat. Thus with Thutmose III firmly on the throne, he could be waiting for Moses (his rival) to step out of line and be dealt with accordingly.

Then the opportunity offered itself for Thutmose to kill Moses. Moses might have been witnessing the senseless killings of his brethren and therefore thinking of a perfect opportunity to revenge. Maybe, by this time too, he might have become conscious of the fact that he could be the instrument of liberation for the people. The Bible says in Exodus 2:11-15;

One day, after Moses had grown up...He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew...he killed the Egyptian...Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known." When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian...

As long as Hatshepsut was on the throne there could be no or very little reason for Moses to leave Egypt, even if he had killed an Egyptian (2:11-14), since he would still be regarded as a prince of Egypt. But now he had to flee when he killed the Egyptian because Thutmose III was now on the throne. Not only was Thutmose III seeking his life but that the Hebrews he had began to identify as his own people were not ready to accept his leadership.

### **Moses fled from Egypt to Midian**

Fleeing from Egypt to seek refuge somewhere was the only option left for Moses after he murdered an Egyptian task-master. But it is possible that Moses fled within the period that Hatshepsut was still alive, but with Thutmose III on the throne. This is because he heard about the death of the king of Egypt (possibly, Hatshepsut, or probably, Thutmose III) while he was in exile, and he recorded it in his writings, "It was during that long period, that the king of Egypt died..." (Exod. 2:23).

Many years had passed and Moses' dream of returning to Egypt was becoming a mirage. This was probably because of his past life as a murderer which kept on haunting him all the while. Now that there was no way for Moses to return to Egypt and enjoy his position as a Prince, what was the way forward? Was he going to remain as a fugitive in the land of Midian till death? What about the Hebrew slaves he had encountered in Egypt and had developed concern for, were they going to remain in slavery forever? Was there a way he could return and continue the process of saving them from the mistreatment of the Egyptian slave-masters as he begun? All these questions might have begun to run through the mind of Moses as he struggled through the wilderness where drinking water was scarce and the likelihood of lots of poisonous reptiles is not ruled out.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the Pharaoh who was seeking Moses' life died, and his successor might have intensified the policies against the slaves. Thutmose III, the father and predecessor of Amenhotep II...must be the ruler whose

death is recorded in Exodus 2:23.<sup>54</sup> Back at Midian, Moses, after denying the princehood of Egypt, was to pass through the next step in his spiritual development. This was going to be a systematic transformational process outside of his hitherto comfort zone.

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, issues that led to Moses' rejection of the princehood of Egypt, his escape to the land of Midian, the ascension of Thutmose III, and the death of 'King Hatshepsut Maatkare,' the woman who ascended the throne of the Pharaohs in Egypt and ruled from 1479 to 1458 BC have been discussed. Moses' family life in Midian and the beginning of his transformation under the supervision of his father-in-law would be the major subjects of discussion in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **MOSES UNDERGOES TRANSFORMATION**

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth...In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some are for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter; he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Tim. 2: 15-21).

One of the greatest developments in Moses' life is how he became a completely different person after he left Egypt. Because of his initial background as one raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, there was the need for a complete turn in his life before God could use him. Under such a circumstance, one should understand the scriptures above as a true revelation of God's heartbeat when the person surrenders to His will. Though oblivious of what God was doing behind the scenes, Moses had very little option than to accept a divine arrangement earmarked for him because he had now identified with the Hebrews. He had to undergo a ministerial training, the "Wilderness School of Divine Training" under the supervision of an unknown priest. By divine arrangement, Moses saved the daughters of a

Midian priest, Jethro, and helped them to water their flock, and in the process was accepted into the family of Jethro (also called Reuel, 2:18).

Moses stayed in Midian for nearly forty years in the house of his father-in-law. This part of his life was also important in God's plan for a number of reasons:

- His stay away from Egypt offered him the opportunity to be weaned from the pampered life he once enjoyed as a Prince of Egypt.
- He began to build a family of his own volition by choosing the elder daughter of Jethro, Zipporah, as wife, and having two sons with her.
- He learned to become a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian. That is, he learned the patience of caring for sheep which were utterly dependent on their master, the shepherd. This was thus leadership school training in the wilderness. Now he was no longer the honored prince but a humbled shepherd learning to lead sheep 'to greener pastures.' In fact, Moses learned through the hard way that God's affairs are done God's way. He learnt that sensitivity to the divine will was more important than the impulse of self and the wisdom of the world (Egypt).<sup>55</sup>

The processes that ensured that Moses becomes the desired vessel fit for the service of God are summed up in the term "transformation."

### **What is Transformation?**

As has been discussed by the author in one of his books,<sup>56</sup> the word "transformation" is from two words which are joined together; "trans," which means to "change," "move

from,” “alter,” etc., and “form,” which means “appearance,” “shape,” “structure,” etc. Simply put, to transform means “to change appearance of something (or someone),” or to move from one form to another. It will make a lot of sense if one sees the old (or first) form as good but the new (or second) form as better. It is important to note that transformation is a process; it begins from the mind. It is a change that is triggered by a desire and willingness not to conform to certain standard(s) or status quo; but “a hundred and eighty degrees turn to begin something new.” Thus when the expected and preferred state is achieved the process should not be halted; it should be allowed to continue.

### **Stimulants for Transformation**

There are many factors needed for transformation to be ignited. With respect to Moses, the main ones are: need for positive change; acquisition of knowledge; and the requisite experience.

**Need for Positive Change:** This is the complete break from the past and a link up with God’s vision and direction. There are many forms of change. The type needed by Moses was supposed to be a full one-eighty degrees turn in direction. There was the need for change, both in the mind and the heart. The old Egypt mentality had to give way to that of a real Hebrew; the palace life had to give way to real life experience outside of the royal courts. The change involved a complete break from the past to the present and the future. His desire of the heart needed to be changed. The desire of doing things by commanding and instructing others needed

to give way to accepting instructions and becoming obedient, and being able to do exactly what one has been instructed.

**Acquisition of Knowledge of God:** This was supposed to be achieved through receiving information different what he had been taught at the palaces of Egypt. Moses was learning and acquiring knowledge in the wilderness on family life. This was necessary to make Moses well informed of the realities of life, not the stereotyped and luxurious one he was used to in Egypt. Moreover, Moses needed to learn how to listen for the voice of God. The Divine One had already made provision in the person of Jethro, the Priest of Midian, who had also become father-in-law to Moses. This priest was a possible descendant of Abraham, through his son, Midian, born to him by Keturah, his concubine (Gen. 25:1-6). Thus Jethro (also called Reuel), would no doubt have received knowledge of the God of his fore-father through successive generations, as was instructed Abraham by God (Gen. 18:18-19). It was expected that the expertise of this priest would serve as the platform for Moses' future ministry.

**Acquisition of Experience:** There was also the need for Moses to gain some experience. This was going to be achieved through application of knowledge and skills. Such experience was necessary to develop maturity. There is a common saying that 'experience is the best teacher.' The import of this saying needed to become real in the life of Moses. He needed to acquire first hand experience of the ups and downs of life as he traveled the mountains regularly as a shepherd. The experience he was building as he led the

flocks for pasture in the wilderness was needed to take care of people. The burden of daily needs for the sheep as well as occasional encounters with wild animals, were some of the challenges that he had to overcome in order to build experience for the main task.

Moses needed to experience God probably in the remotest of places different from the palace gods of Egypt. Along this line, he needed to change from his relationship with the gods of Egypt to an engagement with the great "I AM." He had to experience the power of divinity working through human instrumentality. This would come only through a meticulous life changing process- transformation. That is what Moses experienced from that point onwards.

### **Steps involved in the transformation of Moses**

No transformation of a person comes so easily. This is because there are many steps involved in the whole transformational process. Generally, however, it is the kind of task that will determine the process. In other words, the determining factor in transformation is what the person is to be prepared for. The process also hinges on how the cooperation of the person to be transformed. In the case of Moses, the major processes involved his stepping out from the shade of the Pharaohic umbrella, which was his fleeing from Egypt, and the rest were to follow: These among others would include:

- **Breaking:** This was necessary to strip him off his princely character into a down-to-earth servant. This took place when God caused him to forget about his return

into the privileges of an Egyptian prince. The pampering life of the palace had to give way to a persevering mentality needed to survive outside of the palace. He had to become a fugitive and a wanderer in the wilderness in order to for him to accept a total break with Egypt. This break was a change of direction and part of God's plan to satisfy His ultimate purpose. Moses had to be reoriented for him to align with the eternal purpose. The breaking process would allow for certain unwanted features of his hitherto royal life to be removed and fresh ones introduced.

- **Melting:** This involved Moses being completely subdued as 'divinity took over humanity.' He needed to pour contempt on his pride and scorn the beauties of the palace. Indeed, he needed to see himself as nothing in order to accept what God wanted to offer him. This could last for as long as he was mindful of the palace life. However, after a period of experiencing wilderness life, Moses forgot all the joy, privileges, and beauty of Egypt and was satisfied with life in the wilderness. It is likely he was now satisfied with taking a wife and settling down for family life such that he was not prepared to return to Egypt even when it became necessary.
- **Molding:** Hitherto, the skills, knowledge, and wisdom of Egypt had emboldened him as well as made him quite emotional and hasty. He was puffed up in self confidence and thought that he could depend on his human strength. But at this juncture, he needed remolding by

God because his strength failed him. In the wilderness, he was molded into the vessel God really wanted to use. His mind was oriented into that of a shepherd and a wilderness survivor. His eyes were now opened to beyond Egypt; glimpses and visions of God's eternal purposes were now flashing before him.

- **Filling:** This would probably be the final stage where Moses had to be refueled and thus energized for action. In this case, it was necessary for him to have the right spirit; the Spirit of Yahweh, which would make him the mouthpiece of God. The spirit of fear of the pharaohs of Egypt had to give way to boldness to confront their gods in order to stamp Yahweh's authority over the whole land. Moses infilling thus occurred when he encountered God.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has been quite interesting. Moses was weaned from the memories of princehood of Egypt through the instrumentality of Jethro, the priest of Midian, and his family, particularly, his daughter, Zipporah, with whom Moses had two sons. Even though Moses was the target of the whole process of transformation, he was not actively involved, and was not actively aware of it. But God was having engagement with Moses in His own divine way. As to whether Moses was going to remain passive in all that was required in his transformation is a matter for consideration. Now, the final stage of Moses' transformation would happen during and after his encounter with God at Mt. Sinai. This would be dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### MOSES ENCOUNTERED GOD: FROM PRINCE TO PROPHET

Moses was transformed from a “runaway Prince” to “the meekest Prophet.” His flight from Egypt and subsequent stay in Midian were all part of God’s excellent plan. These opened the door for God to transform Moses. It also made the final preparations for the Hebrews to recognize him as one of their own and receive him as both a prophet of God and their deliverer. But the climax and probably most important part of the process was that in the mist of these challenges God stepped in and began the process of the fulfillment of Moses’ destiny. This was to begin with his call at Mt Sinai.

#### Who is a Prophet?

By God’s perfect design, prophets arose mostly during times of crisis. In the Hebrew language we find more than one word for “prophet.” The word comes from the following key Hebrew words; *Na’bi*<sup>57</sup> (primary word for “prophet,” also written as *Nabiy* or *Nabhim*), *Hozeh*, and *Ro’eh* (Deut. 18:15–22; Amos 7:12–16; Isa. 6:9; Jer. 1:7; Ezek. 2:3–4). In the Old Testament, the word *Nabhim* occurs about 300 times; *Chozeh* – 18 times; and *Ro’eh* – 12 times. The latter are practically synonymous in meaning and both carry the

idea of a 'Seer.' They are related to visions and they have to do more with the reception of the message (1 Sam. 9:9; 2 Sam. 24:11; 2 Kings 17:13).

Being a 'seer' may mean that the person receives divine messages through visions. But in a general sense of usage it may also be used to mean to perceive. Thus the word may be used in relation to both sight and insight. In 1 Samuel 9:9, Samuel is described as a seer. Saul's servant advised him: "Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called the seer." The words "Prophet" and "Seer" occur together in 1 Samuel 9:9 as the same. But they are indicated in 2 Kings 17:13; Isaiah 29:10; and Amos 7:12 to be different. *Nabhim* and *Chozeh* might be used with the name of specific people, indicating their office as prophets, (e.g., Gad, 2 Sam. 22:5; 24:11; 1 Chron. 21:9; 29:25, 29; Heman, 1 Chron. 25:5; Iddo, 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; Hanani, 2 Chron. 19:2; Jeduthun, 2 Chron. 35:15; and Amos, 7:12).

*Chazah*, which is a verb means; to see, look, behold, observe, gaze, and to prophesy and, is used to denote both the visions or revelations given to both God's true prophets and those the false prophets claimed to have received (Num. 24:4, 16; Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 30:10; Amos 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:6; Zech. 10:2). Job used *chazah* to express his hope of seeing God after death (Job 19:26, 27). All three terms *Ro'eh*, *Chazah* and *Nabiy* occur in 1 Chronicles 29:29. Traditionally, Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14), Abraham was called a prophet (Gen. 20:7), and even King David was referred to as such (Acts 2:30). In the first book of Chronicles 25:5, a man called

Heman was referred to as the king's seer, that is, *Hozeh*, according to the word of God. This was another root word used in Hebrew for prophet. Consequently, both titles can be interchangeable in some senses and are used to describe the same people.

On the other hand, *Na'bi* means "one who speaks for God." The occurrence of this was common in the ancient world and was quite loosely applied to anybody who had spiritual insights. But in relation to the Hebrews, it meant something deeper than that, as revealed by Exodus 4:15-16 and 7:1. Here, Moses stood before Pharaoh as God's spokesperson. Between them was an intermediary, Aaron: "He (Aaron) will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him" (Exod. 4:16). Therefore, Aaron was to speak to Pharaoh the words that Moses gave to him. The person, who can be designated as a *Na'bi*, then, is one who speaks forth for God.

Biblically, not everyone who established a direct contact with the Lord was a prophet. For example, people who had direct contact with the Lord like Adam, Cain, and Abimelek (King of Gerar), were not called prophets. But in connection to Abimelek, as recorded in Genesis 20:7, Abraham is called a *na'bi*, "Now therefore restore the man's wife: for he (Abraham) is a prophet." The heroes of the book of Judges had also direct contact with God, but were generally not known as "prophets"; only the judge Deborah held this title according to Judges 4:4: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time."

The nature of Hebrew prophecy indicates that the biblical prophet is not only a foreteller or predictor; he is

a 'forth-teller' (Isa. 42:27; 43:27; Dan. 5:26; 2:26) or God's 'mouthpiece' which in modern systems of government is like a press secretary of a President or an ambassador of a country, (Exod. 4:16; 7:1, 2). The idea of a "Prophet" has to do with proclaiming the message from God to the people. God said, "I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him" (Deut. 18:18).

Sometimes, the prophets were referred to with the general word, "man of God" (Heb. *Ish Elohim*). This title denoted somebody who represented God and did whatever God bid him to do. Examples are, Moses, Elijah, and Elisha (Deut. 33:1; 1 Kings 12:22; 13:1; 17:18). A common feature of all true prophets is that they do not express their own opinion. Rather, they have insight and message that ordinary people do not have. That is, divine words were revealed or placed in the prophets' mouth by God and they spoke to the nation exactly what God had commanded them.

### **The call of a prophet**

One of the most important things to note about the prophetic office is that it is a call by a deity to his service. Moses established this fundamental issue when he stated: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own brothers. You must listen to him (Deut. 18:15)." Therefore, it is not an office that one just picks for himself/herself. Most of the true prophets like Moses have the following as some of the events that characterize their call:

- There is a divine confrontation or special encounter with a deity (i.e., divine experiences; Exod. 3:4; Isa. 6:1ff; Jer. 1:5; Ezek. 1:1; 2:2, 3; Amos 7:14).
- There are specific introductory words or messages of the commission from God to the prophet (Exod. 3:7-10).
- Oftentimes, there are objections or excuses from the prophets due to their feeling of inadequacy (Exod. 3:11; 3:13; 4:1; 4:10; 4:13; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 1:6). A typical example is Jonah who tried to run from God's assignment (Jonah 1:1-3).
- Usually, there are means to equip the person to perform or messages of assurance from God to strengthen the recipient of the divine call (Exod. 3:12-15; 4:2-9; Isa. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 3:3-11).
- In some cases there are signs from God to confirm the call and commission (Exod. 3:4; Jer. 1:11-12).

### **The mission of a Prophet**

A priest represents the people before God; a prophet, however, represents God to the people. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses was instructed by God to spell out a description and qualification of who a true prophet is and is not (Deut. 13:1-4; 18:18ff). Here, a true prophet is not identified exclusively by miracles. Neither is a true prophet one who seeks to manipulate people, events, or God for his purpose. Additionally, a true prophet does not lead people away from God.

On the contrary, the primary role of the prophets was reformation (not innovative or new teachings), that is, to call

the people to obedience to the Law and the stipulations of the covenant. Their words served to test the faith of people for whose life the prophets served as watchmen. Besides, they performed some important functions:

- In some situations they served as intercessors.
- In extreme cases they contacted and rebuked specific individuals (Isa. 7:11-14; Jer. 21:2).

Generally, the Jewish prophets were more than messengers and mediators between God and the covenant community; they were also social reformers who announced God's impending judgment on all other nations.

### **Method of operation of a Prophet**

As with Moses and most of the prophets, the general *modus operandi* included contacting key individuals (kings, priest, false prophets, tribal or opinion leaders, etc.) or speaking to whole communities, cities, or nations (Isa. 7:11-14; Jer. 21:2). They usually presented their messages in the following forms:

- Preaching or speaking out their messages directly under divine inspiration. For example, "And the word of the Lord came to me..." or "This is what the Sovereign LORD says..." (Jer. 2:1; Ezek. 2:4; Zech. 4:6).
- Receiving and revealing their information in the form of visions, dreams, other forms of revelations, and also as trance (Dan. 8:1; 10:1; Hab. 2:2-3; Zech. 1:8; 4:2-3).
- Using symbolic actions to communicate their messages (2 Kings 13:17; Isa. 20:4; Jer. 19:11), and using object lessons when need be (Jer. 1:11-13; 13:1ff; 18:1-10).

- Employing parables and riddles in the presentation of their messages (1 Sam. 12:1-14; Jer. 18:5-6).

### **How Moses encountered God**

Moses was now quite close to the climax of the transformation process; the most crucial and decisive of the whole process. The scripture says in Romans 8:28, "...All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purposes." But was this statement going to be the case with Moses? Was he ready to go through the mill and be grounded into such a material that can be molded and be used for the 'Master's purpose' or there could be a way out of the divine plan? In the long run, in spite of Moses' attempt at halting the process, God had His own way with him because His divine purposes can never be thwarted (Job 42:2). This happened through divine encounters that Moses experienced in the land of refuge.

**The vision:** Moses' encounter with God is probably the last in the process of his transformation. It signified his final break with any dreams of returning to Egypt as a prince and his call and commission as a prophet of the most High God. God gained his attention by means a vision of an unusual burning bush. Unusual in that it was not consumed. But theologically, the vision was very significant in that it reaffirms God as a 'consuming fire' who nevertheless, does not consume His faithful ones. And it was because of His presence at the mountain that made the ground 'holy.' Initially, Moses, filled with surprise could not recognize the unusual presence. As the naked vision overwhelmed him, he

decided to get closer to ascertain what this attention-getter really was. This led to his call.

**The call:** The curiosity of Moses at the vision he was witnessing compelled him to draw closer in order to know what was really happening to the bush. At this point, the God of his ancestors decided to speak to him directly from the bush through an angel. He revealed Himself first as “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” He then commanded Moses to recognize the awesomeness of the place by removing his sandals from his feet. At once, Moses, filled with fear recognized the unusual presence; no doubt, the presence of the Almighty and was afraid to look further at this awesome appearance.

Any human courage and self-confidence in Moses at that moment immediately gave way to brokenness and humility. He recognized how mortal he was before this Immortal One. The call of his name in that distant lonely and quiet place broke him down. He was indeed before the God who calls people by their name. And he had no option than to respond, so he quickly responded.

### **The Name of God**

There are only few encounters in scripture where a person is confronted by a specific name of God. Thus the mention of the name of God in this engagement with Moses is of great significance. Indeed, Moses was to brace himself for the purpose of this great revelation.

**God's Name reveals His covenant:** One of the reasons for the mention of God's name is that every Hebrew was fully aware of His dealings with the forefathers. He had often revealed Himself as: "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; I AM WHO I AM," which is His name forever. Here too, He rightly reechoed it in Moses' ears as His memorial-name to all generations. The way God had dealt with each of the patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, unveiled His character. The names of the patriarchs were very much alive in every Israelite for one important reason; that their expectation of deliverance from bondage to the Promised Land would one day be fulfilled.

In the mind of every descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of their forefathers was and is and will ever be alive. He is the Living God. He is the God who had covenanted with these patriarchs as the self-existent and eternally faithful God. So by hearing the names of the forefathers connected to this deity, Moses now fully recognized who was talking to him from the burning bush which was not consumed; He was no other than "The covenant keeping God."

**God's Name reveals His character:** The mention of God's name as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" is significant for another reason. In most cultures the world over, a person's name was thought to represent his character and personality. Some very discerning people are able to identify or even predict a person's character at the mention of their names. In the

ancient world, this was even more crucial when it came to the names of the gods. In the past, God had summarily revealed himself as Elohim, El Shaddai, and Yahweh (Gen. 2:4; 4:26). The Patriarchs had particularly experienced Him as El Shaddai - God Almighty (6:2).

However, those that walked with God had seen His power of sustenance. Thus, He was now going to speak and reveal himself forever as the God who eternally delivers from bondage as a sign of his covenant faithfulness!<sup>58</sup> He was now ready to perform His saving acts again to bring His people out of the bondage of Egypt. And, in fact, the land of Egypt was to know and experience the true character of Israel's God; not only as the "I AM WHO I AM," but also as Yahweh, The LORD.

Moses' encounter with God and the subsequent call, coming at this moment of his life, signified the birth of a great prophet and indicated the completion of his transformation from a "Worldly Prince to God's Prophet." It might have taken place sometime in the latter half of 1447 BC (7:19; cf. 12:1-6; 13:4).<sup>59</sup> This important event took place in the desert on Mt. Sinai (also called Horeb, Exod.19:11; Deut. 4:10). By this call God involved man in His divine process of delivering the oppressed from the oppressor. In the case of Moses he was going to be part of the solution to getting the Israelites out of bondage, (3:8; cf. 3:10).

### **Chapter summary**

The overall effect of Moses' encounter with God was for the former to become transformed immediately in order to serve the purpose of the latter. Upon his encounter with

God, Moses was completely transformed from a prince of Egypt to a prophet of Yahweh, the God of his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. But was the process of transformation that smooth and easy? No, for transformation will not happen until a person understands the process, and is able to overcome all initial temporal hindrances. What factors could have hindered such a positive step in the life of Moses? Well, it would be interesting to delve a little into the whole process in the next chapter in order to learn some more lessons on transformation.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **HINDRANCES TO TRANSFORMATION**

Almost invariably, believers shun the responsibility of holding the banner to lift the name of the Lord. Hardly do such runaway attitudes appear as hindrances to a possible opportunity for transformation. Three main issues account for this; excuses, disobedience, and procrastination. A lot of believers try to give excuses to beat God's system of redemption for lost souls. The Bible advises believers of God in the book of Exodus chapters 3 and 4 on issues of excuses. Here, the scriptures show how Moses, when he realized that the challenge of his call demanded an appearance before the arrogant Pharaoh, gave excuses that would keep him from going to Egypt to deliver the people of Israel from the Egyptian captivity (Exod. 3:14ff).

#### **The “excuse factor”**

There is ample scriptural evidence to indicate excuses from some people that God calls to fulfill His purposes (1 Sam. 9:21; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 1:6). Chapters 3 and 4 of the book of Exodus reveals a lot about the excuses Moses advanced before God when he was chosen to go and bring the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. On four different counts, Moses attempted to demonstrate sufficient weakness that would disqualify him from the responsibility

God had set for him. He tried to shift the attention of the Divine One from him through excuses. These are as follows:

**Excuse of insignificance** (Exod. 3:11-15): Moses thought he was feeble before Pharaoh and that he could not carry out God's task by appearing before the Egyptian monarch. He thought of an excuse and said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" But the Lord calmed his fears and said, "Certainly I will be with you..." There are times that our concerns are genuine but we fail to understand that God cares much more than we care for ourselves. It is also possible Moses remembered the murder he had committed some time ago and was afraid to go. Sometimes the service of today is blocked by the sins of yesterday. But God can close the door behind and lead through another one. We must not regard ourselves as insignificant for God is on our side.

**Excuse of ignorance** (Exod. 3:13): Once again Moses wanted to use his ignorance as a means to hide from God's plan. He said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" And here too God is more than ready to step into the situation to help man fulfill His divine purposes. So God said to him, "I AM WHO I AM," and He continued, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Note also that God would reveal Himself in another name, (Heb. *Yhwh*), that is The LORD, at a later time (Exod. 6:2) to further convince Moses that He was with him. On that occasion, this name is indicated 'as both his name and the name to be used. This name is not introduced as a new name, hitherto unknown, however, but is reintroduced; that is, after the use of the name Ehyeh its meaning is reassessed.'<sup>60</sup>

**Excuse of inadequacy** (Exod. 4:1ff): Adequacy is not automatically attained but must be earned. At this juncture, Moses realized how empty and weak he was against his own people, the Israelites let alone the gods of Egypt. He said, "What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say 'The LORD has not appeared to you...'" But praise God! For, He is ever ready to stand by His faithful servants and show Himself strong. Notice the wondrous signs God showed Moses. They were not only for the Israelites to accept Moses as one truly sent by God it was much more for the Egyptians.

For, this is what God added, "And it shall come about that if they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign." "But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." What does this teach the believer of God? Simple, that he or she only has to be faithful to God and do what He instructs because "the battle is not ours, but the Lord's."

**Excuse of inability** (Exod. 4:10-12): Moses was still not satisfied so, this time, he turned his attention to his bodily weakness and wanted to use an inherent disability as inability. He said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently or in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." In fact, Moses might have forgotten that God is the Creator and Provider of all things, and that He is able to make a way even where there seems to be no way. Once again, He promises to give Moses utterance, and therefore provided a speaker in the person of Aaron so that Moses will not be alone as well.

The lesson here is that Bible believers must never say "I do not know what to say and what to do." Notice that no believer is ever completely empty without anything to share. The very fact that one is saved is a miracle and that could be a great testimony. What to say as a testimony steers out from what the person knows God to be. You only have to report of the love of God as shown to you or talked of in the scriptures and not what you think is the right thing. The gospel or a believer's testimony of transformation in Christ should be 'Good News' to the world and not just expression of one's views to people.

### **Loss of divine vision**

Much as it is important for every believer to understand what vision is and its importance to every service to God and man, it is equally important to note the dangers of the loss of vision. Generally when a person loses his/her divine

vision the one can no more see spiritually and the following consequences can occur; the person loses his/her way, gets lost and walks in darkness (or deviates from right path). The person's direction or instruction and plan comes to an abrupt end (termination of vision), commits a lot of mistakes because he/she gropes in darkness, lives in ignorance, and ends up becoming inactive. Vision can be lost as a result of disobedience, since the source of the vision can be cut off as happened to King Saul (Sam. 13:13-14). Vision can also be lost when one stops following the lines of the vision or when the spiritual eyes of a person becomes blinded, as happened to the prophet from Judah (1 Kings 13).

This is what was about to happen to Moses. By four different excuses, he tried to sidestep God's perfect vision and plan to transform him into His mouthpiece and instrument of deliverance of the Israelites from the cruel hands of the Egyptians. Throughout the encounter, God's responses to Moses' excuses were not an attempt at debating His would-be prophet. No! Rather, God merely considered Moses as a child that He was raising into maturity. God's assurance of His abiding presence was all the sufficiency that Moses needed to overcome the challenge ahead! Therefore, He gave him that which would encourage, embolden, and at the same time, empower him to rise up to the challenge as a prophet of the Most High.

### **Loss of divine zeal**

God wanted to tell Moses that He (God) was and still is and forever will be the main player of the power game with the gods of Egypt, and that Moses was only an instrument

in His hands. With all these excuses God was patient in answering him through convincing assurances that perfectly satisfied Moses. When everything seems like Moses should step forward and accept the challenge, he fizzled out! In fact, Moses disappointed God when he turned round and told God in plain words: "Send somebody else" (Exod. 4:13). This is too astonishing for anybody to tell God in the face, because He would definitely become angry. And that is exactly what happened.

In response to Moses' blatant refusal to accept the task God was assigning him, the Holy One became angry for two reasons. The first was whether Moses was still burdened with the alarming rate at which idolatry was engulfing the Israelites in Egypt or not. Moses' answer was as if he was no longer concerned about the plight of his brethren in Egypt. Even if he was not concerned any longer, God was. For, He said earlier, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians..." (Exod. 3:7-8).

Apparently, God would surely be surprised that the man who initially expressed concerns at the pains of a Hebrew from the lashes of an Egyptian slave-master could become so callous and insensitive to the groaning of the whole community which had reached a crescendo and had even reached the throne-room of the Most High. God himself testified to this when He said that the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with

which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Thus God was disappointed with Moses' adamant behavior.

The second reason was that God wanted to fulfill His promises to their forefathers; "...To bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites" (vs. 9). Thus Moses' refusal to go could be interpreted as an attempt to sabotage God's eternal plan, something God would never allow. Moses did not have any more reason for resisting the mission. His decision not to go and do as commanded by God is therefore interpreted as sheer disobedience to God's instruction; God did not tolerate such outright disobedience.

Rightly, then, God's reaction to Moses' answer was divine anger: "Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently..." (Exod. 4:14). God demonstrated anger in His statement to Moses because the latter did not really have any genuine reason to run away from the assignment the former had ordained and prepared him for. Now then, drawing from the use of the phrase, "...anger of the LORD burned..." it is probable that God's anger (or wrath as some other versions might use) was experienced by Moses in a certain sense. Some of the antonyms of anger are happiness, joy, and excitement. Expressions of any of these usually lead to something good and positive.

Just imagine the kind of experience that awaits somebody when the LORD himself is happy, joyful, or

excited with; great blessings of open doors, opportunities, peace in life, progressive spiritual life and marriage and/or business and/or education experiences. On the contrary, if a person comes face to face with the anger of God, it is easy to imagine what lies ahead for the person; problems upon problems without any remedy. This might be the situation Moses faced when he refused to heed to the call of God. God's anger brought heat into Moses' life because his disobedience would never be countenanced by the God of his forefathers, the Covenant-keeping One, who above all is his Creator. Finally, Moses had to succumb and respond positively.

### **Procrastination**

One other important issue that usually affects God's plan to effect transformation in the lives of many people is procrastination. This was experienced in the life of Moses after his experience at Mt. Sinai. This was because Moses, after the God of his fathers had encountered him and renewed His covenant with him should have realized that one of the stipulations of the covenant is for every male child in the family to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. Moses might have procrastinated and finally forgotten or might have postponed it till they would reach Egypt. However, God was not ready for such procrastinations and postponements; He met Moses and his wife, Zipporah on the way and nearly killed the son (Exod. 4:24-26). But Zipporah helped to save the situation.

**Chapter summary**

We have discussed that any individual who wants to experience God in a greater dimension should be able to overcome these hindrances to transformation, and the sooner the better for the one. With the issues of hindrances to transformation dealt with, Moses was ready to face the powers of Egypt, and had to do so only in the power of the Almighty God. This was indeed the battle between Yahweh and all the gods of Egypt. What can we learn from such 'power battle'? How did Moses fulfill the mandate that God gave him? The discussions in the next chapter would address these issues.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **HOW MOSES FULFILLED HIS DIVINE MANDATE**

The end product of every positive transformation is the desired material suitable for the usage. Moses was fully prepared by God after their encounter at Mount Sinai, and was ready to face the authorities of Egypt in order to free the Israelites from slavery to the Promised Land. So he returned to Egypt and together with Aaron, his senior sibling, met Pharaoh as directed by God. As mentioned in chapter 2, the Pharaoh of the Exodus was most likely Amenhotep II. Therefore he was the one who challenged God's orders through His prophet Moses, and suffered all the plagues. For example, the tenth biblical plague against Egypt fits with what is known about the death of Amenhotep II's firstborn son.<sup>61</sup>

Underlying the Bible with respect to the ancient world, is the fact that symbolism was often more powerful than words, especially where it was in connection with deities. Particularly, the Egyptians were highly symbolic people. So God decided to play on symbols in Egypt through His chosen vessel, Moses. What is the symbolism here? What is being discussed here is in regards to the staff in the hands of Moses, a prince turned shepherd, standing before Pharaoh. In Egypt, there were many kinds of staffs; the magical wands, the staff in the hand of the living as a symbol

of authority, e.g., Pharaoh's staff, which was a scepter, etc. The difference between Moses' staff and that of Pharaoh was which one had power over the other. It was also between the kinds of deities involved. Moses' staff represented Yahweh. Thus, it was Moses' God, Yahweh, who was meeting Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt on their own terms.

### **Moses was endowed with God's power**

God was about to demonstrate His power through Moses to perform miracles in the whole land of Egypt so that Pharaoh and his people would respect Him as the only true God. So there is the need to understand some issues concerning power. Generally, there are three main demonstrations of power revealed in scripture:

1. The **power to do** (or perform) a miracle (Exod. 7:22-23). Moses was given this power when he encountered God at Mt. Sinai. Some of the things that God did in Joshua's time demonstrate that God gave him the power to do. For example, he divided River Jordan, commanded 'the sun to stand still and the moon to stay,' enjoyed the support of hailstones during a time of battle, etc.
2. The **power to redo** the same miracle which had been done earlier. In this type, the conception of magic is commonly revealed (Exod. 7:22-23). So, the magicians of Egypt could duplicate the initial plagues that Moses by God's power brought to the land. The magicians were performing the type of magic that averts evil. They

could match Moses' turning of a rod into a serpents, although Moses' serpent munched and swallowed theirs. Consequently, some of Moses' miracles that could be duplicated by the magicians could not impress Pharaoh.

3. The **power to undo**, i.e., to reverse what has been done already. Of the three power forms, the power to undo is the greatest since it shows that the person that possesses it can go beyond the level where others can reach. Moses was again given this power when he encountered God at Mount Sinai. It can be inferred from scriptures that other prophets like Elijah and Jeremiah, and probably other prophets were endowed with both the power to do and undo, and these were demonstrated at certain periods of their ministration (1 Kings 17:1; cf. 18:41-45; Jer. 1:9-10). But the magicians of Egypt lacked this power because they could only duplicate the plague, but not undo it (Exod. 8:8ff). The magicians could not duplicate the rest of the plagues because their demonic powers were limited; they could not create life. No wonder, there was discontinuity of the challenge to Moses by the Egyptian magicians from chapter 8:9ff.

Moses could demonstrate both the power to do and also reverse what has been done because what he was doing was not magic. His source of power was genuine; it came from Yahweh. God gave Moses the ability to do miracles which were highly symbolic. He was to prove to be greater by the turning of his staff into a snake and a clean hand into leprous, and to also reverse these miracles. Each of these

demonstrations was to represent power over life and death which in Egypt were pictured as an ongoing cycle. Such miracles were to become extremely difficult for Pharaoh and his magicians to defeat because, in life, it is usually tough to have your paradigm completely inverted. By so doing, therefore, Moses was to prove that he could control all aspects of the Egyptian cycle. Therefore, when he appeared before Pharaoh and in a contest with the magicians of Egypt, Moses unleashed a number of plagues upon the whole land.

Moreover, God increased the strength of the plagues to show that the manifestation of His power have no limits. At the end of all the demonstrations there was enough proof that Yahweh was God over all the gods of Egypt and as such is the most powerful. Each of the plagues was calculated to punish specific god(s) of Egypt.<sup>62</sup> It is more likely the mixed multitude that left Egypt with the Israelites and was later integrated into God's covenant community did so because they were amazed and overwhelmed by the unlimited power of Yahweh revealed through Moses in Egypt.

### **Moses was victorious in his spiritual battles**

It is also important to note from the point of view of scriptures concerning the concept of ancient warfare, that if the battle was between people 1 and 2, it was also between deity 1 and 2 respectively. Thus, the people that win were those that have the stronger god. But in Moses' concept of war in Egypt, it was Yahweh who fought all the gods. In Exodus, the battle was Yahweh against Egypt and its gods (Exod. 12:12; 18:7–11). Yahweh fought the Egyptians, i.e.,

Moses' deity fought the other deities and the people; Israel did nothing. The Egyptian magicians, obviously overpowered and overwhelmed by what God was demonstrating through Moses, confessed before Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19).

Again, faced by the power of God when they were pursuing the Israelites before the Red Sea, the Egyptian army admitted in Exodus 14:25: "Yahweh is fighting for them." Scripture mentions that the Israelites plundered the Egyptians and made an obscene gesture on the way out (Exod. 14:8), though they never fought; God fought for them. After the Exodus also, God proved Himself to be the true God. Indeed, the display of power in Exodus is a way of viewing God not just as a past Deliverer but a present Reality. And Moses was the chosen instrument for such divine demonstration of God's ever-abiding and unlimited saving power.

### **Moses became a recognized prophet**

God's appearance and call of Moses at Mt. Sinai was indicative of a major fact; Moses had graduated from his wilderness school and that God was ready to use him. It also served as the birth of the prophetic ministry in the life of Israel as a nation. The call of God also did signify the commissioning of Moses, and he received a sign of his commissioning (3:12). Considering what Moses was called to do, he really needed to experience God in a dramatic fashion.

Additionally, the time of Moses' call was appropriate for what God wanted him to do. He didn't begin his prophetic

life until he was 80 years of age and had enough experience of what he had been prepared to execute. The proof that Moses was acting on the orders and authority of the greatest Deliverer was that he and the whole Israelite nation would worship on the Mount of Sinai (or Horeb). Moses was now willing to step out, and obey the instructions of God as given to him during the encounter and make himself available for all that was involved in the mission.

Despite the weakness that Moses initially demonstrated, the divine encounter brought the needed transformation. In the end, the virtues of obedience, willingness and availability were achieved. It came to pass that when Moses finally returned to Egypt, God used him to execute His judgment upon all the gods of Egypt. God really demonstrated his superiority over all the gods of Egypt through His newly transformed servant and prophet. Not only did Moses demonstrate God's power in Egypt, the ultimate aim of his encounter with God was fulfilled. He was able to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt and lead them to freedom. This period of wandering of the people of Israel confirmed Moses as the first "national prophet" of Israel. He was the first to speak directly to the entire nation on God's behalf. He was given signs as credentials. He was the first to challenge the covenant community of Israel to the issues of truth and judgment. His focus was on sin and wrath, and to warn the people to repent.

Moses is also the one who put forth guidelines for the operation of the prophetic office properly, outlining the means for determining false prophecy (Deut. 13 and 18). For example, he specified the key job of the Hebrew prophets

as a call to be a check on the covenant community. The expectation was to turn straying people back to the law of God. Moses is still recognized as one of the greatest prophets in the history of the Israelites. Being the opener of the prophetic office, Moses' ministry also served as the prototype of the Great Prophet that God would raise to save Israel and the rest of the world, (Deut. 18:15, 18-19). This message no doubt has been understood by many Bible believers as a promise of God that was pointing to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus Moses is the forerunner to the Lord in the prophetic ministry.

#### **Moses was a scholar/writer**

Moses was also a writer as his works are recorded. He wrote history, legal documents, prophecy, songs, and others. The scholarly prowess of Moses has never been in doubt. Scripture says that he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action (Acts 7:22). The Lord did not allow him to enjoy these privileges in the palace of Egypt for nothing. Definitely, he was going to be used as a tool to produce something more enduring; that will benefit posterity in their knowledge and understanding of the dealings of God with mankind.

As a scholar, Moses is on record as being the main author of the first five books of the Bible commonly called Torah (Hebrew) or Pentateuch (Greek). The records preserved in these documents are God's revelations and engagements with men. There are indications that Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit might have produced the book from information that God revealed to him, Moses.

It is possible that God revealed all the materials of Genesis and some of the other books to Moses during the latter's encounter with the former at Mt. Sinai.

Besides the book of Genesis, statements like: "The Lord said to Moses," "And Moses wrote these words," etc., in the rest of the Torah point out that Moses received first-hand information from God and wrote them down as they travelled through the wilderness. Passages like Exodus 17:14; 34:27; Lev. 8:1; Num. 33:2 indicate Moses was engaged in an extensive historical recording at the command of God. There is also enough evidence from other parts of the OT: Joshua 8:31-32; Judges 3:4; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; Daniel 9:11-13; and some from the NT: Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. These show that the Torah came from Moses (Matt. 17:7, 8; Mark 7:10; 12:29; Luke 24:27; John 1:17; Acts 3:22; Rom. 10:5-10; 1 Cor. 9:9). The first few chapters of Deuteronomy also indicate that Moses had done extensive writing as he now took his time to recount them to the latter generation. Moses was also songwriter. He wrote the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 and the songs in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy.

The date of writing is sometime after Moses' call and just before his death during the wilderness journey- about 1500-1407 BC. Then all these materials were put together into a book called the Law, Book of the Law, Book of the Law of Moses, or simply, Moses. The books of the Law have been the main source of mankind's true insight into the foundation, existence, and reason for the whole universe, and more specifically, God's plan for life on earth. The

Torah, together with the Prophets and the Writings form the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **Chapter summary**

How should we wrap up our discussions on the life of Moses and what should be some of the lessons we could learn from this pacesetter of divine ministry? The man was indeed a prophet in a class of his own as far as the Old Testament is concerned. Obviously, then, believers can imbibe some experience him. The last chapter on the discussion of Moses would help us with some valuable information and lessons, and would conclude the discourse.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **LESSONS FROM MOSES**

One of the...things for which we should give thanks every day...is the company of the holy; for...human beings cannot make progress on the Way unless they are supported by a field of confidence and concern that Truthwinners generate...We should associate with Truthwinners, converse with them, serve them, observe their ways, and imbibe by osmosis their spirit of love and compassion.<sup>63</sup>

Moses clearly sets the pace as a prospective prince who denounces a prestigious world position in order to identify with a lowly but chosen race. The first five chapters of the book of Exodus have a lot to teach on how he was transformed by the God through vision and interaction he had at Mt. Sinai. Those chapters demonstrate some key character traits needed by the minister for effective performance in ministry. Thus, there are some excellent lessons to be learned from the footprints and experiences of this pacesetter who obviously is one of the most powerful Hebrew prophets ever lived.

The following are few of the facts mentioned in Moses' life as a pacesetter and his transformation for a fruitful service to God:

### **Separation and endurance are necessary**

Living for God like Moses demands total separation from all forms of detractions, unhealthy commitments, and many other unnecessary practices. Once again, the life of Moses demonstrated that he was prepared from the time he humbly accepted God's commission for a walk with God. He really experienced a lot of separation from people at different places and time during all the wilderness travel. Learning from Moses, posterity has to be committed to God in order to have engagement with His purposes and blessings.

Abraham typifies someone who engaged in a life of separation and endurance in his walk with God. He did this when he traveled the length and breadth of it, and also lived in it. At a point in time, Abraham moved to Egypt as a result of famine at Bethel but he returned from Egypt through the Negev and settled back at Bethel (12:10). This looks like a full three hundred and sixty degrees journey where one begins from somewhere and returns to the same base. Nevertheless, God did not want to approve all forms of associations that Abraham might want to have. All such separations in Abraham's life finally led to some of God's promises being fulfilled in his life and demonstrated the extent to which God expected him to endure before the blessing.

It should be noted that God did not even fulfill all His promises, particularly the one concerning the possession of the Promised Land, to this chief patriarch. Rather, He caused him to wait until his descendants were ready to take it, and then they would fully possess it. Others may have given up, but Abraham persisted. Sometimes, the

believer has to be completely ready for all sorts of movements in order to experience the best that God had for him in life. Such commitments include separations and periods of endurance as Moses, a descendant of Abraham, later experienced.

### **Preparation is essential**

If there is anything that should be considered in the call to serve God it is preparation. The main motto for the Boy's Scout Guild is, "Be prepared." The same goes for the ministry of God and even much more. The need for every servant of God to be always prepared to respond to God's call for Kingdom work is the master-key for successful transformation for service. Excellent preparation leads to fruitful transformation. Consequently, every transformational process requires some vital ingredients like skill acquisition, endurance, humility, honesty, loyalty, etc., to ensure that the process becomes completely successful.

The story of a fore-bearer of faith like Moses offers anyone who wants to serve God a lot of lessons of how God takes man through many pathways of life before He brings him to the final destination where His promises are fulfilled. This plan of God is revealed to believers through the Prophet Jeremiah when he said: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (29:11). The undeniable fact here is that God is not looking for people who can do His work; He is rather looking for those who are prepared to be transformed to suit His requirement for

service. This is seen in the kind of preparation Moses went through as a shepherd of his father-in-law.

Rendering such service as Moses provided to his father-in-law should be the response of any serious minded persons who wants to witness great breakthrough in the call of God on their lives. God is still calling through a variety of serviceable ways and encounters and is waiting for positive responses. Are you prepared?

### **Obedience is important**

One of the important traits that the Bible reveals through Moses in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy is obedience to the word of God. It is one of the greatest virtues of a transformed life and an important key that opens the door to success. For example, the Prophet Isaiah knew this secret too well and wanted God's people to know too. This explains why he constantly called on the people of Judah to demonstrate obedience, for them to successfully enjoy God's blessings. Hear Isaiah: "If you are...obedient, you will eat of the fruit of the land..." (Isa. 1:18). Little wonder, the Prophet himself was prepared to demonstrate this virtuous trait in order to receive the fullness of God's blessings in ministry.

To test Moses' obedience, God at different points of time and occasions had to issue specific instructions to him, all of which had to be carried out in exact details, which Moses did well to obey. He might have gained some experience of following instructions when he was under the tutelage of Jethro, his father-in-law. Tracing the genealogy of Jethro, there are clear indications that he had also come

from Abraham, a person with unquestionable obedience. Scripture tells of how Abraham demonstrated obedience after God's call to him to move from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan was initially delayed probably by the presence of his father, Terah (Acts 7:1-3).

It was Abraham who was commanded to leave Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan, but Terah, being the head of the family, was rather credited for the journey. But they could not reach their destination; they only came as far as Haran (Gen. 11:31). Their reason for stopping in Haran is probably as a result of the father being too old to continue to the Promised Land. Nevertheless, Abraham in obedience to a reminder from God had to set off and continue the journey from Haran to Canaan to fulfill God's vision for his life (Gen. 12:1, 4). His desire to obey God and fulfill his call is further demonstrated in the up and down movements he experienced in the land.

Before God, 'to be obedient is better than any sacrifice that a person is ready to make.' This explains why when Moses passed all his obedience exams with the exception of one, that is, the instruction at the waters of Meribah; it was enough to disqualify him from entering the Promised Land. This is a secret that King Saul of the United Kingdom of Israel could not find and therefore lost his throne to David and his line (1 Sam. 15:22-23). But Apostle Paul knew the value of obedience for a successful ministry and could testify about it before King Agrippa, "...Wherefore, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). No wonder, Paul is probably acclaimed by many as the

most successful revolutionary after the Lord Jesus Christ. Obedience is still the key. Use it!

### **Divine zeal is helpful**

There is the need for one to be zealous, though not all zeal is healthy for God's work. The type required here is the one that precipitates from the spirit of God within a believer. This is the zeal for God's house and service which must drive a person whose life is on the track of transformation.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ himself demonstrated a great deal of zeal for the work of the Kingdom by the way He went about reaching out to everybody. In response to the need for food and drink the Lord said that His meat was to do the work of the Father and to finish it (John 4:33-34). The Lord Jesus Christ was so zealous for the Father that He could not tolerate the fact that the temple which was meant for meeting with God was being used incorrectly and He had to drive out the traders by force. It is the kind of zeal that one needs to reveal in relation to the service of God. Moses' zeal is revealed in his initial attempt to fight and rescue the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God is looking for zealous people to do His work.

### **Being expectant of God's visitation is important**

To experience divine transformation requires a great deal of a willing heart, prepared mind, and a state of expectancy. In his entire walk with God, Moses had regular engagements because of the above qualities. He was always ready for God and therefore could be used of God once he accepted His call. Moses might have understood

this principle of being in a state of expectancy in one's walk with God from the very experiences of his forefathers, particularly, Abraham. During the period of relationship with Yahweh, Abraham received a lot of divine encounters from the Sovereign Lord because he was always expecting Him (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-18; cf. 19:29, 22; Acts 7:2, 3).

Whenever one shows complete preparedness and availability towards God, the person is not far from visitation from God. Scripture says that "the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9a).

### **Application and Conclusion**

In prescribing for Moses a wilderness training which was completely different from the luxurious experience in Egypt, God wanted the man to have a special encounter that would transform him completely to fulfill a divine mission. People who want to identify with the ministry and blessings of Moses should be prepared to encounter God along similar lines. This does not mean same forms of instructions/ revelations/visions from the Almighty, but same attitude of faith, obedience, and endurance from the former. With such spiritual mental orientation not even the sky will be the limit; it will be the throne of God as the Lord revealed to Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17).

Applying this to all ministry situations, the question one should ask is whether God accepts excuses whatsoever and whether people who are called for special assignments are fond of giving excuse(s) to God when they should not. God does not only abhor excuses He does not even

entertain them. In God's Kingdom business there should be no room for excuses! He has the power to do everything and knows He can use anyone He chooses to do it. Moses had to learn this as a first lesson in his walk with God.

Moses' insensitivity towards his brethren in slavery in Egypt before yielding to God's call is similar to the excuse that most people who do not have any passion for perishing souls give. They expect someone to carry out the duty which God has specifically called them to accomplish. But when the people of Israel, Abraham's descendants, returned from Egypt, they could lay claim to the land because their forefathers like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had received it as a promise from God through obedience, willingness and availability. These are the same factors which came into play when Moses finally accepted the challenge to fulfill God's commission.

In the urgency of the hour and the crisis of our time any believer of God must begin to gather courage and work seriously for Him. It is about time Christians shunned the comfort of this world, took the Great Commission given by our Lord seriously, and moved out to rescue unbelievers from Satan's enslavement just as the Lord used Moses to do. Are you ready now or you are still giving excuses?

## PART II

# LET US LEARN FROM **ISAIAH**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND OF PROPHET ISAIAH**

Few men in history have ever championed more eloquently the cause of God to their nation and all classes of people, especially, the poor and disfranchised like the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC prophet of Judah called Isaiah. Again, many people might have encountered the Almighty God and acted upon it in many different ways depending on the impact of what they met. But few might have become transformed by the circumstance of encounter more than this man.

The Prophet Isaiah saw a vision of God in the temple, and it is the impression of the vision of God's glory and its conviction that transformed him and informed all his preaching. The simple conviction of the vision would rule Isaiah's life and would probably cost him his life, but he was prepared to stand for the real "Master of the universe." For Isaiah saw the Lord in His correct proportion of glory and power. Isaiah ministered through days of crisis and disaster that is probably greater than any before in the history of Israel. This chapter tries to look at the nature of Isaiah's call from the vision he saw and how the call affected his prophetic ministry and life as a whole.

The book of Isaiah is placed among the Later Prophets in the Hebrew canon. There have been various suggestions by Bible critics that as an 8<sup>th</sup> Century prophet, Isaiah could not have foreseen the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC or the rise of Cyrus the Great, the Emperor of the Kingdom of Persia

who ruled around 550-530 BC. Thus they deny the authorship of the Book of Isaiah by the prophet. Some scholars believe that the trend today is to think in terms of an "Isaianic school," i.e., a circle of disciples who added to Isaiah's writings generation after generation until someone (possibly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century) gave the material its final shape.<sup>64</sup>

Bible scholars are divided over the authorship of the book. One of the main arguments of most critics is that Isaiah possibly wrote the first 39 chapters; somebody else, perhaps a disciple, wrote the second half. Thus they claim that chapters 1 to 39 were written around 540 BC and the remaining half was written in 450 BC. There is however no doubt that a good number of Bible believers who might not be interested in the arguments surrounding the authorship agree with Jewish tradition. This holds the view that Prophet Isaiah wrote the book that bears his name. To that effect, the most agreed date is somewhere before his death (i.e., about 690 BC).

In terms of the literary structure of the book one can only agree that maybe that was the style of writing of the prophet. A renowned Bible scholar puts it this way: "His imagery marks him as a poet and an orator."<sup>65</sup> There are lots of war imageries in chapter 1-39 than in 40-66. To this one is likely to accept that a prophet would only see the image one way. Again, when one considers the "comfort theme" of 40-66, it is easy to conclude that those chapters must have been written during the exile, by a different author, and it could have simply been on different subjects. There is no doubt then that theologically, one finds some differences in

the two parts; The Messiah is a ruling King in Isaiah 1-39, but is a suffering Redeemer in chapters 40-66.

The purpose of the book is to record the revelations to Isaiah, to call people to repentance, to encourage trust in God rather than man, to unfold God's plan for the future, punishment for wicked nations and individuals, and to bring salvation for the Judean remnants and the entire human race. Doctrinally, the ideas that Isaiah addresses are: his revelation of God as the Holy One of Israel (popular name for God); major issues in specific chapters; sin (6), the Remnant (6:13), the Messiah (chap. 53), the Consummation (66:22); and issues relating to Zion – which is used about 50 times in this book.

### **Who was Prophet Isaiah?**

Before any discussion into the details of what Isaiah encountered in his life that changed everything pertaining to his relation with God and his ministry in life, a little background into the prophet's life might help. Of the four great prophets; Amos; Hosea; Isaiah; and Micah; who are known to have lived and labored during the last half of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC, Isaiah appears to be the greatest, judging from the extent of his work. Writing on this same issue, a teacher of the Bible considers that it is nearly impossible to construct his biography: "The book of Isaiah only casually mentions what the prophet did; it is comprised primarily of what he said, i.e., his prophecies."<sup>66</sup> All that is known of him is contained in a few passages of the book that bears his name.

Isaiah was one of the most respected prophets of God's covenanted nation of Israel. His Hebrew name was Yeshayhu, which means, "Yahweh is salvation," or "the Lord saves." This name is very similar to the meaning of Joshua, which is also the background name from which "Jesus" came. Isaiah refers to himself in his book as the "son of Amoz." Jewish tradition says he was related to the royal family of Judah. It is believed that he was a brother of King Amaziah; in which case Isaiah would be the cousin of King Uzziah, (also referred to as Azariah). It is likely that Isaiah was born, probably, in Jerusalem during the prosperous reign of this great king of Judah.

A close family tie between Amoz and King Uzziah might have accounted for Isaiah's familiarity with the royal way of life. Inasmuch as he stood in closest relations to the king, he was a court preacher. He also had a close intimacy with the priest (8:2). Available evidence also indicates that Isaiah was a highly educated man. It is likely that he also had some level of influence on the people of his day. Where he lived is not certainly known; nor are many of the circumstances of his life known. But his permanent residence, in the earlier part of his prophetic life, seems to have been at Jerusalem.

As a true Israelite, Isaiah's father, Amoz, might have raised his son in the fear of God and in the law of the Lord. Having attained the age of maturity, Isaiah entered into marriage with a pious wife. Isaiah's wife is called "the prophetess" (Isa. 8:3). Why she is called this is disputed and is not exactly mentioned in the text. Some scholars believe that she might have carried out a prophetic ministry in her

own right, like Deborah (Judges 4:4); and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-29). However, other scholars maintain that the title of prophetess was simply because she was the wife of “the prophet” (Isa. 38:1), and not because she was endowed with a prophetic gift.

Isaiah also had two sons (2 Chron. 26:22; 36:32; Isa. 8:18). The names of his sons Shear-Yashub, meaning “a remnant will return,” implying a return to the God of Israel, from whom his people were estranged; and Maher-shalal-has-baz, or “quick prey,” which may have been intended to serve as a warning to Pekah, the usurper king of Israel, and Rezin, the king of Aram. These names were given to them, probably, as portents of what was to come and also as a reinforcement of the prophet’s predictive message.

Chronologically, Isaiah is considered to have lived about halfway between the time of Moses and Christ. His call might have occurred around 740 BC, probably when he was 20 years old. He is believed to have ministered for 53 years, between 740-687 BC, though this period varies from one scholar to another. It is very likely that Isaiah began to exercise the prophetic office during the last thirty years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the functions of his office occurred during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), the kings of Judah. The first on this list who succeeded his father, Amaziah, was 16 years old when he came to the throne, and reigned 52 years. His general character was that of integrity and piety. He was known to be a worshipper of the true God.

Prophet Isaiah’s name alludes to his major doctrines and teachings. His command of the Hebrew language is

excellent. It is probable that Isaiah begun his prophetic office for a short time, perhaps for a single year, during the reign of Uzziah.<sup>67</sup> Then he continued to minister after the demise of the king, who was succeeded by his son Jotham. This king, who ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five and reigned 16 years in Jerusalem, was followed by Ahaz, and then Hezekiah. Prophet Isaiah's ministry covered these successions. In all likelihood, the prophet outlived Hezekiah (who probably died in 698 BC), because the last event of the book mentions the death of this monarch. Isaiah might have prophesied into some of the years of King Manasseh, the wicked son and successor of Hezekiah, who reigned from 697 BC.<sup>68</sup> If this is the case, then the prophet might have prophesied for not less than fifty-three years. One source gives the prophet a ministry period of 740-681 BC, which computes to fifty-nine years.<sup>69</sup>

### **The historical situation before Isaiah's call**

There are certain issues one must know in order to understand the political allusions in Isaiah's messages. Most of his prophecies which have reference to the Jews relate to the Kingdom of Judah, and to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. In all his messages he gave great prominence to this capital and not many of his predictions had reference to the Kingdom of Israel. In the period just before Isaiah began his ministry, the Northern Kingdom, (that is, Israel), whose capital was Samaria, was ruled for forty-one years by the powerful and brilliant Jeroboam II of the house of Jehu. The Kingdom of Judah, whose capital was Jerusalem, had greatly declined from the splendor and magnificence which

had existed under David and Solomon. Judah was ruled by the descendants of King David. Some of these were wicked, but others were good.

Even with periods of revival and reformation under godly kings, the over-all spiritual tendency of Judah was downward. It had been greatly weakened by the revolt of the ten northern tribes during the time of King Rehoboam, who succeeded his father Solomon, and by the wars in which it had been engaged with the Kingdom of Samaria, as well as with surrounding nations. Though its kings were superior in virtue and piety to the kings of Israel, many of them had been unworthy to be the descendants of David, and their conduct had exposed them greatly to the displeasure of Yahweh, their God. But King Uzziah had been a good king and had ruled in Jerusalem over the southern kingdom of Judah for over 40 years (probably, from 783-742 BC).

Over the years, the two kings, Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel managed to bring appreciable degree of progress to these sister kingdoms. Dyke mentions that, "King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel both restored the boundaries of their kingdom to sizes which together equals the size of the kingdom of Solomon, and that their period was known as the Golden age."<sup>70</sup> Trade routes in the land had expanded, new buildings had gone up, population levels had increased, and there was prosperity past anyone's experience (2 Kings 15:1-3; cf. 2 Chron. 26:6-15).

This was the time of the greatest outward prosperity and enlargement of the Northern Kingdom, but it was rotten at the core and was hastening toward the ultimate judgment

of God, as Amos and Hosea showed. There was injustice in the society, complete moral decay, with the richer class, as often happens, exploiting the poor. In the case of the Judahites, the story is not very different; prosperity meant the adoption of the idolatrous cult worship which was associated with immoral practices (Isa. 1-5).

King Uzziah's reign was one of great progress; outwardly, there was prosperity, but this caused the nation to forget God. And, especially, during the last few years of the life of King Uzziah when he was afflicted with leprosy and had to be isolated; "his son Jotham evidently served as co-regent with him...He was an able and popular ruler, remaining at peace with King Jeroboam II in the north."<sup>71</sup> The general character of Jotham is considered to be like that of his father; an upright king and one who was not guilty of idolatry. Both Judah and Israel were situated in a buffer area, surrounded by stronger nations that aspired to overrun its territory or at least to occupy it as a base for operations against neighboring enemies.

Judah, moreover, was directly in the path of the rival imperialist giants of that day, Egypt and Assyria. Fact is the dominant world power in Isaiah's day was Assyria. A few centuries before this time Egypt had been a very powerful nation compared to its neighbors. Now, however, its power was ebbing, and it became involved in a struggle with the rising, aggressive Assyria. During the prophet's lifetime, the mighty Assyrian Kingdom swallowed up Israel and invaded his own country of Judah, seriously threatening it. It was probably within such a period that Isaiah begun his ministry.

Isaiah's initial prophetic messages can be understood only in the context of the prevailing social conditions, as the prophet denounced the ill-gained riches of his people, who oppressed the poor. Isaiah had a lofty conception of God and understood human sinfulness. He saw himself as one purposely set aside by God to call the covenant community to repentance and also encourage trust in God rather than in man. The purpose was also to unfold the plan of God for the future; punishment for wicked nations and individuals and salvation for God's people (the remnant). He revealed the way of salvation and so he gave more messianic prophecies than anybody else.

In the early periods of his ministry, Isaiah was giving prophecies of God's judgment and promises to His people. During this period, the people had problems with idolatry and became unfaithful. Judah's corruption and religious formalism was condemned by the prophet (1:1–31), and her future judgment and glory of the remnant were the focus of his message (2:1–5:30).

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, we have considered the background to the life and ministry of Isaiah. We have also opened the lid on the politico-religious situation at the beginning of the prophet's ministry. In the next chapter, more issues concerning the prophetic ministry would be looked at in order to broaden our scope of understanding of this important area of divine ministry before we tackle the main issue of how the prophet encountered God in a vision.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORY OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN ISRAEL**

When God appeared to the nation at Mountain Sinai, the people trembled and asked that Moses alone and not God should speak to them (Exod. 20:18-19; cf. Deut. 18:15-19). God commended Israel for their request and announced that there would be a mediator. In fulfillment of this therefore, God had called prophets over the years besides Moses, to serve as mediators between him and the nation. The prophetic institution is therefore of divine initiation; God himself set it up, and in fact distinguished it from those of other religions. Some of the issues in connection with the call and role of a prophet have been discussed in an earlier chapter (in Part I). The discussion of the prophetic ministry continues here.

#### **Background of the Prophetic ministry**

It is helpful in understanding the prophets to delve into the historical background of this ministry, including some of the key prophetic moments.

**The Foundational prophets:** The founding fathers gave the first glimpses of the prophetic gifts, even before the establishment of the prophetic office. For example, Enoch is

referred to by Jude as someone who prophesied against his neighbors (Jude 14). In the Patriarchal Age, Abraham was called a prophet in Genesis 20:7, though Isaac and Jacob and Joseph gave prophetic statements but were not called prophets. However, by the period of the exodus, the prophetic office began to gain prominence. God provided the first “national prophet” in the person of Moses. He was the first to speak directly to the entire nation on God’s behalf. Later, people like, Aaron, Miriam, Balaam, and the 70 elders Moses chose, all prophesied at one time or the other.

Following from Moses time, the true prophets continually directed the people to God’s Law. During the era of the Judges, Deborah, who was a shining light during this period of darkness, and maybe, some people who are only identified as “men of God,” acted as the prophets or satisfied the roles of the prophets. From then on, Samuel is responsible for the next two watershed events.

**The Prophetic school:** Samuel has often been referred to as the Second Founder of Israel as Moses was the first. He closed the door on the dark ages and initiated the “renaissance” of Israel. As an infant, Samuel was given up by his mother at an early age in response to a vow (1 Sam. 1:11-22). He was raised by Eli, the high priest, who allowed his sons to practice gross immorality. Samuel was called by God in the great “wake up call.” His answer: “Speak, Lord – your servant is listening” set the tone for the rest of his ministry. Most people tell God what they want rather than ask God what he wants; Samuel did not.

When he assumed office, Samuel had a lot going against him, especially considering the context. The first book of Samuel chapter 3:10 really marks the paradigm and summary of his life. He served as a “circuit riding” preacher. With the beginning of the monarchy, the office of the prophet became more prominent in Israel as kingship became more prominent. But soon he realized he couldn’t do it all himself. This was when he was impregnated with the idea of training some young men to assist in his ministry, and this gave birth to the “school of the prophets,” sometimes referred to as “disciples schools,” or the “prophetic guilds” (1 Sam. 10; 2 Kings 2-4).

Samuel initiated the concept of training disciples as “bands of prophets” who would carry on his work. Elijah and Elisha did the same, eventually creating a “Bible college” so big they needed a facility to hold everyone. These guilds came to direct the history of Israel, putting the prophets in the thick of the action. This trend carried on to John the Baptist, Jesus and the Twelve, and Paul and his co-workers. It is believed that some of the Pharisees and rabbis had schools of disciples as well.

The prophets who probably graduated from these places became advisors to the king. For example, when Saul became arrogant and disobeyed God’s instructions through His messenger, Prophet Samuel, God through his messenger rejected Saul as king. David later became the king of the United Kingdom of Israel. This was the time that Prophets Gad and Nathan both helped David and straightened him out occasionally. For example, King David was informed by God through the prophets that he would not

qualify to build a temple for God because he had shed much blood and had fought many wars (1 Chron. 22:7-8).

Prophet Nathan rebuked the king because of the Uriah - Bathsheba issue, and Gad also told David to “pick a punishment for counting the people” (1 Chron. 29:29). It is also during this time that the court prophets emerged. These prophets began to write down the key events and histories of the kings (1 Chron. 21:9). For example, the phrase, “As for the events of King David’s reign...they are written in the records of Samuel the seer,” or “...they are written in the records of Nathan the prophet, or of Gad the seer,” and similar phrases of other kings are common expressions of the narrations of this period (1 Chron. 29:29-30; cf. 2 Chron. 9:29-31).

In the course of time, there was the challenge of paganism. This is where the sons of the prophets rose up to stem the tide as in the case of Elijah and Elisha. The ministries of this duo team span over a considerable period of time: Elijah 869–853 BC; Elisha 853–795 BC. The ministries of these spiritual powerhouses were full of excitement and became major periods of great spiritual challenge and revival. Clusters of prophets also occurred prior to times of judgment and punishment in both the Northern and Southern kingdoms. Most of these pre-classical (pre-literary) prophets tailored their messages primarily to the kings and usually held their recipients accountable to God through words such as “Hear the message of the Lord,” or “Thus says the Lord,” “As surely as the Lord lives” (1 Kings 22:14).

**The Writing prophets:** The major and minor prophets are the ones who began preserving what they were doing and what God was calling them to do. Thus the bulk of the prophets (about 13 of them) operated during the period of 790-550 BC or so; only three were post-exilic. Actually, the major prophetic window occurs from 790 BC to 586 BC, roughly two centuries, and they produced the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.

The classical prophets (writing prophets) may have been “witnesses” just as Moses wrote down the warnings in Deuteronomy, and they were used to addressing the people more directly. The primary factor contributing to this was the covenant between God and Israel, whereas there was nothing like this in other cultures. Hebrew prophecy is more interested in causation than prediction. Thus, covenant faithfulness would bring blessings and peace whereas disobedience to the covenant injunctions would bring curses and destruction. This probably is part of what distinguishes God from false gods. Little wonder, one of the notable Bible commentators posits that “Classical prophets have no counterpart in the ancient Near East.”<sup>72</sup>

### **General marks of the Hebrew Prophet**

There were certain distinctive marks of the prophets of Yahweh. Let me share some of these that I studied during one of my OT Prophets lectures:<sup>73</sup>

- **Conscious of God’s call:** The way God calls a person is unique for the one to remember the special role

he/she occupies. The prophets were conscious of the fact that they were recipients of God's word and of divine credentials. That is, there were some qualities that were evident to others that God had called them. Moses had his staff and his leprous/clean hand.

- **Uncompromising but passionate individuals:** The prophets were firm in the delivery of their messages, but they were also passionate. They did not care about what others thought of them and would not settle for sin among God's covenant community or any group of people. This is because they also felt for the negative consequences of the people's sins (Jer. 9:1; Dan. 9:3). On many occasions, some of the prophets would weep for the sins of the people and also because of the coming judgment. The whole book of Lamentation by the Prophet Jeremiah was written to this effect.
- **People of prayer and effective communication:** The prophets loved to pray and commune with God for the people (1 Sam. 12:23; cf. 1 Kings 18:42-44). The ministry of all the prophets reveal lengthy messages and speeches which indicate that they were usually involved in great presentations.
- **Speakers for all seasons and times:** They were people of action who did whatever it took to get people to change, even if they needed to travel to foreign countries. The message of prophets had to do with the past, events of their periods and predictions of the future. These could be either assurances of divine blessings for

demonstration of covenant faithfulness or messages announcing calamity because of disobedience on the part of the people. But the latter were often accompanied by a promise of salvation for a return to God.

- **People who endured great persecution:** The prophets were not perfect, but had good reputation. They became outspoken critics of society's evils. That's what always led to their persecution. The Lord Jesus once told the disciples that the prophets who ministered before His time were persecuted (Matt. 5:11). Deacon Stephen is on record to have queried the Sanhedrin: "Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?" (Acts 7:52).

Besides these characteristics, each of the prophets demonstrated some peculiar and identifiable trait(s) that made the personality and ministry of the person unique.

### **Common terms used to refer to the Prophets**

In addition to the main terms used for prophets discussed in Part I, there are various terms which were also used to describe the Prophets including the following:

- **Servant of God:** These include prophets like Moses and Jonah (1 Chron. 6:49; cf. 1 Kings 14:18; 18:36). Paul sometimes preferred to call himself a "servant of the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1).
- **Messenger of Yahweh:** This is also a term for some of the prophets (Hag. 1:3; Isa. 44:26; Jer. 26:12; Ezek. 2:1ff).

- **Man of the Spirit:** On few occasions, this term was used to refer to the prophets (Hosea 9:7; Micah 3:8).
- **Watchman:** Their role was to keep watch for any advancing danger and warn the people (Ezek. 3:16-17; 33:2ff; Jer. 6:17; Hab. 2:1).
- **Dripper:** This is translated as “prophet,” but from the Hebrew root which means “to drip.” Here, the prophet is supposed to keep repeating the same message over and over again, and getting on people’s nerves (Micah 2:11; Amos 7:16; Eze. 20:46).

### **Chapter summary**

Major issues such as the development of the prophetic ministry, including the classification of the prophets have been discussed in this chapter. Others like the marks and terms that define a prophet have also been tackled in this chapter. Now the stage is set for us to discuss how Isaiah encountered God in a spectacular vision that no doubt transformed him for life and ministry in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HOW ISAIAH ENCOUNTERED GOD**

One of the most remarkable events in the life of Isaiah relates to a particular encounter he had with God. So dramatic was this experience which occurred in the form of a vision that no reference to the ministry of Isaiah is meaningful without a mention of it. No vision has ever transformed a person like the one that the Prophet Isaiah describes in his book and which happened within the year of King Uzziah's death. The coincidence of the demise of the monarch and Isaiah's vision has not been easy to explain by many Bible commentators.

King Uzziah was no doubt one of the powerful kings of Judah after David and Solomon. During his reign, the boundaries of Judah became quite secured and the people too flourished economically. As a result of his success and the enormous power he wielded, the king became arrogant. At a point in time, he usurped the power of the priest and ignored their protest by entering the temple to make sacrifice. The wrath of the 'King of heaven' burned against the earthly king such that he was taken away leprous. For the rest of his days, King Uzziah remained quarantined, and his son, Jotham took care of the state. When the king finally died, the hope of the Judeans was smashed because they felt a great light of life had gone out.

For young Isaiah, the king's death probably became a time for soul searching. The prophet had loved Uzziah who happened to be his cousin. The prophet's access to the king's presence pointed to the likelihood that the king had probably appointed Isaiah as a member of the court. As a result, the prophet had watched the affairs of the state unfold from the inside. Therefore, he was affected in some way by the king's death, and was probably involved in the long period of mourning. But that was the period God also chose to reveal himself to the prophet in a 'never-to-be-forgotten' vision. This makes it expedient to consider Isaiah's vision of God in the temple.

### **What is a vision?**

Before the discussion of Isaiah's vision, it is prudent to consider the broad issue of what a vision is. Physiologically, vision has to do with the eyes. It is connected to the sense of seeing, the ability to receive a mental picture by any means. Ordinarily, vision and seeing are almost synonymous, that is, seeing is vision. To have a vision is to receive enough stimuli that will enable the formation of an image or picture in the brain (or the mind). In a broader sense, vision is the mental picture of one's purpose; it is the mental description of what a person wants to achieve in a particular area of life.

In reality, a person's ability to have a clear picture of things is his or her main sense of guidance or direction for every situation. In this sense, vision is important to everybody for engagements in many issues of our everyday life. To have a good vision, in general, is to see well, or to be able to see ahead into the future. It is to have foresight;

being able to stay focused and directing attention on targeted goals. Visions, it is said, “Form in the hearts of those who are dissatisfied with the status quo,” and Warren puts it this way, “Vision is the ability to see the opportunities within your current circumstances.”<sup>74</sup>

In relation to the prophetic ministry, however, vision is a supernatural in nature. It is the ability for a person to see into the spiritual realm (Matt. 17:9). It is one of the important spiritual gifts for God’s service. Having a vision is the ability to see what is not yet there, or the ability to see what could be. It is to have foresight or revealed plan in the mind or good sense of spiritual perception. To have a vision is to have a spiritual eye to see beyond what others can see (Prov. 29:18a; Matt. 2:1-2, 9; Acts 13:11). Some prophetic visions involve conversations regarding what is seen by the prophet and interpretations by angels (Jer. 1:11-16; cf. Zech. 1-6:8), and quite often its association with the place where the prophet receives the vision-often a holy place (Exod. 3:5; cf. Jos. 5:13-15).

Some revelations are received as open-vision during the day or at night when the recipient is active (1 Kings 22:17, 19-22; Jer. 8:2ff; 40:2ff), or are received as dreams when asleep (Job 33:15; Dan. 2:19, 28; 7:1), or as trance when there is sudden loss of consciousness. All these circumstances can give insight into past, present, or future events. To the believer, vision brings awareness. This is the more reason God kept on using words like “behold,” “look,” “see,” etc., whenever He wanted to draw people’s attention to what He had already planned ahead. No wonder, these words together appear countless number of times in both the

Old and New Testaments. In the first twenty chapters of the book of Genesis alone, the use of “behold” is overwhelming: 1:29, 31; 3:22; 6:12, 13, 17; 8:13; 9:9; 11:6; 12:11; 15:4,17; 16:2, 11; 17:4, 20; 18:27; 19:8,19, 20; 20:16. In most of the cases, God used these synonyms because He wanted the people to be attentive to whatever was about to be revealed, to have an idea of it in the form of a mental picture, or even begin to have imaginations of what was to happen.

### **Purpose of vision**

A vision gives a spiritual plan, instruction or direction to people to fulfill God’s will, (Peter, Acts 10:10; Paul, Acts 26:14-19). It comes to reveal hidden truths of future events, either disasters or blessing (like John in the book of Revelation). It is a means by which God talks to man, i.e., to call somebody for a purpose, (Isaiah 6:1, Paul, Jeremiah). The *New International Dictionary of the Bible* defines the spiritual gift as divine endowment of special ability for service upon a member of the body of Christ that comes through the grace of God.<sup>75</sup> There are many kinds of spiritual gifts in the Bible which the Holy Spirit has given to the Church of Jesus Christ. Some of the main areas of reference are: Joel 2: 28; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10, 28 -30; Ephesians 4:11. A list of the gifts as found in the scriptures includes dreams, visions, and word of knowledge, etc., (Joel 2: 28; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30).

Vision is one of the gifts that God by His Spirit endows His servants with in order to serve well in the ministry. It specifies the when, where, what, who, how, etc., of any meaningful and fruitful service in this life. In all cases, vision

is a light of the believer. When the light is cut off, the believer walks in darkness and gets lost or straight forward movement is uncertain. A person without vision is like cotton wool that is being blown by the wind. It has no specific destination and only relies on the current of the wind. To such a person, life is meaningless because there are no specifics. No wonder, scripture says that where there is no vision (or insight, understanding, knowledge, etc.) the people perish (Prov. 29:18; Joel 2:28; Gen. 37:5-10; Num. 14:29; 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:1; Eccles. 11:9-12:1).

People who lose their vision in life grope in their movements and commit lots of mistakes, or live and walk in total ignorance. They easily deviate from the right path. Isaiah's vision really brought a change for better in his ministry as it served as a guide for him to the end. Generally, it is important for all believers to follow a vision that can lead them on to the end. The question is, "How can a person be able to cross-check God's vision to him or her?" Answering questions such as the following may help:

- Am I following a specific vision for God's work?
- Where did I see the vision and where am I presently?
- Have I reached my limit?
- What are my plans for the vision God has given me?
- Do I see my work as God sees it?
- Am I doing what lies in my power to do as far as the vision is concerned?

### **Isaiah's vision and its meaning**

One of the best ways of making our acquaintance with Isaiah is by looking carefully at the account of his

call through the vision he had. While this passage clearly encapsulates Isaiah's call, 'it can more appropriately be entitled "Isaiah's vision of God" since the center stage belongs to Yahweh.'<sup>76</sup> The vision of God's glory in the temple that Isaiah saw is one of the most detailed and vivid accounts in scripture of the making of a prophet, 'It is this vision that informs and elucidates Isaiah's ministry.'<sup>77</sup>

...I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, 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...

What the prophet saw was a soul-shaking experience that was able to fashion out of an ordinary man, a person full of the insight in the will of God both for his day and a period far beyond. The vision of God left an indelible impression upon his soul, and more than anything else fitted him for his difficult life work. According to one commentator, the spectacle here tells more of Isaiah's view of God than any description of the prophet himself, "but indirectly, at least, our understanding of the prophet can begin to emerge as we face his view of God."<sup>78</sup> Most probably, the prophet, while worshiping in the temple fell into a trance, and beheld

in a vision the glory of God, the reality of sin, and the need for salvation for both himself and his people.

The description of the vision is quite a detailed one. It is of the highest significance that it was in the year that King Uzziah died that he was gripped by the certainty of a God who reigns over all kings and nations and disposes all human history. The prophet, no doubt, had a lot of respect for the king of Judah, even though the king of Assyria was in control of the political power of the world at the time. If Isaiah's vision is convincing and conclusive, then not even the king of Assyria was really the strongest and controlling figure of events at the time. It was, and still is, and ever will be God. He was sitting upon the throne that was higher than that of any Judean monarch, higher even than the towering throne of the great power and despot of the day, King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, who at the time was really the overall political boss of the world. In fact, God is high above everything else, the true "King of kings and Lord of lords," and none of the earthly kings could be compared to Him.

Isaiah is so caught up in the notion of the awesome majesty of God, "the notion of the immense distance which separates him from all that is merely earthly and human, that there is simply no comparison."<sup>79</sup> When Isaiah saw the Lord God, He was sitting in a majestic heavenly temple upon a high throne. According to the prophet, "Six-winged Seraphim encircled Him...With two wings they covered their faces, and with two wings they covered their feet, and with two wings they flew about..." (vs. 2). It is also remarkable that it is not the usual appearance of God in the temple to which he

refers; it was probably the Shekinah glory, or the visible symbol of God.

The Bible describes the Seraphim as using one pair of wings to cover their faces, for even the most perfect creatures dare not gaze brazenly into the face of the Creator. The sight would be too much. According to one teacher on the subject of discussion, Ancient Near-Eastern cultures believed the Seraphim to be protecting the genitals of the deity. But this is in contrast to Jewish Tradition which agrees with the picture in the vision of Isaiah that the seraphim are rather protecting themselves from the holiness of Yahweh by covering their faces.<sup>80</sup> Another pair of wings covers their feet. The precise meaning of this action is not clear to many scholars and Bible believers.

Though this might appear to be the situation not everybody accepts it. According to one scholar who has commented on the subject, the Targum has “body” for “feet” and it explains that the body was covered so that it might not be seen.<sup>81</sup> One might understand the covering of the feet in this manner as a natural expression of reverence. Continuing, the prophet heard that the Seraphim mention the holiness of God concurrently. This side of the vision is very similar to most of the sights described by John, the Beloved Apostle, in the book of Revelation, when he caught a vision of angels worshipping before the great throne of God in the temple. Accordingly, “The song of the Seraphim suggests that this is the prime theme of his subjects’ worship, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts’...Yahweh’s power and might are for Isaiah, demonstrated as much in his holiness as by his military prowess.”<sup>82</sup>

There is something peculiar about the three-fold mention of the adjective, “holy,” because anytime it is recited by the heavenly bodies they repeat it for the third time. This is confirmed by both visions of Prophet Isaiah and Apostle John. It looks like it represents the triune God, the Trinity: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Some may also argue that maybe, the number three represents a perfect number, so the three-fold mention of any word, especially in relation to divinity, represents perfection or completeness. Again, because the number three may represent the divinity, the threefold recital of “holy” probably indicates the absolute holiness of Him who sits on the throne; He is absolutely separate from all sin or uncleanness. Additionally, the thrice mention of “holy” might relate to the number of beings involved. Though the number of these glorious beings is not stated, the context seems to indicate a host of them.

It is not possible to describe the attendants or beings revealed in the vision in any complete way. Scripture describes them as having hands, feet, faces, and wings, but nothing more is said of their appearance. Since they are called seraphim, a term elsewhere applied to serpents (Num. 21:6; Isa. 14:29; 30:6), some scholars believe that they were serpentine (or dragon-like) in appearance. On the contrary, this position appears not to be the situation everybody accepts.

According to one scholar, the chief meaning of the term may be “fiery” (ref. also Num. 21:6), so that the name of the snake is merely derivative (referring to their bite), and the use of the term for the ministering beings would indicate they were “fiery ones.”<sup>83</sup> This explanation appears to be a

very good view of the situation. But not every scholar agrees to it. For example, according to a teacher on the subject of discussion, the Cherubim are usually interpreted as snakes because they are usually referred to in Hebrew as “seraph,” i.e., to burn (Num. 21:4ff), or “nahash,” i.e., serpent (Gen. 3), but that these two Hebrew terms are interchangeable. So, what Isaiah saw are likely to be “the burning ones” (plural).<sup>84</sup>

Contrary to the beliefs of pantheism, which holds that God is identical with the universe, Isaiah sees Him as separate from and above His creation. The whole expression is a most sublime ascription of praise to the living God. The “Lord of hosts,” probably, means the whole earth: “The earth is the fullness of his glory.” All things which he has made on the earth express his glory. His wisdom and goodness, his power and holiness, are seen everywhere. The whole earth, with all its mountains, seas, streams, trees, animals, and men, lay the foundation of God’s praise. This appears to be a very good view of the situation and quite a number of scholars agree to it. For example one writer on the subject posits: “The psalmist, in a most beautiful composition, calls upon all things to praise him.”<sup>85</sup> Isaiah likely saw Christ on the throne! (see also, John 12:40–41).

Memories of such a scene could never be lost by the Prophet or any other person that wanted to have a serious walk with God. But of course, there are chances that a person might not be quite serious with divine matters and as such lose godly vision. In the case of Isaiah, God worked everything out so excellently.

### **The timing of Isaiah's vision**

Isaiah 6:1 reads: "In the year that King Uzziah died...I saw the Lord..." The general period in which Isaiah carried out his prophetic mission is given in the first verse of the book: "The vision of Isaiah...which he saw concerning Judah in the days of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1). Isaiah's work was directed to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. For the actual year of the beginning of his prophetic career, we turn to the sixth chapter. It begins like this; "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, sitting on a throne, high and lofty" (Chap. 6:1). The king died, probably, in 742 BC. According to one writer, Isaiah could not have been much more than twenty years old when he experienced the vision which launched his prophetic career.<sup>86</sup> Whatever the age of the prophet was, it is most likely that he was quite young.

It is likely that the king's death broke down the 'spirit' of the people as they mourned him. As a supposed relative, the news of the monarch's death would no doubt come as a heavy blow to Isaiah. But it is the death-year of the king that had more than mere chronological value; "it was the supreme moment of his spiritual history."<sup>87</sup> Most likely, the prophet, being a relative had neglected his prophetic task and was caught up in the funeral frenzy of the people's 'king of kings'. As a sequel, there is no doubt that God decided to let the prophet know that Uzziah was not indeed the real enthroned "King," and that the original King of kings, i.e., the Almighty God, is not dead but is still seated on the throne and exalted.

**Chapter summary**

The discussions of this chapter have focused on the overwhelming vision of the Most High that Prophet Isaiah received. The word “vision” has also been discussed in its broader sense. Along this line, the meaning of Isaiah’s vision which obviously launched him into the career of God’s spokesman, and its timing have also been considered. But what impact and transformation did the vision bring to Isaiah? Well, the next chapter would make appreciable effort to discuss issues that would answer this question.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISAIAH**

The vision that Isaiah received was convincing proof of the prophet and his commissioning for ministry (6:1-13). The encounter could be described as “the making of the prophet, Isaiah.” The design of this magnificent vision was not only to impress the prophet with a sense of the holiness of God, but to give additional weight to his commission, as having been derived immediately from the divine presence.

#### **The realization**

The vision contained enough to fill every mind with awe, and to impress deeply upon every soul a sense of God’s majesty. Such a realization has happened to a lot of people who had encounter with “The Greatest One.” The patriarch Job, when he saw God, realized his own worthlessness (Job 42:5, 6); Daniel was overwhelmed by the vision of the glory of God such that he could not have enough strength to stand the presence (Dan. 10:15-17); the Apostle John saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed through an angel on the Island of Patmos and “fell at his feet as dead” (Rev. 1:17). Isaiah’s encounter is no exception. The vision gave him a clear view of himself, that is, who he really was. Little wonder, he expressed the experience clearly here, “Woe to me!” I cried, “I am ruined...” (Isa. 6:5).

Prophet Isaiah, probably young by then, becomes overwhelmingly sensitive to such a towering presence of God's awesomeness and power, and saw glimpses of the transcendence of the sovereign God. Isaiah's experience is one of awe, wonder, and too overwhelming for him. The vision brings so magnificent a God to the struggling prophet that he becomes completely conscious of such an indescribable presence and holiness. Indeed, Isaiah saw God in His glory and in such a way as to change and shape his life from that time onwards.

Having been brought face to face with the King of kings, the Jehovah of hosts, who is absolute in holiness and 'completely other' from creation, the prophet realized that even the purest person is unclean when measured by God's divine standard. For Isaiah, the announcement of God's holiness meant that he was in the presence of "One" distinct from him. Such a glorious appearance will definitely defy any bold physical viewing that most people who have had the rare opportunity of an encounter have never had the strength to stand. The event parallels 'the call' stories like those of Gideon, Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Each account includes an appearance of, or statement from, Yahweh, a commission, and a comment about the difficulty of each person's ministry. Some of them, including others like Paul and Apostle John, fell flat and could not have enough strength to confront the awesome sight before them.<sup>88</sup>

One scholar comments about Isaiah's experience thus: "...Unintentionally, and possibly unconsciously, one becomes tainted with uncleanness when surrounded by the

unclean; he invariably takes on some of the impurities of his environment.”<sup>89</sup> As Isaiah lay prostrate at the door of the ‘temple,’ he became aware of his frailty and wished that he had not been alive. Of course, Isaiah fully realizes his complete inadequacy...Within the context of ethics this entails a lifestyle reflective of Yahweh's own holiness and behavior.<sup>90</sup>

### **The preparation**

Why did Isaiah see himself as doomed at God's presence? It is important to consider why the prophet saw himself as unworthy and doomed. As a true Hebrew, he knew far too well that the God of Israel is holy. Not only is God holy; His people too have to be holy. In fact, Isaiah knew he had to be holy in order to see (or meet) God. The entire nation should also be holy (Exod. 19:6). This is a requirement stated in the covenant stipulations in Leviticus, “You shall be holy as I am holy” (Lev. 19:1). This might appear to be the situation for every believer of this Holy God.

According to one scholar, the remarkable thing about the OT conception of holiness is that it represents God's character: “What was distinct about this deity was not so much his origin, his essence, or his numinous power. Rather, it was his attitude toward ethical behavior.”<sup>91</sup> It is this impression of God's glorious holiness and its conviction that caused the prophet to realize his sinful nature. And now, he had to admit that he was doomed for seeing the ‘Holy one,’ and unworthy to be in His presence.

At this juncture, the prophet, having accepted his corrupt nature has to be prepared for the ministry for which

he has been called. This means that for Isaiah to be qualified for the holy service, he had to be made holy. Isaiah needed God's touch that would render him fit for speaking on behalf of God, because the character of a given deity determined the character of that which was dedicated to it. The Holy God that the prophet saw did not want and will not use unclean instruments in His service.

Isaiah had the sense that he was wholly polluted and his people were also unfit to stand before God because of their unclean lips, polluted thoughts, words, and acts. Not only that, he also needed to be sanctified before he could be useful for any meaningful future assignments of God. Under these unfavorable circumstances God awaited the prophet's answer, so to speak. Not only did he need to be purified, he also needed divine assurance from the Almighty; an assurance that he was fit to be a speaker of the Most High.

...Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me..."

Upon the cry of the prophet, who now recognized his own sinfulness in the presence of God, the door was now opened for the Lord to reach out to the remorseful man. One scholar wrote that holiness is understood in two opposite extremes represented by "separate" and "burn."

Either something is set apart and not touched (or seen at all), or the thing is burnt completely, or it is passed through fire to remove uncleanness. For Isaiah to be holy, he had to be passed through “fire” and burned to remove the uncleanness, so that he becomes holy or set apart.<sup>92</sup>

### **The purification**

During Isaiah’s encounter with God, why did he particularly mention one part of the body that had defiled him and the whole community of Judah? Why the lips and not any part of the prophet’s body? There is no doubt the prophet was also implying the tongue because it is one of the functional system for speech. It is important for everyone not to be ignorant of the tremendous power in the tongue. This will make them careful in using the tongue so that it never brings trouble but blessing to us. Scripture says that life and death are in the power of the tongue, and whoever loves it will eat of its fruit (Prov. 18:20-21).

The whole mechanism of speech is indeed under the operation of some organs, the tongue being a major part. Isaiah’s vision indicates that his lips had been unclean because of guilt and sin. This means that people should be able to keep the tongue from evil uses, and use it only for good purposes (James 3:1-12; Rom. 10:10; Matt. 12:34-37). A little information on the tongue here will be beneficial for the discussion.

**The tongue as an organ:** The tongue is the organ of the body that is sensitive to taste. It is located in the cavity of the mouth. It is attached at its far end to the lower inner part of

the mouth, but is loose at the front. The tongue is soft and is able to stretch as well as fold up flexibly. This enables the organ to move freely in the mouth cavity and in the process facilitate speech. It forms about 2% of the body mass. Generally, it is an organ for tasting anything (whether sweet, bitter, or sour) in some organisms in the animal kingdom, especially human beings. It also aids feeding in higher animals, and particularly in humans, it is involved in the mechanism that brings about speech. According to Matthew 12:34, the tongue is the part of a person which helps the mouth to say whatever the mind decides to communicate verbally. The tongue is a very important part of the human body without which speech becomes quite unclear.

**The tongue as a tool:** King Solomon of Israel, a man described by scriptures as blessed with wisdom by God, gave some practical insights and guidelines for healthy life. In the book of Proverbs, the king, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, passes on his practical advice in the form of short, concise sentences that convey moral truths. Among the issue he discussed is the tongue as a spiritual weapon and the proper use of it. The admonitions of the book on the right use of the tongue provide profound advice for a peaceful and successful life.

According to Solomon, there is tremendous power in the tongue and a careful use of it brings life to both the speaker and his bearers. By implication, a careless use of the tongue brings destruction (Prov. 18:20, 21; cf. Prov. 13:3; 21:23; Jas. 1:26; 3:6). Generally, the choice of either

“life or death” through one’s own confession (vs. 21) is against the background of most of the statements made in life. But far above this is the underlying power of the tongue to determine the destiny of men who use it.

One of the writers of the New Testament, James, the brother of the Lord, gives a vivid description of the tongue. In James 3:5, the Elder describes the tongue as a small part of the whole body but full of deceit, and has enough fire that is able to destroy through slander, and/or cursing. Yet it is from this same tongue that people pour forth blessing, praise, and appreciation to God. This means that our mouth can be instruments of blessings or curses to our neighbor. The tongue obviously has power. Let us consider some general areas where the power of the tongue is effective.

- **The tongue has power to death:** The tongue is deadly when used unscrupulously (Prov. 18:21; 21:23). It puts the user in a great danger as when for example the tongue is used to curse or condemn another person. In 2 Kings 2:23-25, Prophet Elisha’s curse on the teasing children brought in two bears which devoured forty-two of the children.
- **The tongue possesses the power to life:** The careful and wise use of the tongue brings life to the user as well as to the hearers. 1 Peter 3:10 says that “whoever would love life and see good days should keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful words.” The life-giving power of the tongue is found in texts such as the following: Prov. 18:20-21; 13:3a, 21:23.

- **The tongue has power to destroy:** It has power to destroy the one who uses it wrongly. God told Jeremiah that he had been given the power to uproot and tear down, in order to destroy (Jer. 1:10). The one who uses the tongue unwisely; speaks rashly will come to ruin (Prov. 13:3b; James 3:6). It has power to destroy those who hear them or those on whom it is used. This, according to James should not be the case (James 3:3-12).
- **The tongue has power to build:** God also told Jeremiah that he had been given the power to build and to plant (Jer. 1:10). The man who speaks with wisdom will reap a harvest from his words just as a farmer enjoys the crop he planted (Prov. 12:14).
- **The tongue has power to discipline:** It is in light of this statement that it must be used to instruct one's children (Prov. 1:8; 22:6; 31:26). There is a lot of virtue in the tongue to teach, instruct, rebuke, and correct.

#### **Proper use of the tongue**

If we learn to use the tongue well it will bring life, health, peace, and virtuous things to us. We should therefore use our tongues to speak wholesome words or words that will build us up and positive things that bring God's favor (Prov. 15:4; Eph. 4:29). For believers to use our tongues well, we should carefully consider the following:

- Endeavor not to make negative pronouncements about God's ministers (Num. 12:8; 2 Sam. 1:14) or to curse or make negative remarks about others.

- Endeavor to utter no filthy or defiled statements (Ps. 34:13; 1 Pet. 3:10).
- Endeavor not to speak lies.

We are advised to bless our neighbors and never to curse them. Whether a person will eat or not rests in the use of the tongue. If the tongue in the mouth fails to ask, the body might not be able to receive what it needs. Additionally, the words that the mouth speaks reveal the true nature of a person (that is, the hidden nature). Scripture says that the utterances from a person's mouth can bring judgment upon the one (Prov. 21:23; Matt. 12:36-37). Therefore, by the use of the tongue, many are languishing in prison while others are living very meaningful lives.

**Isaiah's tongue needed to be purified:** At the instance of Isaiah's vision, the prophet was reaping the fruit of his tongue. He might have used it wrongly at a point of time and was now realizing that the improper use of it had defiled him. At this point, one of the Seraphim separated from the rest, and taking a live coal or stone from the altar, he flew to the prophet. Touching the mouth of the prophet with the coal the seraph said, "Lo! This hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven" (vs. 6-7).

This was a timely assurance that the prophet needed if he was ever going to be confident before God and the people. By this action, a renowned Bible scholar comments that the Seraphim are called upon to act as Priest.<sup>93</sup> Again, it is not the hot coal or the seraph that forgives and abolishes sin, "we have in the vision a symbolic picture of Isaiah's recognition and acknowledgement of his own sins and

God's forgiveness of those sins"<sup>94</sup> (refer 1 John 1-7-9). Sin and its guilt must be removed or blotted out, if one is to be an acceptable servant of the Lord. Thus, by the action of one of the Seraphim, the man was purified. This is a typical illustration of God's salvation by grace and not by works, (to use New Testament terms).

The live coal from the altar in Isaiah's vision was not only an instrument of cleansing. It was also a demonstration of fresh touch that would fill the prophet with the Spirit of God for service and kindle the fire of God in the life of the prophet. That is, it was to give him a tongue of fire as was manifested by the disciples of the early church at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-4). Additionally, it was to take away the spirit of fear and embolden the prophet so that he could face all circumstances in the ministry. Thus, by the consecration and empowering of the prophet, he was now ready to respond to the Lord's need of someone whom He could send and through whom He could reveal future visions and revelations. A teacher and scholar of the Bible comments: "The purification process also opens Isaiah's ear or places him in a position to hear the voice of God."<sup>95</sup>

### **The Commissioning**

Finally, in verse 8, God speaks. He has been silent all this time: he has been king, but has not yet spoken or acted as king. His retainers have spoken and acted for him, but now the High and Exalted One speaks, asking for a volunteer to be his messenger, saying:

...Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant...

Does it mean anything for someone to accept God's invitation to be His messenger? Indeed, Yes! It means everything in this present life to many people. Therefore, the answer to such a question as God posed to Isaiah would meet a moment of hesitation before they come with an answer. When they even do, the answer might not be a positive one. For example, both Moses, the deliverer of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and Prophet Jeremiah, tried to give excuses to similar encounters with God. Moses tried to ward God's call off with four solid excuses, and gathered all the courage he could muster to finally say to God, "Please, send someone else, (refer Exodus chap. 1-4). In the case of Jeremiah, he saw age as a good excuse when he told God, "I am only a child..." (Jer. 1:1ff). Quite a number of believers today are likely to come out with similar excuses.

But that was not the case with Isaiah; he did not hide behind any excuse. Though apparently shaken from the hair on his head to the soles of his feet, the man gathered some courage and confidence to willingly step forward with a bold

declaration: “Here I am; send me!” Clearly, he is now free to accept, because God has taken the initiative and reached out to him.

### **Chapter summary**

The glorious picture of God that Prophet Isaiah saw created a deep sense of awareness of divine presence in him and necessitated his purification. He had to be rendered fit for the task. This process centered primarily on his mouth (or the tongue). Through the same process, there was a filling and a kindling of fire in the prophet. On top of all, the prophet's vision and subsequent purification through a divine touch emboldened him for the task ahead. Thereafter, he was commissioned and ushered to the ministry field as a prepared vessel fit for the Master's use. The next chapter would look at the zeal, style, and message of the refined Isaiah.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MEET THE REFINED PROPHET ISAIAH**

The purpose of the vision was to transform Isaiah to be sent to the people. How does one expect the prophetic ministry of the man to be like from the period of the encounter onwards? Definitely superb; now sharper than before, raging more and burning with extreme fire power. In fact, having been cleansed from his sin and having had his iniquity taken away, Isaiah is now in a position to hear and respond to the Lord's call. That the vision which Isaiah saw was clearly fundamental to the entire course of Isaiah's ministry is demonstrated in the period during his lifetime and even beyond. His ministry took a complete one-hundred and eighty degrees turn for better. According to one scholar who has commented on the subject, "The glory, the majesty, the holiness, and the righteousness of God became the ruling concepts of his ministry."<sup>96</sup>

#### **The new zeal in Isaiah's ministry**

It is possible that the prophet did not understand the weight, the full import, and the consequences of the call immediately. Here was an aristocrat who was living and working on behalf of the dispossessed masses in his homeland. He was unquestionably one of the most imposing figures of his age. Isaiah had a lofty conception of God. He

understood human sinfulness. But now that the situation had changed, because he had come under a different influence, he had to speak a message which the people would dislike so much that they would not hear nor understand him. Nothing was, however, going to stop the prophet from his service; there was a refreshed zeal. When he answered the Lord of hosts' call to service, "Here am I, send me" (6:8), he accepted to be sent by the Almighty to wherever, whoever, and with whatever message whenever. The Lord, realizing the prophet's readiness, now gives him the message of the divine encounter.

### **The style of Isaiah's ministry**

Isaiah was not to have an easy time; he was really going to have a hard time. But at least, he was told before he began that the multitudes would not heed him and that judgment would have to come upon his people. Of course, it looks like this was the situation and although the prophet might appear a little surprised at the beginning he was soon to become used to it. One of the writers on the subject of discussion puts it this way, "It will only have been as Isaiah saw the people getting harder that he himself would have fully realized the implications of his task."<sup>97</sup>

By this time his zeal had reached the highest point and the freshly anointed prophet was ready to explode. This increased level of zeal, no doubt, was as a result of faithful obedience to his new experience and also a deeper sense of burden for his nation that was heading for doom. True to the call and style of ministration of most Hebrew prophets "Isaiah was radical, insisting that ritual was no substitute for

true religion in Judah or anywhere else.”<sup>98</sup> But while in the process of giving it hard to the rebellious people of Judah and Israel, at the same time he was playing the role of an inspirer and tried to change the people to faith in the Lord even in time of imminent danger. Quite ironical!

Clearly, to love your country and people and still condemn them and speak of a coming doom is not so easy for anybody to do. This was the situation that made one scholar to make the following comment: “He saw clearly that a man cannot be a faithful patriot and always be optimistic, saying complimentary things about his nation or their deeds...”<sup>99</sup> However, he could not do otherwise; it was for such a purpose that he had been called and had seen the great vision. For such a reason, a lot of people might show a great deal of admiration for the prophet’s character and nature of ministry. But on the contrary, the “new” Prophet Isaiah had definitely become a big thorn in the flesh of many of his countrymen and political leaders.

Although Isaiah is traditionally linked to the seat of government of Judah, and most likely had access to the kings of his day, he was no longer so much involved in political intrigues. He might have tried to appear neutral in politics while at the same time learning not to separate religion from politics. Frequently, he denounced heathen cults as inimical to the theocracy. In fact, some Old Testament Bible scholars also agree to this point that the prophet was now pinning a lot of corruption to the wall, in the hope of setting a standard for self and the people. He had both a refined life and message, unlike that of a soothsayer. For example, a teacher of the Bible writes:

“Isaiah’s God is specific, personal, involved with his people and yet absolutely distinct from them; he is far, far beyond any easy approachability.”<sup>100</sup>

The description of Isaiah’s profound way of ministry appears to be the situation noticed by quite a number of Bible scholars and commentators. For example, one scholar who has commented on Isaiah notes: “As a seer he united the profoundest religious insight with a wide knowledge of men and affairs, and possessed a balance of powers rarely combined in a single individual.”<sup>101</sup> With respect to his way of delivery, it is most likely that few of the prophets could match his charisma. His messages portray somebody who was an orator, very distinct prophecies delivered in clear and unambiguous terms. According to Robinson, the Prophet Isaiah was likewise a poet, because he frequently elaborates his messages in rhythmic or poetic style, and concerning his speeches, Jerome, one of the Church Fathers, likened the prophet to Demosthenes (probably, one of the greatest orators that ever lived).<sup>102</sup> Isaiah was fully committed to the idea that God was the author and guide in human history.

### **The message of Isaiah’s ministry**

Success came hard for a prophet in 8<sup>th</sup> Century Judah. Not everyone came running to join his crusade, because he was not to see great crowds flocking to the Lord. He was commissioned to go with a message that would make the people ever hearing but not really understanding what they hear, and ever seeing but never really able to see clearly. This is not clearly explained by the content of the passage. But it appears to mean that the people would

become more disobedient to God until He brings punishment on them.

A teacher of the Bible posited that the statement, “Be ever hearing...and be healed,” is similar to Pharaoh’s position in Exodus where his heart was hardened. The hardening of heart here means human rejection of what is right; human rejection of powerful acts; hardening of the heart where man conforms to his own choices.<sup>103</sup> Yet, the Lord assured him that “there was to be a remnant” (6:13); there would always be some who would believe. It is possible that Isaiah understood this commission to be directed not only to Judah, where he lived, but also to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, centered in Samaria, which was to fall to the Assyrians in 721 BC. By this time, Tiglath-pileser III (or “Pul”) had come to power in 745 BC. He began marching westward in 743-738 BC. This left most nations with two choices; to make a treaty with Assyria, or to join an alliance against them. Isaiah had a third option – make an alliance with God.

In Isaiah 7:1-25, there is an interesting account of an incident that underlines the prophet’s ministry. Rezin of Aram (Syria) and Pekah of Israel formed an alliance against Assyria in 743 BC. At this point, these kings wanted King Ahaz of Judah to join up with them to strengthen their alliance, but he was “trusting” in Assyria to win. Isaiah suggested that the king forgets about all these and puts all his trust in God. This was the first time that Judah was up against a “super power” and had no chance of defeating Assyria. So the people of Judah had to learn that “the Lord saves.” Isaiah said: “Ask God for a sign – he’ll show you.”

However, King Ahaz was an idolater; he didn't want a sign because he didn't want to do anything other than make an alliance with Assyria. Therefore, he dismissed Isaiah with a condescending, "Oh, I wouldn't want to put the Lord to the test." Isaiah responded with the Messianic prophecy of this chapter ("the virgin with child").

Isaiah also perceived at the time of his call that God's patience was at hand and that anything that could be done to hasten the day of judgment, was good: that was to be the purpose of Isaiah's ministry. He understood that God was about to trample down both Israel and Judah and make it a waste by raising some enemy against them. He was resolute in his message to the people; His call was constantly to put their faith in 'the One who alone could save the land from an impending devastation.'

Isaiah's use of the phrase, "In the last days," might be hard to understand and interpret. But the primary meaning of what the prophet might be referring to might have something to do with the end of the Mosaic Age and the coming of God's New Kingdom. The book of Hebrews 8:13 talks about "last days" as the period of the disappearance of the old covenant and the establishment of the new. "By calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear." In Acts 2:16-21, Peter refers to Joel and says that that was the "last days." Thus, one cannot just assume that the phrase 'last days,' refers to the future.

**Message to the Covenant Nation:** The reason Isaiah named one of his sons Shear-jashub, which means a

remnant shall return, is still not clearly understood. But it likely might have something to do with the events that would follow in the near future as a result of his message. Maybe, he was predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians or alluding to the distant New Testament prophecies predicting the destruction by Romans, where it is believed that over a million Jews were killed but some (a remnant) escaped. The full meaning is yet to be grasped.

But true to the dictates of the commission he received from God, the people did not receive Isaiah's message. Thus it is probable that Isaiah himself might have allowed for the possibility that people would respond favorably and change their ways as a result of his message (1:19-20). But at a point in time it seems the prophet himself lost confidence in his ministry for the moment (vs. 11). As a result, he probably withdrew from public ministry. This interpretation is quite plausible, and is likely held by some Bible commentators. For example, one writer on the book notes that Isaiah returned from the people and devoted himself to the small group that held with him (ver. 16ff).<sup>104</sup>

**Message to the entire world (future):** Prophet Isaiah's encounter with God also opened his eyes to a lot of events of the whole world in the distant future. Again it could have been that the name of his son would be a permanent show-and-tell to remind people that at least a few will experience a change for the better. However, God's activity was not going to be limited to only Judah and Israel; it would be extended to other nations.

While his people did not pay much attention to him, Isaiah was prepared for God to use him concerning the gentile nations and the future. The prophet understood from the vision that God is not only in charge of Judah and Israel, but that he was in charge of the whole universe. Isaiah had a universal approach in his message such that he is sometimes referred to as the “Universal Prophet of Israel.” This character of the prophet’s ministry is seen in his numerous messages concerning the present and distant future of the neighboring nations usually referred to as the Gentiles.

Again, it is likely the prophet became fed up with his people and begun to see God using these nations to provoke his people in the future. One Bible scholar states that it is from this moment that Judah would cease to function as a nation in God’s purposes, though her national existence still continued for over a century and a half. He concluded: “God is working out His purpose through a remnant, which is dimly seen in 6:13.”<sup>105</sup> This is the view one is attempted to hold looking at the way the prophet shifted his attention from Judah to the gentile nations. It is probably from this point that God started to reveal His plans concerning the coming Messiah to the prophet. Little wonder, Isaiah is also called by some scholars as the ‘Messianic Prophet’ because he was so thoroughly imbued with the idea that his nation was to be a Messianic Nation to the world.<sup>106</sup>

Isaiah saw clearly that the ideal kingdom, which God was about to establish through the Messiah, included all people. Robinson has this to say about Isaiah:

In a word, he was the prophet of universal redemption by faith. No prophet of the Old Testament combined more perfectly than Isaiah's earthly wisdom and sagacity, courage and conviction, versatility of gifts and singleness of purpose, on the one hand, with clear vision and spiritual intuition, a love of righteousness and a keen appreciation of Jehovah's majesty and holiness, on the other...Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history.<sup>107</sup>

There were practically no bounds to his imagination; any more than there were limits to Jehovah's power to save (chap. 45:22). Isaiah envisioned the glorious future of the world, when the Messiah, God's anointed, a perfect ruler, would bring about an everlasting peace among men. This is because all nations were mere instruments in His hands, and they must serve Him by establishing the rule of justice, righteousness, and peace. The nations would "beat their swords into plowshares" and would not "learn war any more" (2:4). Isaiah saw that in the future Israel would be a nation through whom, one day, a great and wonderful blessing would come from God to all nations, "and he was continually dreaming of the day when that great and wonderful work would be done."<sup>108</sup>

Isaiah gives us more messianic prophecies than anybody else. He revealed the way of salvation. The Messianic ideal thus gave a spiritual goal to human

existence. This would be achieved only in the "end of days," when all nations would worship the God of Israel, who would teach them His ways.<sup>109</sup> Here, God's final judgment is seen to involve not merely Israel and the surrounding nations, but the whole world. Thus, in terms of New Testament applications, some scholars see that "both the Messiah and the Church fulfill not only Isaiah's mission, but also the prophetic mission itself."<sup>110</sup> The overall importance of Isaiah's Messianic prophecies was the need for the world to focus attention on the coming King in order that both the Jews and the entire world would look to Him alone for salvation and eternal life.

### **Chapter summary**

The invigorated Isaiah launched out into the prophetic arena in a grand style. His renewed zeal, confidence, and the focus of his message marked him out as an outstanding ambassador of the Most High. His messages traversed the immediate covenant community that would go to exile (only a remnant would return) and affected the surrounding nations. He also revealed the plans of the Eternal God for the future of humanity and creation. Isaiah's revelations concerning the coming Messiah were superb and heart-warming because they were loaded with hope for the future.

In the next chapter, we would look at how the Isaiah took time to encourage those who were determined to walk in faithfully with God and wait on Him; their strength would be renewed like that of the eagle.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **ISAIAH'S MESSAGE ON THE IMPORATNCE OF WAITING ON GOD**

There are certain passages of scripture in which God decided to use lower creatures to speak to humanity (Prov. 6:6; Isa. 40:28-31; Matt. 10:16). Though the reason for such figures of speech can easily be conjectured, the book of Job (12:7-9) establishes the fact: "...These animals and birds teach a lot about God." God used His messengers to communicate to His people by making reference to these creatures, and expected the people to apply such symbolisms to their lives, "Go to the ant...consider its ways and be wise" (Prov. 6:6).

#### **Waiting on the Lord like the eagle**

One of such creatures that God used is the eagle (Heb. *mesher*). The Lord through Isaiah taught His people to develop the habit of waiting on Him in order to have strength to press on and to never give up. In his communication, the prophet gave one of the most inspirational messages when he used the life of the eagle to drive home his point and challenge his audience. In Isaiah 40:28ff, he declared:

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting  
God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth

does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might, He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary (NAS).

What did God want to achieve by using the eagle's ability to mount or soar to high height to speak to His people? The reason is straightforward when one studies this bird. The eagle, usually referred to as "king of the air," is the strongest and the swiftest bird, (Job 9:26). It is about one meter in height, and two-three meters when wings are spread out. The eagle is believed to have one of the best visions; it is able to see far, sometimes beyond 2km. It is known to live for about forty years. It makes its nest at high places; tallest trees, top of mountain, etc. A major characteristic of the eagle is its ability to confine itself to a secluded place for a relatively long period. That the eagle is believed to spend between 70-80% of its lifespan in waiting is an interesting feature worth exploring, since it might be the clue to the bird's ability to soar to very high heights.

Waiting (Heb. *qavah*) is to patiently remain for sometime in order to act or be acted upon. The eagle engages in regular waiting sessions for many reasons. Being a creature that prefers the highest of places for rest or its nest, one reason might be that waiting provides the strength required to mount up and reach its hiding place. Another

probable reason is that because the eagle is a carnivorous bird (Exod. 19:4), it relies on its strength to catch its prey. Thus, waiting enables it to conserve its strength and helps it to become well prepared for attack. Waiting offers the bird the right opportunity to strategize before it launches out. The bird also needs to renew its strength regularly in order to prove equal to its task of having to overpower and catch its prey. So, waiting offers the bird the door to renew its strength so that it can always act (Ps. 103:5). Besides its renewal of strength, since the eagle is a carnivorous bird, it needs good vision to spot its prey. Waiting enables the eagle to remain focused and strategize before it dashes out for its prey.

To be able to capture its prey, speed or swiftness is advantageous. In addition to waiting, therefore, the bird explores others features for the provision of strength to enhance its fast movements. This comes from its strong wing-muscles and the flight feathers. The feathers play a very important role in every bird, particularly, a predatory bird like the eagle. It is the regular flapping of the wings or otherwise that provides the lifting, directional maneuvering, breaking, and landing. The swiftness of the bird during diving to catch its prey also depends on the well trimmed shape which the feathers provide. On top of that, the claws and the beak have to remain sharp at all times in order to catch or grip its prey, and tear its fresh respectively. So the feathers, claws, and beak of the eagle are some of the features that are given regular attention by the bird.

Consistent maintenance of the feathers, claws, and beak is a prerequisite for effective functioning. For as long as

the interlocking barbs and barbules of the wing and tail feathers remain intact, they provide the required air-proof structure that will enable the eagle to negotiate easily in the air: dive down, slow down, or lift itself up at any point in time. When the feathers are not able to function properly they have to be renewed immediately. Renewal of the feathers, claws, and beak is through molting. Generally, molting is the shedding of the old exoskeleton in some organisms for new. The eagle usually undergoes molting in the remotest or most distant place so that it is not obstructed by anything, including potential enemies, since it becomes vulnerable during such periods. During this process, it is believed that the bird plucks all the old flight feathers and also peels off its claws and beak, and stays in waiting until fresh features grow to replace the shed ones.

When the bird is fully refreshed through this process and ready for action, it launches out with renewed strength in its wings and feathers but hunger in the body such that any prey can hardly escape its attack.

### **The importance of waiting on God**

Waiting on God is not an optional discipline in a believer's life; it is a composite part of it. For every Christian, and more especially for leaders, waiting on God is a necessity. It is important to know that God himself is conscious of and interested in people appearing before Him in waiting. In the OT, scripture records how Moses waited on the LORD for forty days and nights on not less than two separate occasions (Exod. 34:28; cf. Deut. 9:8-9; 18-19). No wonder, he was able to lead a congregation of not less than

two million people in addition to the victories he won over Israel's enemies and the signs and wonders the Lord used him to perform. Being the prophet who advocated for waiting on God in order for a person to renew his/her strength, it is very likely that Isaiah's ability to remain in ministry for a relatively long period of time came from his regular waiting sessions.

It is within this arena of watchfulness and waiting in prayer that real spiritual battles are fought and won. It is the example that the Lord himself and the Apostles set for all believers. At the close of His earthly ministry, the Lord had to survive the agony of the cross before He would be glorified. But going to the cross was like passing through all the corridors of the powers of darkness. It was the moment the "Prince of this world," Satan, and his host of demons were fully armed to prevent the Lord from fulfilling the ultimate purpose for which He came to the world. The Lord indeed saw the danger ahead. That was also the moment the Lord came face-to-face with the weakness of the body, for the wishes of the flesh rose against the desire of His soul. Fortunately, the road to the cross had to pass through the Garden of Gethsemane.

At that moment, the Lord realized that moving into prayer and waiting for strength from the Father was the ultimate tool to overcome the flesh. Therefore, he climbed up to the Garden to watch in prayer and even requested the support of the disciples. Even in the Garden, Satan and his forces had overwhelmed the Lord so much that He almost gave up and wished He could have His own way: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me..." He prayed (Matt.

26:38-44; Mark 14:34; cf. Luke 22:42). However, realizing the susceptible nature of the flesh and the will of the human nature to temptations, he surrendered to the Father's will, "...Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:38). At this juncture, scripture mentions how an angel of God came to strengthen the Lord, and how He afterwards travailed in prayer and waited while the disciples were heavy with sleep (Luke 22:43).

The NT record that after the Apostles have been trained for about three and half years, they were asked by the Lord to wait and receive power (or spiritual strength) from the Holy Spirit before they launch out into ministry. They were further instructed by Him on the vision for the Church (Acts 1:1-8). After the Holy Spirit descended on them and they were emboldened to step out, their ministry was very fruitful. They chalked a lot of successes; their messages converted many into Christianity, and their ministrations witnessed great signs and wonders (Acts 4:3, 33; 5:12-16).

Apostle Paul understood the importance of waiting and the efficacy of prayer soon after he received a vision on the way to Damascus (Acts 26:15-20). After a period of waiting on God, probably in a wilderness in Arabia (Gal. 1:15-17), his ministry gifts were so enhanced that he could perceive advancing calamities, and performed many wonders in ministry (Acts 27:10; cf. 27:21-25). The spiritual strength he had from his regular periods of waiting helped him to constantly fight the enemy and to subdue him. In Ephesians 6:12ff, he wrote, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers..."

Every relationship thrives on effective communication. A true Christian life begins, continues, and ends with a full dependence on God. This will require intimate relationship with the Lord. The intimate relationship and dependence will enhance a person's knowledge of God. Being in relationship with God requires regular waiting on Him because:

- It is a period of time a person desires to encounter the Lord in solitude.
- Waiting on God is a period set aside to draw closer to Him and for Him to also draw closer to you (James 4:8).
- It is an opportunity to spend quality time before the Lord in order to deepen one's relationship with Him.
- It is a practice that helps one to be spiritually in tune with God and to be abreast of God's direction.
- It is a time that people pour out their heart before the Lord for direction, encouragement, breakthrough, victory over the forces of darkness, etc.
- It is a deep sense of spiritual thirst for God (Ps. 42:1; Jer. 29:13), or to make one's way pleasing to God (Ps. 63:1-8; Hosea 10:12; Ps. 27:14).

Waiting on God is usually done either individually or as a group. Short time waiting might be that period of lying quietly and patiently before the Lord after prayer for responds from the Lord. But long time waiting requires setting aside a period of time and usually involves a person leaving his/her comfort zone to a solitary place (or a hideout) to fast and/or pray (Dan. 9:3). It can also be the long time period when one lives in the hope that God is doing something in his life (Job 14:14; Hab. 2:1-2). During such periods, one has to

lay aside all that will obstruct or distract his/her attention. Such a decision will drive a person into the serene spiritual atmosphere for total blessings, 'to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not get tired, and walk and not become weary' (Isa. 40:31).

Above all, every person should understand that he/she has an enemy who wants to prevent him/her from receiving the best from God. But we can benefit from the discipline of waiting on God as Prophet Isaiah was inspired to declare. Waiting and being spiritually sensitive helps the believer to perceive events ahead and to pray for direction to handle them. So we need to engage in constant waiting, prayer, and in exercising of our faith in God that we will have success in ministry. It is the more reason why a believer has to separate himself/herself in order to allow for the Spirit of God to fully water the one and prepare him/her for every eventuality.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has discussed Isaiah's call for the covenant community to wait on the LORD. The discussion has revealed the importance of the discipline of waiting on the LORD, i.e., for the people to renew their strength like the eagle in order to continue pressing on in their walk with God, and how it could be done effectively. The onus is on every believer to accept the challenge posed by Prophet Isaiah's submission. The next issue is the need to understand that accepting the call to serve God is a life and death covenant. We would find out how Isaiah was traditionally believed to have faced the consequences of being God's spokesperson in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DIVINE MINISTRY IS FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE**

One of the important aspects of life is that things do not always happen as they are expected to. Humanity expects best result in life, but sometimes it turns to be the exact opposite. In all spheres of life; marriage, education, business, politics, entertainment, and so on, there are circumstances that bring about both sides of the coin of life: rich and poor, win and lose, breakthroughs and disappointments, successes and failures, good and bad, positives and negatives, etc. God's call on people into His ministry is no exception. Prophet Isaiah's entry into the service of God, the experiences he encountered in the course of his duties and the concluding part of his ministry testifies to the fact that there is comfort and dejection, glory and shame, and life and death in the divine vocation.

As a prophet, Isaiah executed his assignment with precision and brought God's message to the targeted audience. Unfortunately, he had no control over the outcome of his message. It was for the audience to decide how to respond to the message, and for God to evaluate the impact of it. But apart from the consequence that the people would suffer for their disobedience to the warning of God through Isaiah, the prophet was equally going to suffer

some consequences as a result of his call, because he would encounter a lot of hardship, rejection, insult, and abuse in many forms. Indeed, the prophet encountered many of these in the course of delivery of his messages, particularly rejection. Nevertheless, he was still ready to continue in his commitment to the “heavenly vision.” He never gave up even in the face of death, considering the nature of death that Jewish tradition holds of him.

### **The latter part of Isaiah’s life**

Not much is recorded of Isaiah’s active involvement in ministry or his private life during the latter period of his life. However, there is some information about the prophet’s latter years from Jewish Tradition and other sources. It is very probable that Prophet Isaiah lived to the close of King Hezekiah’s life. The prophet even lived into the reign of King Manasseh of Judah, the son of King Hezekiah. This view is quite plausible, though it is not the position of some people. For example, one of the notable Bible commentators stated that there is no evidence that he ever carried on a regular prophetic activity among the people after this, not even in the reign of Hezekiah; we gain the impression that he was given to intervening in moments of crisis.<sup>111</sup> But there might be indications that the prophet ministered during the time of Hezekiah’s successor, as would be deduced later.

Divine ministry is indeed for better and for worse. For, the prophet was yet to meet the kind of suffering at the hands of one of the wicked kings that ever ruled Judah, King Manasseh. For it was during this period that Isaiah really bore “the cross of his ministry.” This is ultimately seen in the

way his life ended. It was what might be described as a call to bear the cross; to suffer like some of the heroes and heroines whose names are listed in Hebrews 11: 32-39:

...What more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith...

### **The nature of Isaiah's death**

There are also lots of speculations concerning the nature of the end of Isaiah, especially, with regards to his death. It may however, be reassuring to know that this dearth of knowledge about how Isaiah died is a great bother to many scholars. This has arisen probably because the time and manner of the prophet's death are not specified in either the Bible or recorded history.

There is nothing historically definite concerning Isaiah's end. Most of the information about his death has come from traditional records. Even here, Jewish tradition is mixed. One writer on Isaiah's death records a tradition that is common among the Jews towards the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD. According to this tradition, "Isaiah suffered martyrdom in the heathen reaction which occurred under King Manasseh...because of certain speeches concerning God and the Holy City which the prophet's contemporaries alleged were contrary to the law."<sup>112</sup> The alleged offence was that the prophet said he had seen Jehovah, and for this he ought to die, in accordance with the Law of Moses (Exod. 33: 20), "no man shall see me and live."

Commenting on the issue, Halley notes: "...A tradition in the Talmud, which was accepted as authentic by many early Church Fathers, states that Isaiah resisted Manasseh's idolatrous decrees, and was fastened between two planks and "sawn asunder", thus suffering a most horrible death."<sup>113</sup> Both Jewish and Christian traditions state that he was put inside a hollow tree and killed by being sawed in half. This legendary account, originating perhaps in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC, according to some interpreters, is no doubt what is behind the curious statement in Hebrews 11:36-37: "...Some were sawn asunder." This is the view of one scholar:

The circumstances which render the supposition probable that he lived under Manasseh, and that he was put to death by him by being sawn asunder, are the following: The fact which has been stated above that he lived to complete the record of the reign of Hezekiah, and of

course survived him, and the testimony of the Jewish writers...Josephus indeed, does not expressly state that he was slain by Manasseh, but he gives an account of the reign of Manasseh which renders it probable that if Isaiah were then alive he would have been put to death. Thus he says that "he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for every day he slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflown with blood."<sup>114</sup>

Robinson also mentions that the Jewish Mishna (the first part of the Talmud) states that Manasseh slew Isaiah, concluding, "Justin Martyr (AD 150) in his controversial dialogue with the Jew, Trypho, reproaches the Jews with the accusation, "whom ye sawed asunder with a wooden saw."<sup>115</sup> And even if he died a martyrs' death, it was in line with his call, as indicated by one scholar: "Prophet Isaiah was called to suffer and bear the cross."<sup>116</sup> It must however be indicated here that this supposition is confirmed, not by any direct historical record in the OT, but by all the direct and indirect accounts which have been handed down through various Jewish traditional sources.

Nevertheless, Barnes notes that the character of Manasseh was such as to make it probable that if Isaiah lived at all during his reign, he would seek his death. In 2 Kings 21:16, it is said of him that he "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another."<sup>117</sup> The prophet, most likely suffered a brutal death at the hands of this wicked king. This, notwithstanding, it is

the kind of life Isaiah lived that marks him out as an outstanding figure whose ministry is worthy of emulation.

### **Chapter summary**

Whether Isaiah was martyred because as God's prophet, he stood for the truth and opposed a tyrant king, as some Jewish tradition believes, or not, is not revealed by scripture. But one thing is sure: divine ministry is for life and death. Therefore, the sooner every believer and minister of God who wants to remain faithful to the end settles this in his/her heart the better. We should pray and hope for long life but also be prepared for death by any means at any time, as the Lord permits. For now, we would look at what lessons we could gather from the life and ministry of Isaiah as a pacesetter.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **LESSONS FROM ISAIAH**

For a person whose ministry spans for about fifty-three years or more, Isaiah no doubt sets the pace as the candidate for the longest serving prophet of God award in biblical Israel. To say that some excellent footprints to the fulfillment of God's vision were laid by the experiences of this faithful Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, is an understatement. He was, and still is, and will continue to remain as one of the pacesetters of divine ministry. The first seven chapters of his book have revealed a lot on how the prophet was transformed by the vision he received. Those chapters demonstrate important character traits needed for effective transformation in ministry. These virtuous qualities should be seen as the spices of a successful ministry or the ingredients needed to ensure excellence in any transformational service for God.

The following are a few of the traits that are revealed in Isaiah's steps to transformation and service from which some lessons might be deduced:

#### **Be expectant of God at any moment**

Being in a state of expectancy of God's encounter will help to catch the vision and act on it as soon as the opportunity comes your way. A lot of people are taken by surprise and unable to seize life or ministry opportunities

because most do not expect such to come their way. The Parable of the Ten Virgins shows the situation of those who are expectant of opportunities and those who are not. The response of Isaiah to the question “whom shall I send...” is enough to show that he was always expecting such an opportunity or door to open so that he could enter. Thus he responded: “Send me...” Habakkuk is one of the prophets who really demonstrated a state of expectancy for God when he said: “I will stand on my watch and see what answer the Lord will give to my questions...” (Hab. 2:1).

### **Demonstrate faith in the word of God**

What would need most when a door of opportunity to experience God is opened before you? Simple! Just a bold forward step, that’s all. But such a step can only be taken based on one of the most essential spices or ingredients of life called *faith*. It is described as “The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report...For without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to Him must acknowledge that He exists...” (Heb. 11:1-6). Indeed, faith is needed for any fruitful walk with God as stated by the writer of the book of Hebrews.

None of the Hebrew prophets showed any wavering of faith in their long walk with God. They saw faith as the lifeblood of the prophetic ministry to which they were called. All the miracles they performed, the extreme levels of opposition they offered to all the negative practices of the people they were called to serve, and the predictions of both impending gloom and future glory, were based solely on the

extraordinary levels of faith these prophets had in their God. Sometimes, just a single act of faith or response of faith can make a whole lot of difference in a person's life and walk with God forever. This is what may be described as "the leap of faith!" Everyone who wants to experience transformation from God needs to show a leap of faith at a certain point of time as Isaiah did when he encountered God in the vision. When it happens, be prepared to act!

### **Be willing to do what God says**

A discussion on Isaiah cannot be completed without considering the very excellent example the prophet showed in his walk with God. Having a heart of willingness is another important trait needed by a person for every service of God. There is a saying that "where there is a will there is a way." The Scriptures correctly put it in Isaiah's own way, "If you are willing and...you will eat of the fruit of the land..." (Isa. 1:18). Indeed, Isaiah is one of the Bible characters who demonstrated willingness to the divine call when the Holy One engaged him. His preparedness to go wherever he was sent and the span of years he ministered cannot be overemphasized. He was willing to confront all manner of people; the kings of the Southern Kingdom within whose period he ministered as well as the people of Judah especially those that demonstrated disobedience to the stipulations of God's covenant.

As a descendant of Abraham, Prophet Isaiah might have learned about the heart of willingness that the great ancestor revealed and had desired to emulate his excellent example. Tracing the movements of Abraham

shows how this patriarch demonstrated absolute willingness in following God. He was willing to pitch tent at any place in the Promised Land as commanded by God. This is revealed in his next move after the death of his father. From Haran, Abraham's first stop mentioned by scripture, when he enters Canaan, is Shechem (12:4). The fact that Abraham settled here means that he might have been attracted by the fairness of the land with respect to agriculture. But the openness of the region of Samaria to warfare, and its rottenness by way of its widespread idolatrous practices might have compelled Abraham, a worshipper of the true God, to leave this place and travel further down south. From Shechem, Abraham traveled to Bethel. Then he moved his tent to the east of Bethel. Abraham's stay between Bethel and Ai might have been due to the economic opportunities in the area, since the place is a highly settled region.

Desiring to live in peace, Abraham moved towards the Negev through cities such as Mizpah, Ramah, Gibeah, and Jerusalem. It might be during this time that he heard about Melchizedek, the king of Salem (the original name of Jerusalem) also called the king of peace. Probably, that was the time he became acquainted with this king, for, at a later time when Abraham was returning from a fight with the five kings that attacked Sodom and Gomorrah (chap. 14), Melchizedek came to meet him and served him food after which Abraham also paid a tithe of what he had to him (14:18). Abraham made all these journeys as part of his willingness to obey the command of God to explore the Promised Land (Gen. 13:14-17).

In line with Abraham's obedience, Prophet Isaiah demonstrated his willingness to travel the length and breadth of the Southern Kingdom to bring God's warning to the people. Therefore, any person who surrenders to the call of God like Isaiah is likely to be posted to different places to minister to people. When such a person obeys God's instructions and walks faithfully in the specified area of service without giving up, he/she is likely to experience a tremendous expansion as happened in Isaiah's ministry.

### **Be careful of what you say**

Obviously, the proper use of the tongue brings life and lead to escape from calamity. If people shall use the tongue with a lot of circumspection, peaceful and fruitful life will be the result. The key thing here is that whatever results a person expects or hopes to see depends on how such a one uses the tongue. The Lord advises or encourages us to make the right choice by choosing life (Deut. 30:19-20). Making the right choice in life includes using the tongue rightly. That is, the ability to control the tongue is one of the clearest marks of wisdom (Prov. 10:19; 17:27; 21:23; Jam. 3:2). The contrast in the text is between the silent type of a person who chooses words well, and the fool whose opened mouth is full of mere chatter that turns out to be ruinous to himself (Prov. 18:7; Eccl. 10:12-14).

It is very apparent in the New Testament just as it is in the Old in general and the book of Proverbs in particular that the use of the tongue either produces life or destruction. The Lord Jesus himself, knowing the effects of the tongue, both positively and negatively cautioned that person should be

careful with the use of the tongue since everyone will give account for every loose word spoken (Matt. 12:37). Apostle Paul emphasizes what the writer of Proverbs 18:20-21 says when he mentions that it is with one's heart that he/she believes and is justified, and it is with the mouth that confession unto salvation is made (Rom. 10:10).

Prophet Isaiah had to be consecrated by a touch at the lips before God commissioned him for His purposes. Christians in general have received a great responsibility in the proper use of the tongue. The power to pray for healing of the sick, bless God, wish people well, pull down satanic structures, and so on, are all invested in the believer's tongue in order for him/her to enjoy life and also radiate it. In the home, among the family, and in church, believers need to be extra careful in the use of their tongue. Depending on one's interest, he/she will reap the fruits of the use of his tongue. But, we are exhorted to be wise and use the tongue well to enjoy the blessings that life has to offer.

### **Be watchful; regularly wait on God**

A discussion on Prophet Isaiah can never be completed without sharing some thought on his passion for waiting on the LORD. It was one of the pivots of his exhortation to the covenant community; to wait on God in order to be renewed. It is thus rewarding for leaders to be prepared and consciously ask God to continuously renew them spiritually and lift them up (Ps. 57:10). In fact, all believers need to wait on God in order to renew our strength to do His work effectively as the Apostles did. Serious Christians are those to spend quality time to wait on the

LORD in order to renew their strength. They are able to continue in their Christian commitments without growing weak and never giving up in whatever they do. They are able to soar in spiritual things in order to achieve success even when the going becomes very challenging.

Contemporary believers also need clear visions of what God wants us to do. Like the Apostles, we need insight into scriptures to know what God wants us to do, or clear vision of God's plans for our lives and ministry. In fact, we need to ask God for insight, and direction into the issues of life (Isaiah 40:31; Lam 3:25-26). That is, we should be able to put away our old ideas and seek new ones through waiting on God. Some Christians hardly give priority to waiting on the Lord in order to enhance their spiritual growth and development. Such people are spiritually weak (Luke 10:38-41). But the good news is that the Lord has not given up on such weak Christians; He continues to draw up programs that will build capacity in them in order that they will become spiritually sensitive, effective, and fruitful. The believer needs to see God as a loving Master who only wants the good of His people. It is the example that Christ left believers. Being a disciple is a firm decision to follow the Lord without turning back.

As a result, the Holy Spirit grants believers the ability to emulate Christ in order that we would gradually be transformed to the image of God (John 21:25). If we (believers) continue to demonstrate watchfulness and an attitude of waiting in prayer, we will enjoy the best of the land according His word in Isaiah 1:18ff, for, "Faithful is He who has promised, who also will do" (1 Thess. 5:24).

Prophet Isaiah makes all believers to understand the need to ask God to continuously renew our strength so that we can be able to mount up like the eagle.

### **Application and conclusion**

If there is going to be any record of the most successful prophets of Israel prior to the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prophet Isaiah would definitely be among the first. The extent of his ministry and his success all hinge on the encounter he had with God when he saw a vision of the glorious Eternal King. So great was the transformation of the prophet that he was prepared to face any situation, because he had been called and ordained for such.

Being so mindful of God's call, Prophet Isaiah endeavored to remain faithful to it even if it meant death to him. This is precisely what happened; although the hearers of his messages were reluctant to forsake their evil ways and return to God, he nevertheless continued faithfully as instructed by God in the vision till the end. In the end, he suffered martyrdom for his faith at the hands of a wicked King, Manasseh, because the prophet had dared to criticize his reign of terror, according to Jewish tradition.

His obedience to God, burden for his nation, and love for even the Gentile world marks him out as a Universal Prophet indeed. Robinson writes that no prophet, except perhaps Jeremiah, felt more keenly than Isaiah the cost of genuine patriotism, or the burden which all true prophets in every age are forced to bear.<sup>118</sup> One of the main marks of Isaiah's faithfulness is the blessing of eternal life that the

expected Messiah, Jesus Christ brought to the entire world through His message of transformation.

To what extent are you transformed for the service and glory of God? Clearly, the vision of God can really serve a good purpose to everyone who receives it just as it happened to Prophet Isaiah. No doubt, ministries of the prophets are still important because the world needs people who can speak for God and bring people to obedience to the will of God. Though there may be ministers today who do not qualify to be prophets of God due to their evil deeds, there are also some faithful ones. Ministers of God should bear in mind that they are doing the work of a prophet and must therefore do it faithfully. You should be prepared to pursue a vision!

## PART III

# LET US LEARN FROM **DANIEL**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

The story of Daniel reveals that God is in control of events in the life of man. In Psalm 137:1-4, the Psalmist questions how possible it would be for one to rejoice under certain circumstances. It reads:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows nearby we hung up our harps. Those who captured us told us to sing; they told us to entertain them: "Sing us a song about Zion." How can we sing a song to the Lord in a foreign land? (Good News)

The book of Daniel in the OT provides information about many of the events that took place during the Neo-Babylonian captivity of the Judeans. In particular, the book tells of the role that Daniel, the prophet, played in captivity and the impact that he made on the culture of the people. The importance of the impact of Daniel in the life of the captors, the captives, and the remnant that returned to Judah and the successive generations, and Bible believers in general cannot be over-emphasized. This shows that it is possible for any believer of God to rise up to any occasion provided the person is willing and ready and available to God. The one who trusts in God and avails himself to the Almighty can definitely "sing the Lord's song in the strange land." This is what the subsequent discussion is about; it's

about being transformed to make the required impact as purposed by the only True God.

### **Background of the Book**

The book of Daniel is named after its main character, the Prophet Daniel. Various views have been proposed regarding the authorship of the book. Traditional scholars hold the view that Daniel is the author of the book that bears his name. Many reasons have been given for this position. For example, one source states: "The fact that Daniel speaks in first-person narrative from chapter 7 to the end naturally suggests that he is the author."<sup>119</sup> Additionally, evidence from the book itself (Chap. 9:2; 10:2), the New Testament (Matt. 24:15), and Jewish and Christian tradition, point to the "prophet" Daniel as its author.<sup>120</sup>

Another scholar provides a stronger argument as proof of Daniel's authorship. He states: "The author of Daniel shows such an accurate knowledge of 6<sup>th</sup> Century events as would not have been open to a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century writer..."<sup>121</sup> Also, Daniel 7:2-6, 28; 8:1, 15; 9:2; 10:2 provide the internal evidence for Daniel's authorship. Still another scholar mentions that the genuineness of the book was sanctioned by Christ in Matthew 24:15-16, while, "It was so accepted by Jews and early Christians."<sup>122</sup> However, the Jewish canon places Daniel among the Kethubim or Hagiographa, rather than among the prophets.<sup>123</sup>

But critics, most likely liberals, provide a strong challenge to the view that Daniel authored the book. The great majority of them provide a late date, far beyond the

exilic period as the most probable period of writing the book. Many reasons have been assigned for this view. Some argue that 11:29 is a “prophecy after the fact” because it accurately describes the second campaign of Antiochus in 167.<sup>124</sup> Others who still hold the Inter-testamental period as the most probable date of writing argue that the book was “intended to encourage the resistance movement against the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes.”<sup>125</sup> Many critics also consider the book to be fiction.

Others, including many modern scholars are still divided on the issue of both the author and date of writing. Longman and Dillard also mention that it is becoming increasingly popular to date the stories of the first six chapters to an earlier period, usually sometime during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC. According to them, “The predominant signal for this dating is the positive attitude toward monarchs like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4. It is rightly pointed out that such a positive attitude toward a Gentile ruler would not have been appropriate for the time period of the persecutions of Antiochus IV.”<sup>126</sup>

Thus, while the traditional view provides strong internal evidence from both the Old and New Testaments, there are other reasons for moving away from a 6<sup>th</sup> Century date for the book. For example, according to a team of scholars such exact prophecy is not possible, and there are the supposed historical errors.<sup>127</sup> But other scholars have a contrary view. One of such sources commented thus: “If the book is not exactly what it professes to be, how can we think that God could be a party to the deception?”<sup>128</sup>

### **Date of writing of the Book**

The issue of the date of writing of the book of Daniel is tightly connected to various positions of scholars on the authorship. According to traditionalist and conservatives, the date of the book which is set in the context of world events is from 605 BC to the mid-530 BC, that is, from the year that Nebuchadnezzar carried Daniel and his three friends into exile to Babylon (1:1) until the third year of Cyrus (10:1). This position is also held by some contemporary scholars as may be deduced from this statement by some scholars, "The events of the book of Daniel are clearly set against the background of the sixth century BC"<sup>129</sup>

But very many scholars contend that the position of the conservatives and majority attributes the date of writing of the book to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. They date the book of Daniel to the period of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The reason for targeting this date and the precision of it are both derived from chapter 11 of the book. They argue that the book accurately reflects events that took place in the year 168 BC, and therefore, it is supposed that the book was written soon after that date. Since Epiphanes died in 164 BC, they propose that the book would have been written before that time. In chapter 11, Daniel discusses a number of kings whom he does not name but refers to as "king of the north" and "king of the south." Some of the scholars who support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century dating of the book contend that Daniel fits into the category of apocalyptic literature.<sup>130</sup>

As it turns out, however, the details presented in this chapter coincide quite closely with the history of the Middle East from the time of Alexander the Great in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC (11:3-4) through the time of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC (vs. 21ff). The book must have been completed shortly after the capture of Babylon. It records the transfer of authority from Babylon to Persia, but is completely silent on the decree of Cyrus permitting the return of the Jews (538 BC).<sup>131</sup> The aforementioned positions notwithstanding, the debate still goes on in the hope that newer evidence may help to establish the facts about the book. This view is also supported by some scholars who posit that it is not possible to prove or disprove definitively a 6<sup>th</sup> Century date for the book and its contents. For example, some argue that the best that can be done is to show that the contents of the book and a 6<sup>th</sup> Century date are reconcilable. According to them, “the lack of positive evidence is the result of a dearth of detailed knowledge of the period in question and the nature of harmonization.”<sup>132</sup>

### **Plan of the Book**

The book of Daniel exhibits such variety of genre and language that the issue of the original unity of the book has been debated for a long time. While some scholars disagree on the unity of the book others have defended it. Both traditionalists and conservatives are firm in their position on the unity of the book. Those who support unity of the book, including tradition, do so because of their concern to attribute the authorship of the whole book to the prophet Daniel, and they are supported occasionally by non-

conservative scholars.<sup>133</sup> This does not mean that the book was written and completed over a single time period. Rather, it is probable that Daniel could have written the book in parts throughout his life. The time span “could conceivably account for the variety within the book, but even this variety could have arisen in the process of writing the book at one period of time, say, at the end of his life.”<sup>134</sup> One source notes: “Critics and most modern commentators believe that the different attitudes toward pagan kings in the first and second halves of the book demonstrate that the first part is written in an earlier period than the second half.”<sup>135</sup> These arguments notwithstanding, the Jewish canon places Daniel among the Kethubhim or Hagiographa, rather than among the prophets.

### **Purpose and Message of the Book**

The book of Prophet Daniel was written in Aramaic, or Chaldee, from chapters 2:4 to 7:28. This language was both the commercial and diplomatic (or official) language of communication at the time. The rest of the book was in Hebrew. According to one Bible commentator, this is what might be expected in a book written for Jews living among Babylonians, and also contains copies of official Babylonian documents in their original Babylonian language.<sup>136</sup> The fact is that the precise dating and the specific and well-known names of kings and places all signals that the author intends to impart historical information to the reader.

One team of scholars mention that in the narratives of events in the lives of Daniel and his friends, the emphasis is on living a life of faith in an increasingly hostile world.

But they believe that the sovereignty of God is the core of this book. They write that God's sovereignty is seen in his ability to prosper or deliver those who are true to their faith convictions, and that the Israelites were to live out their faith in a Gentile world. They had to count on the sovereignty of God to sustain them generation by generation. They also had to trust the power of God to control the flow of world empires as they rose and fell.<sup>137</sup>

According to one Bible commentator, the basic theme of this work is the overruling sovereignty of the one true God, who condemns and destroys the rebellious world power and faithfully delivers His covenant people according to their steadfast faith in Him.<sup>138</sup> His view concerning God's sovereignty and judgment over all kingdoms is also supported by other excellent Bible commentators like VanGemeren, Hill and Walton.<sup>139</sup> Combining their views, the most probable theme for the book would be "The sovereignty of God over the affairs of men in all ages." Thus, the book of Daniel is intended to reveal the supremacy of God over the powers of all nations (2:47; 4:37; 6:26)

The book contains a variety of messages right from the first to the last chapter, presented in different genres. Here too, one team of scholars see the book of Daniel as presenting a clear theological message that rings through every chapter of the book, "God is sovereign, He overrules and eventually will overcome human evil."<sup>140</sup> Clearly, the book can be divided on the grounds of theology into two parts. The first half reveals God intervening in the historical circumstances of the characters, delivering them from danger and even using their distress to further their

own careers and power as is seen in Daniel 6. In the second half of the book, Daniel powerfully paints evil's potency by showing the people of God as they live under oppression and even persecution. But as one source puts it: "God's deliverance is pictured here as being more a future hope than a historical reality."<sup>141</sup>

Many scholars agree that the book has a lot of apocalyptic prophecies, i.e. mysteries and revelations. One of them identifies the book as an historic apocalypse in which heavenly messengers revealed hidden secrets about history, the final judgment, and God's intervention to save the righteous at the end of age.<sup>142</sup> Others posit that the book of Daniel as a whole is often characterized as an apocalyptic prophecy, and consider it as the only non-disputed apocalypse in the Old Testament. They see the latter half of the book of Daniel as clearly exhibiting most of the traits that are associated with apocalyptic literature intended to encourage the faithful in a time of distress.<sup>143</sup>

### **Breakdown of the book according to chapters**

A team of scholars have presented these excerpts as the message revealed in the various chapters of the book:

- Chapter 1 shows God honoring the act of faith of Daniel and his friends.
- In chapter 2 the sovereignty of God is evident in his providing Daniel with the interpretation of the dream and thereby sparing their lives.
- In chapter 3 we see God honoring an act of faith with deliverance. God may choose to provide deliverance or he

may not, but his sovereignty is in no way threatened if he should not choose to deliver in any single instance.

- Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate God's power and control over the Gentile kings and kingdoms.
- In chapter 6 we see conspiracy against Daniel that was focused on his religious practice. Here it is the gentile king who affirms the sovereignty of Daniel's God.
- Chapter 7 shows clearly the perversity, especially of the fourth kingdom, and the hostility toward the godly. The emphasis is on the fact that after these pagan kingdoms, the kingdom of God is coming and will endure forever, verses 16-18, 27.
- Chapter 8 tells both the pride of the king and his program of persecution that make the Babylonians pale in comparison.
- Chapter 9 addresses the way in which Israel and her prophesied restoration fit into the four-kingdom framework. This also shows that, contrary to expectations of those returning from exile, things would get worse before they get better.
- Chapter 10-12 speak of the eventual end of gentile rule. Implicit in this, however, was the warning that there might be several periods of history that look like the end. It was not the task of the godly to know when the end was coming, but to persevere until the end that certainly would come in God's time.<sup>144</sup>

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter was an introduction to the book of Daniel. It was dedicated to issues such as the background, plan, purpose, and message of the book. Attempt has been made at a chapter by chapter breakdown of the book. The next chapter would consider the circumstances that led to the fall of both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and how Daniel ended up in exile.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND OF DANIEL'S CAPTIVITY

Babylon was an old city, established soon after the flood of Noah's time. It was constructed by a great-grandson of Noah, known as Nimrod, who also established Erech, Akkad, and Calneh in Shinar (Gen. 10:8-10). Babylon might have come from "Babel the name given to the place where the people who survived the flood were believed to have started building a city with a tower, with the hope of reaching to the heavens..." (Gen. 11:1-9). Cornwell says that Babylon means "*gate of the god*," and was the center of civilization for nearly two thousand years. He also claimed that Babylon, the Greek form of the Hebrew word *bavel* is closely allied and probably derived from the Akkadian *babilu* or "*gate of God*."<sup>145</sup>

Over the years the city of Babylon became an empire and is believed to have been one of the greatest during the period of King Hammurabi. It is believed to have been one of the ancient centers of learning, commerce, and various religious beliefs. Writing is believed to have originated from the ancient Babylonian empire. Although it lay in ruins for many centuries, archaeologists have now uncovered much of the city. Cornwell confirms this when he writes:

Archaeologists have found hundreds of thousands of cuneiform tablets in Babylonia and as far away as

Egypt...They include historical and legal documents; letters; economic records; literary and religious texts; and studies in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and magic.<sup>146</sup>

### **Background of the Assyrians**

But the ancient old Babylonian empire might have given way to others like the Hittites, Hurranes, and Akkadians, during the peak of their existence. Assyria is the last of the empires that ruled the world before the coming of the Neo-Babylonians, who are believed to have arisen from the ancient Babylonian empire, hence the name. The Assyrians were a group of people who lived in the north-eastern part of Asia, beyond River Euphrates, but along River Tigris in the Fertile Crescent. They came into prominence probably around 885 BC. One of their major cities, probably their capital city, was Nineveh. Under kings like Ashurbanipal, Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V, and Sargon II, the Assyrians gained world-wide control and ruled the world.

The Assyrians were known to be very wicked people, especially in terms of the way they treated their captives. They could skin their captives alive, sometimes behead them and use their skulls as a pile to decorate their streets. Under King Tiglath-pileser (also called Pul, 2 Kings 15:9; cf. vs. 29), the Assyrians attacked the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Menahem, and put it under a heavy tax. But under Shalmaneser V, the Assyrians attacked the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722/721 BC, and completely defeated Israel, whose king was Hoshea. The inhabitants of

the Northern Kingdom were taken into captivity, thus ending the existence of the nation (2 Kings 17:1-40). They were deported and settled in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor river, and in the towns of the Medes.

As part of the policies of the Assyrians, they would deport their captives into different lands that they had conquered, and also bring different people from different geographical areas and language backgrounds to settle on the emptied land. By so doing they created mixed cultures and thus prevented their captives from ever returning to their land or existing as a distinct nation. In the case of the Northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians deported them to different places beyond the Tigris river and in their place transported people from Babylon, Cuthah, Hamath, and others who were most likely the Amorites, Ammonites, and Moabites, etc., to settle in Samaria and other parts of the land of Israel.

The captivity of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians was not a surprise to the people. This is because the Lord God sent His prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and Jonah to warn them of their moral and spiritual corruption; the sins of adultery, idolatry, worldliness, and insensitivity to the plight of the poor and weak in the society. The Prophet Amos particularly revealed the wretchedness of Israel. Socially, there was a misuse of authority as the rich oppressed the poor. The government was corrupt because the rich often bribed the officials. They were addicted to materialism, and could spend a lot of time at parties. Religiously, their worship was very ceremonial; they didn't really have it in their hearts. The people were sexually

immoral, and were deeply practicing idolatry including calf-worship. Others were also very complacent in their spiritual life, and nauseatingly arrogant.

Therefore, scripture says that God sent His prophets to warn them of the consequences of their sins. But the people disobeyed the prophets, despised them, and never heeded their warnings (2 Chron. 36:15ff). Most likely, the warnings that God sent through His prophets were made ineffective by the work of some false prophets among the people who were giving them false hope and making them feel that all was well, (Micah 2:6-11; 3:5ff). In spite of all this, the Lord had great compassion for His people so He was calling them to repentance and reconciliation. Hosea's marriage, the unfaithfulness on the part of his wife leading to divorce, and God's call to the prophet to take back his wife (Hosea 1-3), was a typical illustration of God's desire for His people to repent and return to Him, but they refused.

In the end, Israel received what they deserved as a result of disobedience to the stipulations of the covenant and lack of respect for God's servants that were sent to them. God did to the people exactly as He planned, making them aware that they would go into captivity and never return. But the end of the Assyrians was soon to follow as prophesied by the prophet Nahum (chap. 1-3).

### **The Neo-Babylonian captivity**

But the baton of the political system of the world which was dominated by the Assyrians was soon to change hands. The Assyrians domination came under the attack of the invigorated old Babylonian Kingdom, appropriately called

the Neo-Babylonians, with Babylon as their capital. Under its powerful king, Nabopolazzar, the Neo-Babylonians are believed to have united some cities in the region of the East around the river Euphrates. The Babylonians are believed to have been very polytheistic, worshipping many gods; the chief god being Marduk, the god of the city of Babylon. "Marduk was represented by a dragon in the artwork that decorated the city. Festivals were held throughout the year in honor of specific gods to assure their favor."<sup>147</sup> The people, together called the Chaldeans, now directed their attention towards the west, and were able to defeat all they attacked on their way.

In 626 BC Nabopolazzar was enthroned as king of Babylon as the people declared their independence from the waning Assyrian Empire. Allying themselves with the Medes to the east, they began testing the strength of the Assyrians. By 612 BC the capital city of Nineveh fell. Their most decisive battle was fought against the Assyrians at Carchemish, in 609 BC in which they finally overthrew the Assyrians who were believed to have been supported by Pharaoh Neco (or Necho) of Egypt. With the collapse of the central government at Nineveh came the final fall of the Assyrian empire after their defeat by the Neo-Babylonians in the battle at Carchemish. Nabopolazzar, the king of Babylon, might have died within this period and his able son, and field general, Nebuchadnezzar, occupied the throne in 609 BC and continued the conquest to completion. Clearly then, the historicity of Babylon and its kings is (therefore) no more in doubt; "...Nebuchadnezzar was a real king."<sup>148</sup>

After the defeat of the Assyrians, the Babylonians assumed control of all the territories forfeited by the Assyrian capitulation, including Judah. Nebuchadnezzar continued exerting pressure on this southern region of Palestine. The land of Judah had only been previously saved from his world-wide conquering campaign as a result of the death of his father, which caused his return to Babylon. The king of Judah was spared only on the grounds of obedience and submission to Nebuchadnezzar and payment of tribute to him.

By this time, events in this Southern Kingdom of the former united nation of the Israelites had moved from bad to worse. Socially, there was complete injustice in the land of Judah. The class system was very high, with the rich exploiting the poor to a very great extent. The Bible refers to the rich buying the poor for a pair of sandals. Politically, there were lots of changing events. The blood sisters of the Judean's, the Israelites, had been taken away into captivity over a century before this period by the powerful Assyrians. Religiously, the people of Judah had drifted from the covenant stipulations that Yahweh gave to their forefathers and which they all agreed to obey (Exod. 24:1-8). By this time, the people had drifted from Yahweh, and had moved so much into idolatry that, the Bible mentions the worship of Molech and the astral deities as the order of the day.

King Josiah, who ruled Judah between 630 and 612 BC undertook a great reformation in Jerusalem as mentioned in 2 Kings 23:1-28. Josiah was a good king and was successful because he received a lot of support from advisors, like the prophet Jeremiah. His attempt to reform

the people by reversing some of the wicked and adulterous practices of his predecessors, King Manasseh and Amon, did little to really turn the people's hearts to God. King Josiah's reforms could not bring the people back to total obedience to Yahweh, because it is most likely the heart of most of them were not really reformed. The king only managed to reinstitute some of the temple ceremonies and sacrifices, and destroyed all the high places that were erected by Manasseh, but the reforms could not turn the heart of the people completely to God.

Quiet unfortunately, King Josiah's reforms came to an abrupt end because he suffered death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo, when he tried to prevent the latter from going to support the Assyrians against the Babylonians (2 Chron. 35:20). After his death, the people enthroned Jehoahaz, the second son of Josiah, but his period as king was very short. He tried to rebel against Pharaoh Neco after just three months, and was caged and taken into Egypt as a captive. Then his senior brother, Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim), the first son of King Josiah, was put on the throne. He ruled for a period of eleven years, but became disobedient to Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled.

The prophets sent by God were rejected by both the people and most of their kings. The records of 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 tell of how the people refused and instead killed some of the prophets, persecuted and ridiculed others in order to provoke God to anger. For example, Jeremiah was preaching submission to Nebuchadnezzar because he saw him as God's instrument to punish the disobedience

of Judah. That is, Babylon is seen here as 'an antagonist in Israel's political life and is perceived as a partner and an antagonist worthy of Yahweh.'<sup>149</sup> But King Jehoiakim refused to listen and on some occasions, burnt the letters that the prophet wrote through Baruch, his secretary, to the king. The king even went to the extent of mistreating the prophet by throwing him into prison many times, and ordering his beating, but Jeremiah never gave up (Jer. 37 and 38).

On many occasions, the prophet would weep for the sins of his people and also because of the coming judgment. Apparently, he saw his role as one that had been called by God to stand in the gap and warn the people concerning the punishment of God for their disobedience. Also, the words of warning by Prophet Jeremiah were nullified by some false prophets who preached peace and prosperity to the people. For example, after the first deportation, the Lord revealed to Prophet Jeremiah to write to the captives that the captivity would last for 70 years. But some false prophets in Jerusalem, like Pashur and Hananiah (Jer. 28), were preaching that the captivity would be very short and that those that had been in captivity would return very soon. At some point in time, they saw Egypt as a possible defender against any invasion.

Therefore Jehoiakim was torn between obedience to Nebuchadnezzar and aligning with Egypt to reset against the Neo-Babylonians. He decided for the latter, and the consequences were disastrous. King Nebuchadnezzar first came and took him, (King of Judah) captive to Babylon. To demonstrate his dominance over Jerusalem after its fall, Nebuchadnezzar took many of Jerusalem's members of the

royal family, some of the wisest men, taking also with him the rich and skillful men mostly youthful and strong, and the most beautiful women, in all numbering about 10,000 to Babylon as captives.

Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians did not practice the policy of scattering their captives. They rather put all their captives in one place and granted them some limited rights to worship, provided that would not interfere with their religious worship. They never also put any different people on the land of the captives so that whenever the people would return home, they would come safely to their homeland. All the captives were sent to Babylon, and probably, other close cities. Among them were Daniel and some other Hebrew young men, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego. Yet, the last kings; Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, were not prepared to accept a vassal role. Their conspiracy and constant rebellion against the Babylonians over the next two decades did more harm to the Southern Kingdom of Judah than good. Other deportations followed later in 597 BC, and a final raid that eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC by the powerful Babylonian army.

Scripture reveals that the captivity of both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were God's acts of judgment and purification (2 Chron. 36:15-21)- judgment in the sense of God punishing the people for covenant disobedience and insensitivity to all his warnings sent through the prophets. It is not surprising therefore that the efforts of prophets like Isaiah, who prophesied earlier on,

Jeremiah, Habakkuk, etc., could not avert the wrath of God on the people, so the land was judged of her sins.

### **Chapter summary**

Our discussions in this chapter have centered on the events that led to the captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians, and that of the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians. Both events were as a result of the disobedience of God's covenant community, and the latter led to Daniel and many other princes being taken into Babylon as captives. Daniel had the opportunity to be chosen with other Jewish youngsters and youth of other nations in captivity to be trained for the service of the Babylonian king. The subsequent chapter would consider details of their transformation for the king's service.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CAPTIVITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF DANIEL

It is very important to discuss the life of Daniel and what he stood for as one of the captives in Babylon. The Bible gives brief information of Daniel's background, but is quite extensive on the events leading to his presence in exile. The name Daniel in Hebrew is *Daniyye'l*, which means either "God is Judge," "God is my Judge," or "a judge who pronounces judgment in the name of God."<sup>150</sup> His name probably is best translated "God is my Judge," and this fits in with the character of God described in the book. Daniel, no doubt, comes from the royal house of Judah. The Bible refers to him as a prince of Judah. It is very possible he was linked to the royal family of Judah (Dan. 1:3-4).

Daniel was born during the reign of the righteous king Josiah, but during his teens the Babylonian army took Daniel and many other Judeans into captivity during the reign of King Jehoiakim (605 BC; 1:1; 2 Kings 24:1; Jer. 25:1-12).<sup>151</sup> The book of Daniel tells of the period of Daniel's captivity as "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim." This date might be in the year of 605 BC, since Jehoiakim, who was also the first son of King Josiah, ascended the throne around 608 BC, after his junior brother, Jehoahaz, the second son of King Josiah, was taken captive by Pharaoh

Neco into Egypt after just three months on the throne as Josiah's successor (2 Kings 23:31-36).

### **Evidence of Daniel in captivity**

Sometimes, it appears quite hard to accept some of the events of the book of Daniel as historical. This is because of their nature of occurrence and accuracy of recording. An example is the animal-like behavior exhibited by King Nebuchadnezzar for a period of nearly eight years, the throwing of the three Hebrew young men into a burning furnace, the casting of Daniel into the den of lions, etc. Such stories make the book appear more fictitious than factual. But there are some archaeological evidence for the presence of Daniel and the three other Hebrew young men in Babylon, during the time of King Nebuchadnezzar and beyond. Though some might appear in slightly different forms from what is given in the Bible, the information about them appears the same.

In one such evidence, the names of Daniel and his colleagues were recorded in the works of A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, as; Belshazzar (Dan. 4:8), instead of Belteshazzar; Hananu, instead of Hanania; and Arid-Nabu, instead of Abednego.<sup>152</sup>

### **Processes that transformed Daniel**

One cannot benefit from the life of Daniel without studying the kind of transformation that he experienced. For a Christian, transformation is very important to understand in order to experience "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). It is the same for every

unit or organization; when the leader(s) set transformation in motion, it usually permeates the whole system. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon wanted to experience positive transformation of his kingdom. To achieve his aim, the king had to see to the transformation of selected young men including Daniel and his colleagues from young Hebrew slaves into prominent figures in the Babylonian Kingdom, to help in his service.

### **Transformed in spirit by God-consciousness**

Daniel's approach to life as a Hebrew even in captivity was enhanced by his self evaluation as a believer of Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, in the light of the life in Babylon, more so, as one that had been taken into the training of the king for his service. He weighed the kind of religious (or belief) system, the tradition, culture, etc., that he had been trained up with as an Israelite in the light of that of the Babylonians. That was really a good sense of evaluation and the decision and steps he took from these paid off. No wonder, "he purposed not to defile himself..." (Dan. 1:8). This is a clear demonstration of the God-consciousness in every believer and an activation of the spirit of self-evaluation in the person.

This is how the Spirit of God operates in a believer's life during situations of temptation and wrong-doing. The person is thus sensitized of what lies ahead in order to take a stand for God or otherwise. Any person desiring transformation through constant self evaluation will consider some of the questions set out here and react appropriately.

- Do I believe that I am important to God? How do I prove this? (2 Pet.1:9)
- Do I really know Jesus Christ as Lord whom I am willing to obey? What are my reason(s) for being a Christian? What have I counted as loss in my effort to know God?
- Comparing my love for God and that for other things, which of them means more to me and why?
- What do I have to do to reflect the love of God?
- Do I feed on God's "spiritual food" regularly? Am I growing normally in my Christian life in proportion to what I am being fed spiritually? Has my feeding on God's word caused me to have a passion for souls?
- By carefully analyzing the daily, weekly, and monthly schedules, how much time do I commit to my house chores, spiritual engagements, academic or professional duties, social activities, etc.? Do I see a proper balance in my commitment to these areas? If not, how do I hope to improve upon it?
- What might be the reason God put me in a particular ministry area?
- Am I concerned about other people's lives?
- In what ways can I demonstrate Christianity as the solution to the needs of others?
- How sure am I that my service to God will stand the test of fire when the Lord returns?

Through regular self-evaluation such as providing answers to questions raised above, the believer activates the God-consciousness in him/her and makes an effort to improve upon his/her spiritual formation. Such regular

considerations might have precipitated the resolve in Daniel not to defile his being with anything, including the king's food and drinks.

### **Transformed in body by a healthy eating habit/ lifestyle**

As part of his plans to govern the kingdom and establish himself on the throne, King Nebuchadnezzar decided to select some of the young people from the nations he had conquered and train them for his service. The Bible records that among the people that were selected there were Hebrew young princes. During the period of learning of these selected young men, the king prescribed a special meal plan for them. They were supposed to enjoy the kinds of food, drinks, and probably some form of entertainment like music that was prescribed by the king. It is very likely that the king wanted his servicemen to become as healthy as he was in order to execute their duties with all the vigor required.

Moreover, the king wanted his service personnel to look smart and handsome in appearance and reflect the splendor that he exerted. It may also be that the king believed his kind of food could enhance the learning abilities of these young men. One writer mentions that in Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, and Canaan, gods and humans alike tried to gain advantage over others by following prescribed rituals.<sup>153</sup> Whatever the reason may be, one should not doubt the possibility of the spiritual effect (or influence) of the king's food on these young men. That is: "Since food and drink were offered to idols, the association with idolatry may have made the food unclean."<sup>154</sup>

The relationship that exists between the kinds of food and drink one takes and its spiritual effect on the person was well known in those days. As a young man from a Jewish background, Daniel had been taught from the Torah how certain foods were detestable to God (Yahweh) and he might have been told the reasons for God's rejection of certain foods and drinks; that they could defile a person (Lev. 11:1-47). So Daniel might have remembered these and realized that these kinds of food could defile him and make him detestable before his God. Butler agrees when he writes: "To share in such a feast was, according to an eternal principle, the same as worshipping the idol."<sup>155</sup>

This could also imply that the king's food would open him up to the influences of the gods of the Neo-Babylonians. There is the popular cultural belief that food which was prepared for the kings of Babylon were first presented to the gods as sacrifices before they were given to the kings. Daniel might have known all this, so he purposed not to defile himself by not eating the prescribed food (Dan. 1:8). To achieve his aim, he pleaded for a vegetarian diet for himself and his other Hebrew colleagues from Ashpenaz, chief of the king's court officials. One source notes: "Fearing defilement from eating heathen food, they persuaded their dean to let them have simple vegetables instead of the food from the king's table, sprinkled by the blood of idol sacrifice."<sup>156</sup> The prescription of only vegetables is believed to be one of the bases for vegetarian diet in society over the years. Though Ashpenaz feared the consequences of a negative outcome, he reluctantly agreed because God granted Daniel favor before him (Dan. 1:3-14).

At the end of the diet test, Daniel and the other Hebrew young men on the vegetarian diet were discovered to be healthier, stronger and better nourished than those on the king's meal plan, so they were left out of the king's prescription. Daniel proved to the chief court official, and most likely to all who knew of his request, that his choice of food could produce better results than that which King Nebuchadnezzar and his people believed.

### **Transformed in mind through education**

Daniel became an excellent transformational leader and made a distinctive impact in both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires because he himself was transformed. As one who wanted to achieve his mission in captivity, he braced himself up to face and overcome any challenges in life. Thus, not only did he pursue the core value of obedience, loyalty, and live a morally righteous life, he also underwent vigorous training. This happened when the Babylonian king selected young men from various national, cultural, and religious backgrounds to be trained in the Babylonian language and literature that would make them very skillful and serviceable to the kingdom.

Therefore he wholeheartedly passed through King Nebuchadnezzar's training school. During the training session, he might have studied courses which might have helped him to be a utility person. Apparently, that would make Daniel abreast of issues not only of the Babylonian Kingdom but possibly the global village. The Babylonians are believed to have evolved a very high educational standard at that time. Their studies would definitely involve

areas like Chaldean Language, Science, Astrology, Dreams and Visions, Literature, Mathematics, Leadership, Human Resource Management, Music, and many more areas of scholarship. It is easy to conjecture that not many people would easily excel in this kind of studies if they did not come from that culture or were not linked to them.

No training for success comes easy, so Daniel might have psyched himself up to climb the ladder of life to the highest level. For three years, Daniel and three other young Hebrews were trained in all the wisdom of the Babylonians. One scholar writes about the nature of the education:

The training period for a diviner was longer and the diviner's principal literature was embodied in the omen texts...this literature represented over a millennium of observation various phenomena along with the favorable and unfavorable events they portended. In addition, there are instruction manuals and correspondence in which the reports of these specialists are given to the king.<sup>157</sup>

It is likely that some of Daniel's study mates were young people chosen from the Babylonian people, who already had insight into a lot of the areas. In spite of this, it is recorded that Daniel and his colleagues of Hebrew young men produced better outcomes at the end of the training. Their efforts reflect one of the most inspirational statements made in history: 'The heights that great people reach are not achieved by sudden flight, but they while their colleagues are asleep, will be toiling up in the night.' In any case, if there were no Babylonians in the group of the young men, which

is not probable, there is the possibility of so many young men selected from all the nations that the Babylonians had conquered.

But the Bible records that when they were tested by King Nebuchadnezzar himself, the Hebrews were found to be ten times better than all the rest (Dan. 1:17-20). In addition to this, Daniel is singled out as having special understanding of and insight into visions and all kinds of dreams. Daniel became an outstanding figure, standing tall among all his peers in terms of scholarly matters. Clearly, Daniel was transformed by acquisition of appropriate skills necessary for the fulfillment of his divine mandate in captivity. Through formal education organized for them, he was able to combine the acquired knowledge with the spiritual gifts God endowed him with to enhance his performance and achieve better results than his colleagues.

Without any controversy, Daniel's life and how he was able to fulfill his divine mandate is a strong case for training in ministry. The issue of how important education is to the equipping of any person for greater works will be treated in much detail in the life of Apostle Paul in Part IV of this book. But as a result of his excellent foundation, Daniel became a leader who discharged his administrative commitments with alacrity, and purposed never to do or accept anything mediocre (Dan. 6:3). With this mind-set and through hard work, success crowned all his efforts to the admiration of the king.

Not surprisingly, his colleague satraps, about 120 other officials/leaders of the Medo-Persian Kingdom (i.e., 124 minus Daniel and obviously, his other three Jewish

colleagues), envied his exceptional leadership performance and promotion by the king. Consequently, they tried to look for fault with his service in order to use such against him. But Daniel was so blameless in character and honest in his administrative assignment that after a thorough effort, his 'enemies' found no charge or error or fault in him.

### **Transformed in the area of ethical/moral life**

Morality and ethical issues in ministry to the Church, State, or any organization usually cover all aspects of a person's life. But three main areas are of utmost concern here are: love of money, sexual immorality, and desire for power. All these areas directly or indirectly confronted Daniel as a statesman, administrator, and above all, as a prophet of God to a heathen nation. But from all indications, he pursued the core value of moral uprightness in life at home, workplace, and everywhere.

With regard to money, it is observed that the OT Laws did not clearly specify means of care for the prophets like the priest. As a result the concept of a gift for the prophets became a normal practice (1 Sam. 9:7; 1 Kings 14:3; 2 Kings 4:42). In spite of the seeming challenges, the true ministers of God, whether priests or prophets, were not lovers of money (1 Sam. 12:3-4; 1 Kings 13:8, 2 Kings 5:15-16). It appears however that in other cultures there was a fixed fee for consultation for ministry and reward for special commitments (Num. 22:7; cf. 22:16). Such a practice no doubt became a recipe for corruption among the ministers. Due to the **love of money**, lust and greed, some people who could have been used by God fell into punishment.

Examples include Balaam (Num. 22:16-17), and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:19-20). Some people see the ministry not as a special assignment but only a means to live (Amaziah; Amos 7:12)

I have always wondered if Elijah was not faced with the temptation for sex during the period of his stay with the widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-24). Yes, he was, because scriptures say he was a man like us, a person of sensitivity and passion (James 5:17). Yet, there is no record of any wrong-doing to that effect. On the contrary, some of the ministers/prophets were morally weak and fell into **sexual immorality**. Examples are Ahab and Zedekiah, who were particularly condemned by Prophet Jeremiah (29: 20-23). As a sequel to their unacceptable lifestyle and clear compromise of their call to serve God and the covenant community, some of them became deceptive and resorted to prophesying lies (1 Kings 5:21-25; Jer. 14:14); employing divination (Jer. 23:13; Num. 24:1); providing false hope and security (Jer. 23:16); and devaluing the power of God's Word (Jer. 23:17). In the process, they incurred God's condemnation and suffered His wrath.

Many people fail to consider the huge responsibility that falls on the shoulders of those that accept to be God's spokespersons. While some people like Moses and Jeremiah weighed the 'call' and tried to give excuses in order to run away from such divine commission, others rather desired and entered the ministry with evil and ambitious motives. Their objectives included **desire for power** that would catapult them to fame, associated with recognition and a longing for exalted positions in society,

(Hananiah; Jer. 28:1ff). Some of the ministers fell for significance and power; Miriam and Aaron attacked Moses (Num. 12), Zedekiah stood against Micaiah (1 Kings 22; Jer. 28), but there is no indication that Daniel undermined anybody to gain any advantage or promotion.

The moral qualities of Daniel were so exceptional that at a point in time when his detractors were looking for opportunity to pin him to an unethical behavior they found none. Though some might conjecture that his situation as a possible eunuch is an advantage for insensitivity towards sex, his innocence with regards to money and struggle for power is not in doubt. In their disappointment, they decided to kick against Daniel's very foundation for his excellent life and performance. They plotted to trap him with a bait he would not be able to resist; his dependence on God (Dan. 6:3-5). That is, if he did communicate with his God instead of the 'king' of Babylon he would be punished.

Though Daniel was caught and punished because he could not compromise his faith and resist engaging God in worship, his faithfulness paid off. His ethically 'pure' life and his devotion to God in righteousness became his strong defense. However, the evil schemes of his detractors lured them to a shameful end.

### **Transformed through services to the state/society**

Foreign rulers in biblical times used to demonstrate their total authority over their captives in diverse ways. Most of the means were calculated to break the back of the captives and make them submit to their lordship, and one of the ways was to give their subjects new names. Somehow,

to change someone's name might be a show of authority over them and their destiny. Or that the change in their names might be considered to be part of the culture of that period to conceal the identity and historical background of slaves and captives. However, would Daniel and his companion submit so easily and accept this practice? In life, it is natural that some people find it very hard to submit to others because everybody has a sense of pride, more so when the person has a reason for feeling superior.

To a Hebrew, the question of submitting to any authority (or somebody) other than that of God was quite difficult, though not impossible. It only happens when God has allowed it and it's clearly understood as such. The reason is not far-fetched; they were the superior nation by virtue of their covenant with the God of heaven, who no doubt proved to be the Superior God among the gods. For Daniel and some of the Hebrew who were princes of Judah to submit to the dictates of a heathen king was a big blow of abasement. Until the fall of Jerusalem and their captivity, the Jews found it very hard to come to terms with the will of God in submitting to Nebuchadnezzar, even though some of the prophets, particularly, Jeremiah was preaching "submission to the Babylonians as part of God's divine plan and part of His process of transforming them" (Jer. 27:1-11).

As captives, Daniel and his companions had no alternative than to submit out of respect for God's word. By this time some of them were beginning to appreciate the will of God in their circumstance. It is their God who had allowed the Kingdom of Babylon to be in charge of the whole world at the time and had also allowed them to be taken into

captivity. This is one of the reasons why Daniel and some of the other captives could accept the change of their names. Their Hebrew names are given as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, but these were changed by the Babylonians into Belteshazza, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego respectively (Dan. 1:3-6). Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar, which means “protect his life.”

### **Chapter summary**

Daniel’s transformation for the king’s service was holistic. It involved many areas: he was transformed in spirit by God-consciousness, in body by a healthy eating habit or lifestyle, in mind through education, in the area of ethical or moral life, and also transformed for service to the state and society. For the results of such in-depth transformation process, we would continue with the discourse by looking at the impact Daniel made in captivity.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS OF DANIEL'S TRANSFORMATION**

The end product of Daniel's transformation is the great impact that he made on many areas of life even as a foreigner, a Hebrew in captivity, and also as a handsome young man. Through excellent services that Daniel was able to render to the state he remained useful throughout the period of Nebuchadnezzar and during the reign of some of his successors (Dan. 5:1ff). So immense was Daniel's impact that he rose through the ranks as a student to become the third in command before the overthrow of the Babylonian by the Medes and the Persians under King Cyrus, the Medo-Persian Emperor. Daniel served even in the first year of this king (Dan. 1:21). The discussions that follow look at some of the impact that Daniel made in captivity.

#### **Impact on the prophetic ministry in Babylon**

A lot can be said about the impact that Daniel made while in the service of Nebuchadnezzar and the successive kings. The period of service of Daniel is given as from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus (Dan. 1:21). During the reigns of all those kings, Daniel made tremendous impact. This might explain why he remained even after their demise because both the Babylonians and Persians could not deny the wisdom and power of Daniel's God. The areas of insight

into mysteries, revelations, and dreams are major ones that Daniel impressed his mentors. The belief in dreams, visions and special revelations is believed to have existed long before the advent of the Babylonians. The Bible records of how God appeared to the patriarch in such forms as vision and dreams. Mention can be made of Enoch and Noah who had intimacy with God possibly through such means (Gen. 5:22-24; 5-6:19).

But over the years it might have gained popularity such that special services were rendered in this area by certain people who had become experts in the field. Loewe and Blacker confirm that dreams were regularly employed as a method of divination by expert practitioners in them and that, 'there developed a class of persons, of whom Joseph and Daniel are the most obvious examples, who, on the one hand, were expert dreamers themselves, but were also experts in interpreting the dreams of others...The interpretation of dreams was a function of the distinct class of wise men.'<sup>158</sup> Indications are that dreams were considered important source of knowledge about the future, and was therefore a huge area of concern to many kings more than anybody else.

By the time of the Babylonians, belief in dreams had probably assumed a higher dimension. Therefore, they more than anybody else, were possibly very interested in the meaning of dreams. One scholar describes Babylonian dream beliefs thus:

In the Babylonian culture the attempt to find certainty amid uncertainty, to control or direct the threatening forces of

nature, to find one's way through the event of life, led to a wide array of techniques concerned with prophecy, magical control or propitiation, and trying to know the will of the gods. The kings hoped that a god would be on their side in battle, or would give them confidence by telling them in a dream that they would overcome their enemies.<sup>159</sup>

Though King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Assyria, Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, making Babylon the most powerful empire at the time, Egypt was still a strong nation, and there could always be the internal threat of this nation attempting to overthrow him. It therefore comes as no surprise for him to become preoccupied with a dream that could hold the secret to his success.

Unaware of God's activity, it is not surprising that Nebuchadnezzar could be so upset by a dream he had received that he would be awakened from his sleep. This was one of the most difficult tasks that the king might have given them, because they claimed it as a task that no human could perform (Dan. 2:10). It is more likely that they were known to the culture where dreams and visions were told, and then the misinterpretation would be given. So what the king was introducing was a new dimension all together. Yet, the king insisted on his demand and prescribed a death penalty if they failed (2:12).

It may be argued that he wanted to test them to know whether they really had insights into dreams and visions as they claimed or otherwise. The king may have assumed, and reasonably so, that if they really claimed knowledge in

hidden truth and interpretation of various signs and wonders, then they should be able to reveal hidden truth as well as interpret it. A team of scholars agree with the king's demand and expectation from the wise men because of what they profess to be, 'a class of experts claiming special knowledge for the interpretation of omens and prodigies and professing special techniques for provoking them as occasion required.'<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, it may be reasoned that the king was genuinely looking for a revision of what he dreamed because he might have forgotten. He was troubled that the people he so trusted as wise men were about to let him down. In the end their judgment was pronounced, death by execution.

Daniel intervened and proved equal to the task, if not beyond it. After asking for a period of time to seek the answer he wanted, and truly, after going into prayer with the support of his Hebrew colleagues, the dream and its interpretation were revealed to him. When Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar both the dream and its interpretation, the king's acceptance of the precision of the dream and his belief in the interpretation could be seen from his action, 'he fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor' (Dan. 2:46). The extent to which the king went, even ordering incense and an offering to be made to Daniel, demonstrated how he saw Daniel, most possibly, as 'a god in human flesh.'

But Bible scholars interpret the king's action in various forms. Some critics of the Bible may argue that the king was worshipping Daniel and that it was wrong for Daniel to have accepted it; others think otherwise. In support of the latter group, one scholar posits: "What he does recognize is

the superiority of Daniel's God over all the other gods of his pantheon, for Daniel's God is able to do what the gods of the Chaldean wise men could not do."<sup>161</sup> Whatever the interpretation given to it, the simple fact stands that Daniel gained respect in all the realm of King Nebuchadnezzar as one who could reveal hidden secrets. One source states: "Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, had to admit that the religious and intellectual system of Babylon was inferior: 'Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries...'"<sup>162</sup>

Another area of keen interest is Nebuchadnezzar's reference to Daniel's God as 'God of gods.' This clearly reveals the king's recognition of the supremacy of Daniel's God over all other gods, including the Babylonian deities. It demonstrated that, "Nebuchadnezzar was worshiping, though probably not really Daniel, but the God to whom Daniel gave all credit (cf. Acts 10:25; 14:13). He knew of this God only through Daniel, and it seemed appropriate to worship Him through the human instrument."<sup>163</sup> Daniel's impact in this area led the king to recognize Daniel's God as superior to all the other gods: "Surely your God is the God of gods..." (Dan. 2:47). This persuaded the king to promote Daniel both politically and religiously and he became the overseer of the wise men, and such a position indicates that, he showed himself superior to all of them, and so the king suited his future role to this superiority.<sup>164</sup>

In order for Daniel to have other opportunities to promote the extent of the power of his God, he needed to accept the promotion that came with his success. This was nevertheless going to open him up for far more greater

challenges as it was likely that the other wise men would find a way to also prove their worth. Needless to say, Daniel also had to regard his elevation by the king as a promotion from his God since he believed that only God could promote man. According to one scholar, Daniel's acceptance of the honors was not because of any value he placed upon them, as his original words to the king show. Rather it suggests an acknowledgement of the supremacy of the only true God-Daniel's God.<sup>165</sup>

Daniel made additional impact on Nebuchadnezzar that caused the king to confess praise and exaltation to the God that Daniel worships (Dan. 4:37). This was after Daniel's interpretation given to another dream that the king had had come to pass, exactly as he told it. The dream concerned the punishment that had been prescribed for Nebuchadnezzar as a result of his pride and belief in himself rather than acknowledging God as LORD. The king was told how he would be insane and taken away from men for a number of seven times: "...Let him live like the wild animals until seven times pass by for him" (Dan. 4:23).

The Bible says that this happened as Daniel told it to the king (Dan. 4:28-33). Many Bible scholars give various interpretations to this event which indeed happened to King Nebuchadnezzar though a lot of critics also deny it as historic. Some even argue that the king was converted as a result of the excellence of the interpretation and its impact on the king. But what has to be emphasized here is the impact that Daniel might have made on the king as a result of its fulfillment. Even before Daniel's interpretation, the king had admitted respect for Daniel: "...The spirit of the holy

gods is in you” (Dan. 4:9ff). Could there be a more excellent way for the king of the whole ruling empire of the Neo-Babylonians to express respect for a man than this? Yes, from that moment, Daniel was ‘both respected and feared by Nebuchadnezzar.’<sup>166</sup> This shows the extent of Daniel’s impact on him, and in the whole kingdom. He was addressed as the chief of all the magicians (Dan. 4:9).

King Nebuchadnezzar did not only respect Daniel but he also acknowledged the God that Daniel served, a fact that is so important in the realm of his kingdom. The Babylonians were known to worship many powerful gods. At this moment in history they had believed that their gods were more powerful than all the gods of other nations since their gods had helped them to subdue all the nations of the world. It would definitely come to everyone as a surprise that their king was recognizing a different God other than their gods.

Such recognition came about as a result of Daniel who ‘presents us with a fusion of Hebrew and Mesopotamian cultures: the God of Israel provides a service to the king of Babylon, but in a way that was well within the parameters of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience...’<sup>167</sup> Therefore, here was their king making a public declaration, because what had happened was beyond his estimation. King Nebuchadnezzar also confessed openly that ‘the Lord alone is king and that he is free in humbling the proud and exalting the humble (Dan. 4:1-3, 34-35, 37; cf. vs. 32; 5:21).’<sup>168</sup>

Another mention can be made of the expertise of Daniel in revealing secrets and interpreting hidden mysteries during the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of

the Neo-Babylonians. His name is given as the son of Nebuchadnezzar, but this could be interpreted as son in terms of also sitting on the throne of the Babylonians. This is because he is known to have rather been the son of Nabonidus who co-reigned with his father and was later in charge of the kingdom while his father probably was far away in Tema (in the region of present-day Saudi Arabia), a city Nabonidus is recorded to have built.

Belshazzar organized a banquet and in the middle of the celebration, ordered for the gold and silver goblets which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem to be brought to him for use (Dan. 5:1-3). In an apparent insult to the God of Israel, Belshazzar rendered praises to the Babylonian gods of silver and gold. To every action of a person there is a consequent reaction from God. Thus this was a very provocative action which the God of Israel would certainly not allow to go unpunished. He is the one who weighs the steps of every person and will not let anyone have his/her own way. In other words, God will always provide proof that He's in control of the affairs of mankind. This is the way one scholar puts it: "Some attributes of God demand an extraordinary means of revelation to bring them into manifestation."<sup>169</sup>

Belshazzar was about to suffer the consequences of his arrogance because suddenly a finger appeared on one side of the wall of the building and wrote a message there. This mysterious event changed the whole joyful atmosphere to bitter celebration, because the king became worried and sought for interpretation. This is a clear example of the supreme spiritual being interfering in the affairs of physical

beings, “God’s eternal purpose concerning man and his destiny made it a necessity for revelation of an extraordinary king.”<sup>170</sup> Now there was the need for one who understands the things of the spirit to unravel the mysterious writing.

Unfortunately, none of the wise men in the realm of the kingdom could read the writing, let alone interpret it. Once again, Daniel had to be sought for because somehow his impact in that field could not be forgotten. The one who remembered him is addressed here as the ‘queen.’ Many scholars interpret the “queen” here as not in direct reference to Belshazzar’s wife or his mother. Her title as ‘queen’ could make her either Nebuchadnezzar’s wife who might have survived until that time, or could qualify for Belshazzar’s mother. One scholar comments that the queen being referred to here was Queen Nitocris, younger daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, wife of Nabonidus, the reigning monarch and mother of Belshazzar, who this very year had been promoted to joint-rule with his father.<sup>171</sup>

Whoever the queen was, her recollection of Daniel shows the extent to which Daniel was recognized and known throughout that number of years. What appears quite surprising and yet interesting is how “the queen” could mention Daniel to Belshazzar and not any other person. It will never be a surprise to anybody that by this time Daniel’s influence might be fading most probably as a result of being in the service of the predecessors of the young Belshazzar. His call for the wise men and not Daniel might be an indication that he was young and might not be conversant with the history of the kingdom.

The 'queen mother' proved that age may have an advantage when it comes to history. It is not only her ability to recognize Daniel as an expert in the field of mysteries and revelations but her evaluation of him is expressed in her words:

There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods...Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means (Dan. 5:11-12).

The compliment of the 'queen' is an indication of Daniel's credentials before the Babylonians, '...Rather than being cast in the role of biblical prophet or wise man, Daniel is cast in the role of a Mesopotamian *mantic sage* - the servant of a God who reveals secrets.'<sup>172</sup> It also reveals how much she respected Daniel and the extent of her knowledge of him. It tells how difficult it was for Daniel's impact in the kingdom to be completely forgotten.

Like king Nebuchadnezzar, and even from the statement of the wise men in the kingdom (Dan. 2:11), the queen doubted that an ordinary man could possess such insight as Daniel had, and therefore Daniel was a special person who could pass for a god. Such an assessment is also supported by this comment, "The queen-mother exhibited her high evaluation of Daniel's wisdom, when she compared it to that of God...She may have meant by this that she believed it came from God, as Daniel himself had explicitly stated to Nebuchadnezzar (2:28-30).<sup>173</sup>

True to the 'queen's' recommendation, Daniel was able to read and interpret the writing on the wall. The message was God's judgment on Belshazzar for his disrespect for Him, as the Sovereign Lord. Daniel rebuked Belshazzar for not learning from what happened to his 'father,' Nebuchadnezzar. That same evening, Belshazzar's kingdom was coming to an end, according to the prophet Daniel. The impact of Daniel's message led to his coronation and elevation to the position of the third in authority of the kingdom, but that was short lived because in fulfillment of his interpretation of the writing on the wall, the kingdom came to an end that same night (Dan. 5:30). So it came to pass that the same night the king was killed by the Medo-Persians, who took over the kingdom.

### **Impact as a political administrator**

Few people have made impacts on the political scene while in captivity like Daniel, going by Biblical records. Mention can be made of Joseph's impact in Egypt when he was a slave who had been thrown into prison. Also, Moses rejected his title as a prince of Egypt and ran away into exile, only to return to Egypt as a deliverer (Exod. 1-12). Then Nehemiah, as a cupbearer of the king of Persia (Neh. 1:1ff), and Esther and Mordecai in the book of Esther. All these played roles that lasted a period under one, or probably, two kings. Daniel is believed to have served a period spanning about five or more kings (Dan. 1:21; cf. 6:28).

Daniel's records as an administrator or ruler over the Province of Babylon and chief of the governors, as well as chief of the wise men during the days of Nebuchadnezzar

may have continued through all the successive kings. Though sometimes he was probably relegated to the background, he continued until the time of Belshazzar, when he was raised as the third highest of the kingdom (Dan. 1:21; cf. 5:29). He no doubt suffered political persecution, yet he wisely lived through these periods. Even during the time of the Medo-Persians, after the Babylonians had been overthrown, Daniel still enjoyed political office. This is quite unusual, because the likelihood that on assumption of power, political office holders may want to completely do away with all enemies, and most often, all those that might have had dealings with their perceived enemies, is a common practice, (and it is politically advisable).

It is interesting to note that the successive emperors of Babylon did not eliminate Daniel. He survived all the changes to the occupants of the throne throughout the time of the Babylonians, beginning with king Nebuchadnezzar, and into the period of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king. It is most probable that the person mentioned as Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel (6:1-28) was someone who served as king over the Babylon region of the Medo-Persia Empire during the time that Cyrus was the emperor.

If the above is the case then it only makes sense that he allowed Daniel who was already acknowledged in Babylon to continue his fruitful service. In support of such a view, one scholar argues that Daniel, who had been promoted to third place in the kingdom (next to Nabonidus and Belshazzar), went uninjured because Darius saw in him a man who could be useful in the solidification of his new empire.<sup>174</sup> This may be as a result not only of his ability to

reveal secrets, but probably for his wise counsel to the kings. He might have been closer to Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, he offered some counseling to him (Dan. 4:27).

Not only to the king would the advice of Daniel have gone, but most probably the subsequent kings, the other wise men in the kingdom, and even his own Hebrew colleagues. That is, "As chief of wise men, Daniel's counsel would have been sought in the more important cases and by the more influential people."<sup>175</sup> Thus it is very likely that he might have tried to play that same role during the time of Belshazzar, but the king rejected it (Dan. 5:22-24). For Daniel to have remained in the service of such kings, spanning Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus was a clear testimony of his impact in the courts of these powerful worldly kings. The extent of his influence is very much appreciated when one considers the circumstances that brought him to Babylon; he was a prisoner of war (POW).

### **Chapter summary**

The transformation that Prophet Daniel experienced in the Babylonian captivity ushered him to a high platform of service. He made great impact in all spheres of life in Babylon. On the prophetic arena, he made a great impact as the one person who could reveal secrets and interpret the dreams and mysteries of the kings. His success in the reign of the Babylonians helped him to survive the reign of over five kings of the empire, and led to his promotion as the third in command of the empire before its overthrow by the Medo-Persians. As a political administrator, he was found to be blameless, and this helped him to survive an evil plot on

his life by his detractors during the time of King Darius the Mede. In the next chapter, we would consider how Daniel fully satisfied the divine mandate as a pacesetter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DANIEL FULFILLED HIS DIVINE MANDATE IN CAPTIVITY**

A call to serve God might take many forms; as a prophet, priest, king, cook, gatekeeper, carpenter, shepherd, etc., provided the person is being led by God's spirit. In captivity, there were many civil and political areas that Daniel impacted after undergoing the transformation in Babylon. These made Daniel appear more as an excellent political statesman. His performance can be seen either directly or indirectly by the way in which he influenced people to see God's supremacy at work through His servants over all others which compelled them to openly confess the superiority of his God over all other gods. It appears though that Daniel is more often considered a political figure involved with others in their struggle for survival in captivity.

But Daniel was more than a prophet among the captives performing a divine assignment. His role as a Hebrew Prophet in captivity cannot be overemphasized. His ministry as a prophet was in turning the hearts of different groups of people; including kings, and more particularly, the Hebrew captives, to faith in Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, and to continue living for Him. Thus Daniel can be classified as an all-rounder, a utility player, in fact one who was able to fit all roles that God called him to serve. No wonder, early scholars were confused about where to

place the records of Daniel. The early scholars who did a compilation of the Hebrew Old Testament did not group the book of Daniel among the books of the Prophets, but brought it under History. Then during the translation of the Hebrew manuscript to the Greek version, the scholars decided to bring it under the Prophetic books.

The discussions that follow here show some of the impact that Daniel made in captivity. The lessons to be learned here is that, no matter where a person is, God can use him to achieve His purposes.

### **Service to Gentile kings**

The proclamation of king Nebuchadnezzar is one of the issues which have received a lot of attention from Bible scholars. Especially among those in the field of theology, it is an interesting subject. Most Bible believers interpret the declaration and proclamation as clear manifestations of conversion of the gentile monarch into the faith of the Hebrews, Yahweism, though it is possible that Bible critics may object. One scholar believes that by the declaration of Nebuchadnezzar, "His devotion to the Babylonian pantheon with Marduk as the head is now directed toward the God of Israel, a change which depends on a transformed life."<sup>176</sup>

It might be strange for anybody to argue that the king's statement is not an open declaration of one who is completely convinced and converted. If not then what kind of words should one use during an open confession to demonstrate one's faith or admission of truth? Clearly, there are indications that King Nebuchadnezzar became a

convert to the worship of Yahweh, the God of Daniel and the Hebrews as commented here: "The king from this time became a convert to Yahweh."<sup>177</sup>

Not only is King Nebuchadnezzar found in the book of Daniel expressing faith in Daniel's God, the queen mother of Belshazzar also made a similar open declaration of him. One source states: "...Her willingness to speak so courageously of Daniel before the unsympathetic Belshazzar, the possibility presents itself that she had been converted to a true faith in the Judean God, even as her father may have been (4:37)."<sup>178</sup> From the testimony of such high ranking members of the Babylonian kingdom, one would not be presumptuous to agree that quite a number of the officials and people from both the middle class and even the lower class became converts of the prophet Daniel.

Beyond the Babylonians, Bible records the relationship that developed between King Darius the Mede, and Daniel (Dan. 6:1-28). Darius had a lot of respect for the God of Daniel such that when Daniel was trapped by his fellow wise men for praying to his God against the law of the Mede-Persians, and was thus thrown into the lions' den, the king was hopeful that the God Daniel served would deliver him. This is seen in the king's statement to Daniel before he was taken into the den, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you" (vs. 16). Again, this 'worldly king' developed some hope in the power of Daniel's God to save him such that he became restless during the night, and early the next day, visited the den to ascertain the results of his hope. His shout of, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has

your God...?" is a clear indication of the king's declaration of faith in the God of Daniel.

This story, no doubt, tells of one of the strongest impacts that Daniel made in the era of the Medo-Persians. Its historicity is supported by the comments of one scholar, Shea, in his article, "Daniel and the Lion of Babylon," in which he presents information about a basalt statue of the 'Lion of Babylon' which has a man lying in a prone position but the animal seems to make no attempt to devour him. His estimation that the statue dates back to the Medo-Persians convinces him that it no doubt might be a representation of the story of Daniel in the lions' den.<sup>179</sup>

### **Service to Judean exiles**

It is also important to mention here that the role Daniel and his other Hebrew colleagues who had by this time also risen into very prominent positions played might have influenced the rest of the Jews in captivity to turn their hearts completely to God. It is possible that Daniel's prophetic role was recognized in the Jewish community as a result of his revelations to the kings which also became known to his Jewish audience. It may be inferred to a reasonable extent that the Jewish community in exile began to realize the presence of God with them even in captivity. This was very important to counter their sense of despair as a direct result of what had befallen them.

By the time of the decree, no doubt, there was a well-prepared remnant that had fully surrendered to God, and was prepared to return and worship him. One scholar believes that, the conversion of a Babylonian king to a

Jewish worldview was an event that must have encouraged the exiles to believe God. Thus he comments as follows: "When exiles in Babylon read Daniel's account, it convinced them of God's wisdom and power and persuaded them to not accept all the Babylonian rhetoric about their gods."<sup>180</sup> Once again, Daniel is mentioned as a key figure who worked behind the scenes to bring the captivity of Judah to an end. This is seen in his direct role in going through a period of intercession before God for the captivity to end.

The Bible reveals that when Daniel understood from the prophecies of Jeremiah how long the people of Judah will be in captivity, he went before God in prayer (Dan. 10:1-19; cf. Jer. 29:10). Daniel might have counted the number of years that he was taken into captivity and realized that the seventy years as prophesied by Jeremiah was due. This was during the time that he was in the service of King Darius. The period of his prayer was just within the time that the decree of Cyrus came, showing that his prayers of confession and petition might have caused God's response to quicken the heart of Cyrus to act.

### **Daniel influenced the end to the Jewish captivity**

It is not a coincidence that Daniel is mentioned in the service of the King Cyrus of the Medo-Persians, and the people of Judah were also granted their freedom by this same king (Dan. 1:21; cf. 5:30; 2 Chron. 36:22). By the time of the coming of the Medo-Persians, it is possible that they had received some information or stories about Daniel and the supportive role he had played in the court of the kings, probably not only in the area of dreams and mysteries but

as an advisor to the kings. According to one scholar, “The stories do not reveal how these men interacted with the social order promoted by Babylonian diviners, wise men, and astrologers, but do reveal how Babylonian and Persian kings were led to accept a Jewish perspective on key issues.”<sup>181</sup> Consequently, both Darius and Cyrus also admitted him and put him in a position of trust; under Darius the Mede, he was one of the three presidents of the satraps.

Daniel’s personal integrity was so great that he could be heard and trusted even by those monarchs who did not believe in his God. Daniel might have played a major role in the events that led Cyrus to make the decree for the captives to return. The Bible records show Daniel playing a role as an administrator of Babylon, under King Darius who might have been an appointee of King Cyrus to oversee the region of Babylon. Daniel might have had access to King Cyrus through his service to King Darius. Long before that period (probably before Cyrus was born), Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in which he had mentioned that after the Babylonians there would arise the Medo-Persians.

It was likely that such a revelation might have been told to Cyrus by Daniel himself, “No doubt Daniel showed this scripture to Cyrus. This made an impact on Cyrus (Ezra 1:14), as he made the decree for the children of Israel to return to Jerusalem.”<sup>182</sup> Since the decree of Cyrus came in his first year and Daniel outlived that period, it shows that he could be a positive influence on Cyrus’ decision to set the captives from Judah free. Daniel was somebody that was accorded high respect and recognition throughout

the period of captivity; from the king of the Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus of the Medo-Persians.

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, we have looked at how Daniel fulfilled his divine mandate as a captive in Babylon. As a devout Jew, he set the pace by remaining faithful in the service of gentile kings without compromising his beliefs. He rendered a great service to the Judean exiles by becoming their light before the gentile community. But one of the greatest of Daniel's achievements is the role he played to end the Jewish captivity. He did this by way of his intercessory prayers and supplications to the Most High God. It is even believed that he influenced Cyrus' decree that opened the gate for the exiles who wished to return to Jerusalem to do so. We really need to learn from Daniel, and the next chapter being the last would consider some of the valuable lessons from this role model of divine ministry.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LESSONS FROM DANIEL**

The Bible is replete with characters that reveal the supremacy of God to a world that appeared to be almost overshadowed by the narrowness of their knowledge, and captivated by the existing powers. Through these devout personalities, the world has come to appreciate God and at no point in time can anyone say He is silent. Daniel, no doubt, is one of such pacesetters. He sets the pace as one who from youthful years dedicated his life to God and ministered without any fault to the end in a hostile public administration. Daniel was a man of faith, courage and conviction, and he showed that he was truly a man of God. He was ready at all times to declare without fear or favor what he believed and to stand for his convictions regardless of the circumstances and consequences. His statesmanship and role as a prophet is unquestionable.

No doubt, the experience of this powerful Hebrew prophet, Daniel, brings to the fore some excellent footsteps to being transformed for God's service. All the chapters of his book have a lot to teach on how the prophet was transformed by the vision he received. They also unearth useful keys needed for effective transformation in ministry. These keys are needed to unlock the doors to ensure excellence in any transformational service for God and successful ministry to humanity. They include:

### **Faithfulness as key**

One of the virtues of life required for transformation is faithfulness. A person needs to be faithful to the stipulations of his or her call. In fact, the final mark of the prophetic ministry, and indeed, every walk by any person with God is faithfulness. This is because every call of God has clear specifications which have to be followed if one wants to fulfill the call successfully. Without faithfully following careful instructions none of the prophets would have been successful in their ministry. What this means is that every single individual has to be clearly aware of the details of God's call on his or her life. It is only by this knowledge that one can accomplish the task faithfully.

Apparently, the dictates of God's call demands that one demonstrates faithfulness before the person achieves success. This is exactly what God admonished Joshua to ensure; to remain faithful to the stipulations of the covenant as spelt out in the Book of the Law, when He said: "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but you shall meditate upon it day and night, and shall be careful to do whatever is written in it, for then you shall be prosperous and have good success" (Jos. 1:8). The instructions of God to Joshua show clearly that faithfulness is a key to success, but success is not a mark of faithfulness.

God is looking for people who will be faithful and not necessarily successful. He decided to remain faithful to the end so he would receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). This should be the decision of all who have been called into a faithful walk with God and should be the hallmark of everyone's ministry, just as Daniel demonstrated it,

especially, after he was called to enjoy the king's diet. Faithfulness is a crown to any life of transformation.

### **Commitment is very important**

One has to be committed to a particular cause in response to the call for service to God. There are no idle hands in God's vineyard; everybody is committed to doing something for the progress of the kingdom. It is the commitment of every single person in God's Kingdom to a particular role as assigned by God that continues to make it operational on earth. This can be understood well when one compares the kingdom of God to the functions of the human body. For proper understanding of the excellent operations of the body, one has to know its structural build-up.

Just as God's Kingdom on earth consists of individual members so is the human body made up of cells. These cells are said to be the building blocks of the body (or organism). The coordinated functions of these single units of life constitute a tissue. Different tissues, each made up of many cells, constitute the organ. Thus each organ is made up of many tissues whose coordinated functions ensure the continuous operation of the organ. Likewise, many organs, each made up of many tissues, become coordinated in function to become a system. Each human being is made up of many systems: nervous, transport, digestive, skeletal, reproductive systems, etc. It is the coordinated functions of all the different systems that ensure the continuous living of the human body.

For the human body to continue its living functions every level of the organized parts; cells into tissues, tissues into organs, organs into systems, and many different systems constituting an organism should remain committed to their assigned responsibilities. Thus, no part of the body is without a specific role. Isaiah somehow got to know and accepted that he had been called to be God's spokesperson and he demonstrated commitment to this cause by beginning the ministry even before the ultimate encounter. After the special encounter with God, Daniel showed greater commitment to his call as a prophet of God till the end.

### **Humility is basic to experiencing God**

The Lord determined to use the captivity and life in exile to humble the people against pride, idolatry and covenant unfaithfulness (Jer. 13:1-11). At the same time, the captivity would serve as purification period, for through it the Lord was going to teach His people obedience and renewed commitment to His principles and law. In fact, the captivity of the Israelites, and of course, for any children of God could only be averted through certain conditions; repentance and returning to covenant obedience. For example, proper observance of the Sabbath, the pursuit of justice for the oppressed, etc., were required for the Jews (Jer. 17:14ff). The Prophet Zechariah mentions how the people showed remorse for all calamities that had befallen them (Zech. 1:6).

The captivity also allowed the land to have its Sabbath rest of 70 years. The captivity would also serve as lesson

and warning to the newer generations. It is therefore not surprising that the people who returned from captivity were prepared to immediately do away with any sins that they would be confronted with. This change in attitude shows a direct contrast to the attitude of the people before the captivity. A typical example is recorded in Ezra 10:1ff, where the people joined in to seek God's face for their sins, and later asked Ezra to take steps to deal with any sins among them. The people were prepared to make a covenant with God (Ezra 10:3), and to deal with any acts of disobedience.

In the books of Haggai and Zechariah, we also see a people who responded quickly to the rebukes and admonitions of the prophets. For example, Haggai 1:12-15 and Nehemiah 2:20-3:22, and similar texts show the quick response of the returnees to God's words through the prophets. All these demonstrated a change in the people's attitude towards the things of God after the captivity. They had been purified and refined by the captivity.

The humility of Daniel is a major factor and adds to the main keys to successful service to God wherever one finds himself/herself. Of particular importance is the way Daniel depended on God throughout the period of his life in captivity (Dan. 2:28, 20). This includes the way he went to God for insight, direction, and protection. He never portrayed himself as the "capo-de-capo," i.e., originator and executioner of whatever revelations he received. He ascribed every breakthrough and the honor that came with them to God.

## **Application and Conclusion**

The life of Daniel in captivity is indeed worthy of emulation. If his situation is not a typical example of someone that is able to sing the Lord's song in a strange land then what could it be? Through different ways and means, God used Daniel to announce His presence in the Babylonian captivity, and by the impact he made the people came to understand that God rules in the affairs of mankind. The captivity no doubt prepared Daniel and some other Hebrew young men for a greater honor in the land of captivity. I cannot but agree wholeheartedly with the following comments about Daniel;

Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus, are the simple words; but what a volume of tried faithfulness is unrolled by them! Amid all the intrigues, indigenous, at all times, in dynasties of Oriental despotism, where intrigue too rolls round so surely and so suddenly on its author's head; amid all the envy toward a foreign captive in high office as a king's councilor; amid all the trouble, incidental to the insanity of the king or to the murder of two of his successors, in that whole critical period for his people.<sup>183</sup>

To conclude, let me confess that no greater honor could be described to a man than what is written about Daniel's exploits in captivity. His life sets the stage for all believers; youth, adults, leaders, and all categories of people of the larger community, and particularly Christians to use our God-given talents to the fullest wherever we might find ourselves. If we also serve God faithfully, there will definitely

be a way by which He would honor us. Wherever we might be presently, we should seek God concerning how we can serve Him there. Are you ready to brighten the corner where we are for the Lord? God is waiting for your response.

## PART IV

# LET US LEARN FROM **PAUL**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND TO THE CALL OF APOSTLE PAUL**

Among the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul could be singled out and rightly described as the 'Apostle to the nations.' No doubt, he was one of the most loyal apostles of the Church, and it is important to study the character of such a person within the context of knowing and serving God better. Such a study will unravel the secrets to his preparation for the ministry and personal purpose in life which helped him to know God and do exploits for Him (1 Cor. 9:1ff; 15:31, 32; Acts 27:29ff).

### **Paul's Jewish and Roman citizenship**

Though born in Tarsus, Paul was raised in Jerusalem. He was thoroughly trained in the laws of the Hebrews until he became a recognized Jewish scholar, and in fact, a Pharisee (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5). He had his schooling under a much respected Pharisee, Gamaliel, who in all probability was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Parliament or highest decision making body of the time (Acts 5:33-34). Paul came from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). He was so strong a defender of the Jewish faith and tradition that his zeal influenced him to hate the young Christian faith and to persecute its adherents. Little wonder, he called himself "a persecutor of the Christians of the early church" (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 26).

Paul was also a Roman citizen by reason of birth because he was born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3). As early as 171 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had re-founded Tarsus, and brought Jews there...After 67 BC, the Roman Emperor Pompey took it and made it a Roman colony.<sup>184</sup> In the Roman world, Tarsus was known to be a city of Cilicia, which also became the capital of that Roman province, in Asia Minor, and was an important trading centre surrounded by fertile lands.<sup>185</sup> It is likely that the introduction of Jews into Tarsus and its later Roman status gave Paul his Roman citizenship. It is also believed that Paul acquired the Roman citizenship through his parents, who probably were rewarded for supplying leather tents to the Roman army. Little wonder, Paul became a tent-maker and leather worker, a trade he might have picked from his parents. Most probably also, Paul spent his early life in the Roman world in Tarsus (Acts 21:39).

In relation to its cultural and religious situation, Tarsus, during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century before Christ, was believed to be the home of a Philosophical school, and was therefore a town where the intellectual atmosphere was likely to be filled by Greek thought.

### **Paul's conversion from Judaism to Christianity**

Paul, known commonly in Jewish circles as Saul (Acts 7:58-13:9), was converted to Christianity in a miraculous way. He was one of the key persecutors of the early church. When Deacon Stephen was being stoned to death, Paul was the one who volunteered to take care of the clothes of the killers (Acts 7:54-59). When he realized that some of the

persecuted Christians of Jerusalem had fled to other cities, Paul went to the Jewish authorities and obtained permission to chase the Christians who had run to other cities. It was while on his way to fulfill this mission in Damascus that he had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Acts 9:3-8 (cf. 15-16; 22:4-5; 26:12-18), it is recorded thus:

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

As a result of the 'heavenly vision,' Saul was blinded and had to be led by his companions into the city. Meanwhile, in Damascus, the Lord revealed to a disciple called Ananias what had happened to Saul, and asked Ananias to visit him and minister healing to his blindness and ensure his baptism. Even though Ananias was hesitant because he had heard of Saul's attacks on the Church, the Lord prevailed over him to go to Saul because, as the Lord put it: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel..." (Acts 9:15). Some Bible scholars have described Paul's experience as modeled on the order of OT prophetic call/commissioning narratives, or as a call and conversion to the apostolic office of the Gentile world.<sup>186</sup>

After his conversion, he began his ministry in a superb manner and by all indications Paul speedily gained

grounds among the Jews as one of the greatest disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:19-20). But soon it became clear that Paul would have to deal with great opposition from the Jewish authorities and persecutors he had hitherto instigated against the Church. He fled to Tarsus when the Grecian Jews of Jerusalem plotted to kill him during the early years of his conversion.

### **Paul's transfer to Antioch and early ministry life**

It is likely that as a result of the stoning of Stephen, the deacon, which brought about the scattering of the disciples of the church of Jerusalem, a church started at Antioch (Acts 11:19). The Apostles in Jerusalem heard of the progress of the church at Antioch and sent Barnabas to help in the work. After laboring there for a while, he went to Tarsus and brought Paul to join the believers at Antioch to assist in teaching the disciples (Act 11:26ff).

A little information on Antioch will throw some light on the ministry of the church in this city. Antioch as a city was built on the bank of the Orontes River in the ancient Syria. It was founded by Seleucus Nicator, one of the commanders of Alexander the Great, also the founder of the Seleucid Empire, around 301 BC, and named after his father, Antiochus.<sup>187</sup> It should however be noted that there were many other cities which bore the same name, Antioch, and very likely that all of them were spread out in the Roman Empire.

According to Douglas and Merrill, Antioch became the meeting point of the great and oriental civilization. It was a great centre for Greek philosophy until it fell under the

Roman Empire. It had an important Jewish community from the early time when the Seleucid kings rewarded their Jewish mercenaries with grants of land, so its culture was influenced by the Jewish culture. Antioch gave rise to a school of thought distinguished by the literal interpretation of the scriptures. One of the original deacons of the apostolic church, Nicholas, was also a proselyte from Antioch.<sup>188</sup>

The Roman Empire's policy of freedom of worship and belief made possible the spread of Christianity in all its colonies. At Antioch, the capital of the proconsul province of Syria, some of the believers who had fled the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem, and those who had ran away as a result of the stoning of Deacon Stephen, had established a church which had gained roots. The church at Antioch was believed to be the first gentile church, and the mother of all other gentile churches. The Antioch church became so great and alive that it was at this place that the early believers first gained the title "Christians" (Acts 11:26). The church itself was likely to have been formed by Christians from Cyrus and Cyrene (Acts 11:19-20).

It was mentioned in the previous section that when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of the progress of the church at Antioch, they sent Barnabas to the church to help in the work. After laboring there for a while, he went to Tarsus and brought Paul to assist in teaching the disciples (Act 11:26ff). Thereafter, most events of Paul's ministry began to take shape while serving the Lord with other brethren at Antioch. After an earlier visit to Jerusalem, they came to continue the work at Antioch and it was during this period that the Holy Spirit asked them to set off for the missionary

journeys which gave birth to many of the gentile churches (Acts 13:1-4). Antioch thus became the base for the first recognized missionaries of the church, Paul and Barnabas.

### **Chapter summary**

Our discussions in this first chapter have centered on the background to the call of Paul. Specifically, we have looked at Paul's Jewish and Roman citizenship, his conversion from Judaism to Christianity, his transfer to Antioch in Syria and ministry life before his call to the missionary field. It would be prudent to consider some of the many factors that culminated in the total transformation of Paul into an excellent Apostle of the Lord. This is what the next chapter is about.

## **CHAPTER 2**

## **HOW PAUL WAS TRANSFORMED FOR MINISTRY**

After receiving the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the subsequent call into the ministry, Paul had to undertake certain spiritual disciplines that would ensure his total spiritual transformation. He stayed with some of the disciples for some time and later had to take another step. This is where it is believed that Paul separated himself for the call (Gal. 1:12-18). He probably travelled to a hiding place in Arabia. As Acts 2 indicates, believers from Arabia were in Jerusalem during Pentecost. Thus by the time Paul went to Arabia, there would have been established Christian communities in the region, believers who did not have any misgivings about Saul's bad reputation, as compared to the Jerusalemites. So Paul had almost ten or so years there to grow in that supportive environment.

Later he returned from Arabia to Damascus. All these were part of the plans to receive more insight into a revelation received from God through His word or other means. The Lord says in James 4:8 that if believers draw nearer to Him, He will also draw nearer to them. This calls for believers' purification of their hearts, forsaking worldly cares, and spending time daily at the Lord's feet. This also calls for not being overburdened by worldly or material things which cannot be compared with the knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 4:18).

There are so many issues that might be discussed about the transformation that took place in the life and

ministry of Apostle Paul. Without doubt, it did cost Paul in his quest to know God (Phil. 3:7-9). Perhaps analyzing these verses will help people to know the Lord God much more. So, the subsequent section will consider some of the areas for the benefit of the reader.

### **Paul sought knowledge from the truth of God's word**

From the time of his conversion, Paul's main goal in life was to know God better (Col. 1:9; 6:3). He also wanted to let the word of God dwell in him richly (Col. 3:16) and to take time alone to be with God each day (Mark 1:35). The reasons for pursuing these goals are very relevant. Such knowledge will enable a person to be obedient to Him. When a believer's heart is well prepared to receive the Word of God, the spiritual blessings and profit from the heart will be translated into or manifested in the flesh for people to see.

As an illustration, we know that there are different types of seeds that every farmer can sow but not all of them are good or profitable. The type of seed one sows determines the fruit that will be produce. Again, not all seeds that grow bring profit. So it is important to identify the kind of seed to be grown on the land of a person's heart; whether it is a profitable (or true) seed, or just thorns (or false seeds) as discussed in the Parable of the grains and tares (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22, 24-26). Surely, the kind of seed could be good or bad, sweet or bitter, big or small, annual or perennial, bountiful or sparing, and of course it could be for immediate need, profit making or for a lasting fulfillment as could be deduced from scriptures indicated.

In life, the kind of seed every person sows could be a matter of choice. But the guiding principle in sowing is that every person reaps what he/she sows. What one sows is proportional to what the person reaps. But it should be understood that whatever seed a person sows and the conditions for its growth is a matter of concern to God. So care should be employed in what is sown, whether it is the seed of the Word of God or works of the flesh. A man has to decide which type of seed is profitable to him or her. This rule applies to all persons, including Christians. He that sows to the word of God will reap Eternal life but he that sows to the flesh will reap corruption (Gal. 6:10-12).

This is exactly what happened in Paul's life and ministry. He devoted himself to the study of the scriptures and the related practices for healthy spiritual formation such that at any point in time he was able to base his argument on the Word of God (Acts 13:13-41; 17:2, 3). It is even believed that Paul's subsequent time in Tarsus before he was recruited by Barnabas to the ministry in Antioch is also important for his preparation. This is because Tarsus was a key Jewish university centre at the time. So he might have spent some quality time studying the Hebrew Scriptures in order to have a stronger foundation for the gospel of Christ.

Therefore, what was sown in Paul's life was not "man made" for he did not receive it from any ordinary person neither was he taught by any ordinary person. It was a revelation dropped into a well prepared heart to transform him and make him fruitful in the kingdom. This in-depth knowledge is what helped him to preach from the known to

unknown. More so, Paul knew that a sincere desire for the Lord can help him to know God more (Ps. 42:1).

### **Paul allowed for proper watering by the Holy Spirit**

The issue of how any seed will grow is very important for understanding how the word of God works in a believer's life, and this is where the need for rain or water comes in. Thus, another area of illustration in this discussion is to look at the conditions under which seeds are sowed; dry or rainy, among thorns or on a ploughed land. Every person has to decide the condition of the seeds he sows. Generally, all seeds and plants require water for growth.

After every farmer has sown seeds the next important thing is for the rains to come to make it grow. In Jeremiah 4:1-3, it is written: "This is what the Lord says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: Break up your fallow ground and do not sow among thorns." In the passage, God related to His people in agricultural or farming terms. One of the key issues is, "fallow ground." What is a fallow ground and what is the ground to the farmer? What does 'fallow' mean? The other key issue is how this question relates to farming. For a deeper explanation, one has to refer to Matthew 13:3-22.

How does "breaking the fallow ground" relate to the Christian? How do we prepare the heart for best results from God? To the Christian, "fallow" might apply to the following: hardened to God's word (stony heart) or hatred to God's word. The ground corresponds to heart (which is the seat of the Spirit); and thorns may mean the following, full of worry or worldliness, full of deceit (or evil plans) according to Matthew 13:24-26. All these characteristics prevent proper

growth and yield of crops. This is where a person depends upon God. God wants His people to experience real success and blessings. This is why He sent this message through the Prophet. God used the message of the prophet to draw the people's attention to the fact that their investment and fruitfulness depended on Him. How were they supposed to prepare the ground for best results from God? The answer is simple and this was provided by the prophet, "By breaking up their fallow ground."

It should be understood by Bible believers that success by worldly standards is never success before God. This no doubt requires a life of investment in God through submission to Him (Joel 2:12-14, 18-19). The need for water or rain is like what man does in life. It is man who does the sowing but it is God who sends rain to bring the increase. If we want to have good results for what we are sowing in life, we need to return to God and seek His face (2 Chron. 7:14; 1 Kings 18:41-45). In the passage of Jeremiah 4:1-3, a person is supposed to fulfill instruction, and then the rest is for God to determine. The key ingredient here is dependence on God for water or rain (Job 14:7-19; cf. 2 Chron. 7:14; 1 Kings 18:41-45). All these will then cause the person to cry to God to uproot all hardness in his/her life. Believers need to hold on to God. Hosea 3:1-3 says: "Let us return to the Lord...He will return like the former and the latter rain."

God thus brought Apostle Paul to this realization, that is, to identify what hardens a man's heart, to identify the thorns in a person's life, and to pass a person through a process to break the person down and cause the one to

desire a change for the best in life. Paul's heart needed to be well prepared for service in the Lord.

### **Paul learned to live by faith**

One of the reasons why believers should trust God to provide our needs and keep us growing and living for him is that it is the will of God for us to have faith in Him. Additionally, his promises are fulfilled because the honor of the Lord is at stake when people trust him. That is why He will honor himself when we ask for anything by faith. Faith also helps believers in asking everything according to his will and receiving it (1 John 5:14). Scripture says: "But will thou know o vain man that faith without works is dead," according to James 2:20. Also, the book of Malachi 4:2 says: "But unto them that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..." Our faith is essential in our spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:13-16) and in overcoming the world (1 John 5:4-5). Learning to live by faith as Paul did is therefore a non-negotiable requirement for the believer.

Paul also lived by faith by relying on God's Word and acting upon his promises throughout his life on earth (2 Cor. 1:20). Psalm 48:14 says: "For this God is our God forever and ever and will be our guide into death." Proverb 3:5-6 also says: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all thy ways, acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths." Elsewhere it is also written: "Fear not, be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I'll strengthen you and you and uphold you (Isa. 41:10). Again, it is written: "The Lord is at hand, have no anxiety but in everything give thanks to Him and make your requests

known to Him” (Phil. 4:6). In fact, it is not only Paul but it is the will of God for every believer to experience holistic prosperity, i.e., enjoy good health, and that “all may go well for everybody even as our soul is getting along well” (3 John 2).

Therefore, in times of discouragement, Paul found strength in the Lord. You can do same by relying on his promises. When you see others pressing on ambitiously to do something great for God, do not belittle yourselves because the Lord is with you to also help you to be victorious. Not counting on one’s weakness but building up faith in Him is very essential for our Christian growth because God is interested in our success (Rom. 4:19-21).

### **Paul learned to be prayerful**

Prayer is one of the primary tools to help every believer’s services to God and battle with the enemy. The Lord Jesus Himself did not relax in prayer during his earthly ministry. Through prayer, He overcame the devil and was able to set people free from all forms of demonic possessions, and oppressions. Realizing the importance and efficacy of prayer in the ministry the Lord did not hide it from His followers. In many passages of scripture, He taught believers how to pray (Mark 11:25; Luke 12:16-21; 18: 10-14). It was through prayer in Gethsemane that the Lord was strengthened to face and win the final battle (Luke 22: 41-44; Heb. 5:7). It is a common statement that the weakest Christian begins to shake the devils foundations when he prays (Heb. 4:15-16).

The Apostle Paul also learned of the importance of prayer and was never prepared to be a weak Christian as far as his prayer life was concerned. It is believed that he might have learned to pray during his time of waiting in Arabia, or his three years stay at Damascus (Gal. 1:13-17). He could also have become very prayerful by devoting enough time to this spiritual discipline daily. Whichever means that helped Paul in his prayer life; the bottom-line is that he became a prayer giant. Consequently, he was used mightily of God to break new grounds with the gospel, and in bringing healing and deliverance to many. As a mark of a true apostle and spiritual statesman, Paul was not selfish to unfold to believers some of the secrets to his manifold blessings in Christ. For example, the first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians' church shows some of Paul's priorities in life. In verses 16-17, Paul says that he never stops praying for the Ephesians. The Apostle was eager to go on praying that believers understand God's blessings fully (Eph. 1:15-23).

Realizing the role prayer plays in the life of the Christian, reveals that we should not be tempted to have self-satisfaction just because we have received salvation. Rather Christians should ask about what step could be taken to get to know the Lord and His blessings more deeply or read the Bible more. In fact, Paul's earnest prayer was that believers come to know better the hope and riches and power we have in Christ. His prayer life should help believers to know in what ways we feel hopeless, poor and powerless and what to pray for in life, and what hope, riches and power Christ can give for today's situation. It should help believers in knowing why it is important to keep on praying

and not to lose heart (James 5:12). It should also help believers in knowing for whom we are challenged to keep on praying (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Once again, the way chapter one of all the epistles of Paul begins and ends with praise for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ reveals how believers could make praise a part of our personal and group prayer.

### **Paul totally separated himself for God**

One of Paul's objectives was to have regular quality periods to be alone with God. Separation from other activities for God to soak the believer in His Spirit is a very important factor for the person's spiritual formation, development, and maturity. Total separation is neither freedom from temptation, a guarantee of safety from the possibility of sin, nor a gradual deliverance from sin. It is rather an instantaneous crisis experience. It is a step in life to facilitate victory over sin and a life-long transformation into Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). This requires separation from worldly pleasures (2 Cor. 6:14), regular confession of sins (1 John 1:9), continuous dedication of oneself to Christ, and continuous infilling of the Holy Spirit.

If there is any period for the need for separation to be sounded more it is now. The reason is simple; the world is identifying with the church at a very fast rate, while the church is also becoming quite worldly such that it is hard to distinguish one from the other. Now, a lot of believers are mere shadows of themselves, because the glory of God has departed from them (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Sam. 4:1-21). They are just wandering about like the time Israel wandered in the

wilderness. But God does not intend for believers to just wander about. God's plan at conversion is for the believer to yield fully and live in the spirit without backsliding. But some people do not experience this. Nevertheless, if believers learn to walk in the light they will not fall. The only way to win others is to be different and thus attract them by something they lack.

### **Paul was humbled through suffering**

One of the most important examples that Christ set for believers is to be humble even as He was (John 13:1-17). The very nature of Christ as regards His acceptance to lay aside the glories of deity for an earthly life shows the extent of His humility (Phil. 2:1-11). During His life on earth He continually exhibited humility by embracing all classes of people; rich, middle income persons, and the poor. He travelled to all kinds of environments; Metropolitan cities, towns, villages, and remotest places like the wilderness. He mingled with all manner of people; religious leaders, tax collectors, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Additionally, the Lord interacted with all age groups; old, youth, children, and people of both sexes. He spoke to people of different positions; kings, governors, military leaders; different political dominations like Greeks and Romans; and even among the Jews, he interacted with individuals and groups of various orientations like Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. There are enough records to show how the Lord Himself demonstrated humility during His earthly ministry and the results were marvelous. It is not surprising that the break-through to the final prayer he

offered came because of his approach to the Father in humility (Heb. 5:7).

When Paul became converted on the Damascus road and after his further engagements with the Lord in Arabia, his life became like someone who had really eaten “humble pie.” The haughty Pharisee became a slave of the Lord and the people’s servant. As a follower of Christ, he also lived and moved with all classes and manner of people, and was ready to embrace and endure all situations just like the Master. In fact, Paul became all things to all people in order that he might win them for the Lord and also set himself as a leader worthy of emulation. Therefore, those of us who have the benefit of the scriptures have no excuse because the records of the life of those who walked with God are within reach for us to study and live accordingly.

Believers of today cannot say that we are limited as human beings and that because Jesus had the nature of God or was God that is why He was able to demonstrate excellent forms of spiritual disciplines like forgiveness, praying without ceasing, and most importantly total humility. The fact is that once the spirit of God comes upon/into a person, all the seeds that were sown by the devil when he/she was an unbeliever should be rooted out. Believers should be prepared to set some benchmarks for others to aspire to. We should not only fight for high and prestigious offices but also be ready to take lowly positions.

Through the afore-mentioned or discussed processes Paul became very transformed and equipped for ministry and was ready to set out for whatever services the Lord wanted him to render.

### **Chapter summary**

Paul underwent vigorous processes during his transformation: he sought knowledge from the truth of God's word and allowed for proper watering of it by the Holy Spirit; he learned to live by faith and made prayer a lifestyle; he totally separated himself for the ministry and also became humble through the suffering he endured for the sake of the gospel. In fact, Paul was so transformed that he became all things to all people in the hope that he would win some of them for the Lord. The next chapter would consider some of the strategies he adopted in order to achieve his objectives for ministry.

## **CHAPTER 3**

## **STRATEGIES OF PAUL TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN MINISTRY**

Whether in religious ministry or in secular service, following some set processes to achieve one's life ambition, goals or plans are very important. This is what the scriptures mean by each should sow in tears in order to reap in joy (Ps. 126). The Apostle Paul was not an exception.

### **Paul devised a strategic plan for ministry**

As a chosen instrument of God, and in fact, a special Apostle, Paul definitely had a vision for ministry, and he also had a mission. To achieve these noble objectives by which he would be able to serve God and fulfill His call, he had to come out with certain definite strategies. Paul's main objectives could be achieved in many ways. So the Apostle developed some strategies that enabled him to succeed.

- The first of these was through church-planting, i.e., to evangelize both the Jews and Gentiles. He engaged in missionary journeys (Acts 13-20). This was enhanced by engaging in regular visitations, revivals, and follow-ups as he did at some of the places like Corinth, Philippi in Macedonia, and Ephesus. Besides monitoring the churches by regular visits, he also sent others and constantly received reports from the brethren (Col.1:3-4).
- The second was through teaching the churches unto maturity (Acts 2:18-21; Col. 1:28). The latter was done through exposition, exhortation, correction, rebuke, and

preaching both in public and in homes (Acts 9:15). He trained responsible team members as leaders to continue his work: Timothy, Titus, Archippus, to mention a few.

- A third means to achieve his objectives was through correspondence with the churches and individuals or other appropriate means. He ensured effective means of communication, through letter-writing when necessary.
- He maintained his drive to fulfill his ministry. Paul never gave up, and his zeal never waned. He kept his fire for the ministry burning till he finished.

The list above and many others enabled the Apostle Paul to be on top of what the Lord had actually called him to do. This is why at one point in time he said he was still pressing on towards the goal (Phil. 3:12). This is because at that time he had not finished with the list of things that needed to be completed so he was still pressing on towards the goal. But at a later time he was able to say that he had fought a good fight and had finished the race and was just waiting to appear before the Lord for his crown (2 Tim. 4: 7-8). By then he was sure all that the Lord had called him for had been completed.

### **Paul generated funds to support others**

One of Paul's strategies was to become self sufficient so that he could meet the needs of his team and also share with others. He engaged in tent-making and was thus able to extend a hand of support to other people around when the need arose. In Acts of the Apostles 20:34-35, Paul testified thus: "You yourselves know that these hands of mine have

supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed to you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord himself said: 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Scripture says that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26).

Sometimes, it is important to ask ourselves why we think faith without works is dead. Does it imply that believers who are not practicing what they profess are dead believers? If so, then one should ask whether he/she is a living or dead Christian. Indeed, our belief must be shown, and we must practice what we profess (James 2:17-26). Our faith should be backed by appropriate works. Ephesians 2:10 reads: "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

What the immediate passage means is that every person is unique before God because the person is a special handiwork of God. King David of Israel acknowledged this when he declared in Psalm 139:13-14: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." This means that God specially and specifically allowed every person to be formed in the womb and born for a good reason.

The next important point to note is that God did not just create humanity and then drop them into a world system to do their own wishes. No! Rather, He purposed that all His creation will work through the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:10). That means it is only in Christ that God's excellent and eternal purposes for everybody can be

achieved. No person outside of Christ can glorify God by any means. More so, the only means to glorify the Lord as His perfect workmanship is to do good works. It is the only means to show to people that we are from God and really believe what He says about us, that 'He purposed well in advance to create us for good works.' Any person who does not delight in deeds has no way to reveal God's love which is usually expressed through giving (John 3:16). The epistle of James 1:22-23 says that we should not be mere listeners of God's word but doers as well.

There should not be any reason to account for our inability to do good works on the part of Christians. If believers were to practice a quarter of all that are taught in their communities most of these would have changed for the better and the world would have been a transformed place by now. Constantly, believers should be addressing thought-provoking questions as to whether they have been practicing what they are taught at Church, or any Christian fellowship, or not. To be successful in life, we should really be doers of the word and not hearers only (Jos. 1:8).

### **Paul learned to forgive and not fight his accusers**

When a person chooses his/her own way and becomes rebellious to the saving grace and fellowship of God, the result is that the wrath of God continues to live with the person until Christ returns. But when the person turns to God through Christ and asks for forgiveness, God answers the one (Eph. 1:7-8), and forgives the sinner. In fact, that's why Jesus Christ died on the cross to proclaim forgiveness to mankind (1 Pet. 2:20-24) so that

the blessings of God will be enjoyed by the believer. For example, all the promises of God as King David mentioned in Psalm 23 will be experienced by the person, "...His goodness and mercies continue to follow the person throughout life (vs. 6).

God does not only forgive and bless believers but has also set the example of forgiveness for believers to follow. When the Lord Jesus taught the disciples to pray He said, "...and forgive us as...we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mark 11:25). This means that forgiveness on the part of believers is a condition for us to also receive forgiveness of our sins from God and answers to our prayers. Stephen, followed the example of Christ to the point of death when He said, "Father forgive them..." as he was being stoned to death (Luke 23:34; cf. Acts 7:50).

The Apostle Paul, demonstrated forgiveness after his life underwent transformation as a result of his conversion to Christianity. As a Jew, more so a Pharisee, he understood all the processes involved in dealing with someone who had offended another as stipulated in the Old Testament. The underlying factor was simple, "to pay evil for evil." But when he came to know the Lord and understood the importance of forgiveness, he did not only practice it but also taught Christians to do same. In Romans 12:14-21, Apostle Paul under the influence of the Spirit of God, laid down some of the excellent ways to practice forgiveness as a Christian:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse...Live in harmony with one another. Do not repay anyone evil for evil...If it is possible, as far as it depends

on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge...but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Clearly, if believers continue to pursue the principles of scripture concerning forgiveness, we will be able to live acceptable lives before the Lord and receive answers to our prayers. We will live in harmony with all people, enjoy healthy living since our hearts are free from bitterness that can wear us down, and be able to overcome the devil because he will not have any hold on us for not being able to forgive others.

### **Paul was prepared to endure persecution/hardship**

Paul is the apostle whose suffering and endurance in times of persecution have challenged believers across the centuries. Everyone who has read Paul's letters in the New Testament thoroughly could imagine some of the persecutions and suffering Paul went through. But he was able to stand firmly (endure) in these hardships (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 11:23-29). In spite of the persecutions, Apostle Paul consistently pressed on to know God better and also take care of the church. At a point, he himself confessed, "...I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ

Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). Apostle Paul’s sufferings included the following:

- Persecution
- Voluntary imposition of hardships
- Unmitigated hardship

While the first two are easily understandable, the third is characteristic of his time of which both believers and unbelievers alike suffered from. But how did Paul behave during such times? Did he complain and murmur against God for his predicaments, or turn from the ministry? God forbid! Rather, Paul’s suffering served as inspiration to forward the cause of the gospel. His experiences became a testimony and a challenge unto others. He endured much suffering with great joy because of his knowledge of God’s faithfulness. He is one of the apostles who really suffered for the cause of the gospel. No wonder, Paul later mentioned his chief desire in life in Philippians 1:20-21: “...For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

### **Chapter summary**

There is much difference between communicating what God has done for people and testifying to the truth through personal experience. Apostle Paul was a living testimony because he shared his life experiences with his hearers. In this chapter, light has been thrown on some of the strategies of Paul to achieve success in ministry. It has been mentioned that the apostle followed a carefully devised plan for his work. The apostle was neither prepared to allow his needs to hinder the flow of the gospel nor

become a burden on the churches. So, he engaged in some tent-making business in order to generate funds to support himself and his ministry team. He quickly learned to forgive his offenders and not fight his accusers, and was prepared to endure all kinds of persecutions. In the next chapter, we would look at how these and many other strategies enabled Paul to fulfill the mandate God gave him.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **HOW DID PAUL FULFILL HIS DIVINE MANDATE?**

To what extent does becoming a Christian benefit the believer? Is it in material wealth, body health, status in society, or what? While many people without knowledge of the will of God might make earthly gains for the Christian life their priority, the true answer is rather the opposite. According to the scriptures, the first benefit is the believers' blessings of eternal life through the Spirit who seals us into the position of children of God: heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, believers are special people called out of the world to be God's chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a peculiar race to declare the praise of Him who saved them out of darkness into light (1 Pet. 2:9). These are the issues that constitute the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. It is after these are secured that "all other things including material blessings are added" in accordance with God's perfect purposes for each individual (Matt. 6:31-33).

For Apostle Paul, there were no arguments about his priorities after he surrendered to the Lordship of Christ and securing his 'sonship' in God on the road to Damascus. He did not want to be disobedient to the 'heavenly vision to serve God and be a witness for Christ' (Acts 26:15-20). By so doing he would fulfill the message of 1 Peter 2:9. This called for the need to devise ways to satisfy God's call for

him. A few of the ways by which he was able to fulfill his ministry will be discussed here.

### **Paul became an Ambassador of Christ**

What is the world's or your community's greatest need? Why hasn't this greatest need been met? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? The answers to these questions are the reason why God called Paul to be His ambassador to the Gentile world. Through his service to the Lord Jesus Christ as a preacher, Apostle Paul became one of the Lord's greatest ambassadors to the world at the time. He spearheaded the message of God's saving grace and power of deliverance from all the shackles of Satan in many places. He became a champion for breaking new grounds for the establishment of the New Testament Church of our Lord.

As a result of his pioneering role in the Apostolic Church in the Roman world, he faced numerous oppositions, challenges, and trials. He faced both physical and spiritual obstacles but still persisted in his call to be Christ's ambassador. Most of his foes were Jewish religious leaders and people who professed to be Christians but were teachers of false doctrines, as well as worshippers of the many idols of the Roman Empire. These were the key groups that Paul and the other Apostles contended with as the Lord's ambassadors, but they still stood for the Lord unto death.

Joseph, for example, is one of the Old Testament characters who served as a worthy ambassador of God. He was born to Jacob and Rachael in his old age (Gen. 30:22-

24; 37:1-28). As a teenager, he was sold by his brothers into slavery and ended up at the house of Potiphar, a high official in Egypt. When he resisted the temptation to fall for his master's wife, he landed in prison. But God brought him out and presented him before the ruler of Egypt as interpreter of Pharaoh's dream.

At the zenith of his life, Joseph was the second in command or Prime Minister to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Through his lifestyle and services, he brought honor to the name of God in Egypt. As part of the favors he received for fruitful and faithful service, his extended family comprising the father Jacob and his wives, children, grand-children, and servants were saved from a severe famine because they were accepted by Pharaoh into Egypt where there was enough food, and granted the choicest land where they would find enough pasture for themselves and their animals.

What really made Joseph a favored child before God and the father, Israel? These texts show the things that brought honor to Joseph: Genesis 39:2-9, 21; 40:16, 25-36.

- He hated sin, honored his master, and feared God.
- Even before Potiphar, he proved to be a capable manager of his master's house.
- He humbled himself and sought God's face in order to honor and glorify God.

Therefore, God also honored him by granting him the ability to interpret dreams, a gift that opened a great door and brought him from prison to the palace, in accordance with Proverbs 18:16, which reads: "A gift opens a way...into the presence of the great."

All Christians are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). We should therefore realize the basis of our commitment and whom we are to serve. Since it is in response to our salvation which is by grace through Christ and not by any works of righteousness, it is spontaneous, that is, as soon as we experience the blessings of new life in Christ. Our service in the vineyard of God should involve our whole stay here on earth. In God's vineyard there is no passiveness, for we were not saved to stay on the fence but to affect the world around us. Scripture says that the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment while continuing their punishment (1 Pet. 2:9). Every believer is called to pursue excellence and never to soil our garments with spots and wrinkle. The believers' commitment to spiritual growth should improve our service qualities as ambassadors. The example of Christ should guide all believers even as we decide to press on in His good cause (Luke 2:21-22, 52; John 4:34).

### **Paul championed the true message of the gospel**

As a person who had a spectacular encounter with the resurrected Lord, Paul was well positioned to communicate the right spiritual food and drink that would satisfy the hunger and thirst of lost souls. Unlike others who were holding on to false doctrines, insights from Paul were truth and would nurture converts in the Lord. This section discusses some of the Apostle's messages.

**A. Once enemies of God, now His heirs:** With various contrasts and pictures, Paul makes it very clear that

salvation in Christ has made us part of a new society (Eph. 2:11-22). Christ has accomplished what man has failed to do through the ages. Thus Paul took a careful look at God's new society and planned how he could be a part of it. In the book of Ephesians, Paul painted a very striking contrast between what believers were before coming to know Christ and after knowing him (vs. 11-13, 19). Twice in verses 11-12 Paul asked believers to "remember" what their status was before they came to know Christ. But why is it so important to remember what we were before we were saved? Through the blood of Jesus, deep and divisive walls of hostilities, separations and exclusion have been broken down.

**B. Once under a curse, now enjoying blessings:** Being made alive and being made friends, what responsibility is there to tell that good news to others? Paul realized that once he was poor spiritually, but now he was tapping the unsearchable riches of Christ. He saw very keenly his privilege and responsibility to appropriate the unsearchable riches of Christ in his life. He prays that we too would come to know fully the deep seated love of Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians chapter 1, Apostle Paul unfolded all the blessings we have in Christ. That prompted him to pray that we would see them more clearly. In the subsequent chapters, Paul unfolds the mystery that is no longer hidden. Four times in chapter 2:1-9, Apostle Paul repeats that he has the privilege and responsibility to reveal to believers a mystery that God has kept hidden since the foundation of the world. Why might Paul be prompted to pray for us each time he thinks about what God has done for us in Christ? What

could we learn from this pattern of praying? Believers like the apostle can look and see what can make them effective ambassadors of Christ in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

**C. Once strong in flesh, now strong in spirit:** God uses different means to keep his servants from self exaltation so that they do not fall into condemnation. Not even the Lord Jesus Christ himself was excluded from the temptations of the flesh, yet He was without sin. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He admitted: "The soul is indeed willing but the flesh is weak..." Such a humble admission caused the Lord to pray and surrender to a higher presence, the Heavenly Father (Heb. 5:7). Again, the scriptures say that whoever exalts himself will be humbled but whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Consequently believers are to submit and live in absolute humility before God.

**D. Believers should submit to authority:** One of the important requirements of transformation is submission. It is an ingredient which cannot be left out in the whole process. In fact, it might even become the mind's starting point. For a person to change his or her mind-set and evolve a new set of ideas is a typical case of submission of the self. The New Testament also speaks on the issue of submission to those in authority and the government of the day. The first seven verses of Roman 13 establish the authority for local and federal governments and give God's endorsement for those in authority. These verses additionally bind civil laws on all people, especially Christians.

If believers are seeking to develop a balanced biblical understanding of the roles of the state and church, then central to it will be the truth that the state's authority and that of the Church are both given by God. So, governments, whether good like the Medo-Persian government of Cyrus, or bad like the Babylonian government of Nebuchadnezzar, are of God because He ordains the leaders and permits their establishment. Therefore, no power is sufficient to resist such authority since doing so is tantamount to rebelling against Him and bringing condemnation to the person (Rom. 13:2).

Explaining why governments are of God, Apostle Paul in Romans 13:1-7 strongly affirms that those in authority have received the mandate from God to perform certain responsibilities. Among these are the fact that;

- They should do good to believers (vs. 4a).
- They are God's agents of wrath to bring punishment on the evil doers (vs. 4b).
- They are God's servants working God's will of governing people (vs. 6).

God's mandate entrusted to the state is therefore for those in authority to concern themselves not only with ensuring good but to also deal with evil in society, that is, to promote and reward good and restrain and punish evil.

When the state punishes evildoers, it is functioning as the servant of God to execute His wrath upon them, and that the punishment of evil which is God's prerogative is now being exercised through agents like law courts, kings, governors, etc. For, it is to punish evil that those in authority bear the sword (Rom. 13:4). The role of the state is not only

to punish evil, however, it is also to promote and reward goodness although this positive function has in many cases been neglected. The authorities are also God's servants for the mobilization and utilization of taxes for the betterment of the community. Consequently, Christians should accept their tax obligations with good grace, paying their dues in full both nationally and locally, and to give proper esteem to the officials who collect and apply them.

Additionally, Paul's view in Romans 13 concerning respect for authority by believers is supported by his letter to Titus which reminds believers to be submissive to rulers and authority, to be obedient and to be ready to do whatever is good (Titus 3:1). Nevertheless, the people of God have sometimes resisted authorities when their law(s) contravene(s) God's laws, in which case God lends His sovereign support to His saints (Dan. 3:1-27; 6:1-11; Acts 4:1-12). Because every government and authority is set up and also removed by God himself, as was acknowledged by King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:17), believers should accept and give them the due honor. Also, once God purposely set up such authorities to fulfill His divine plans it is expedient that believers also intercede for them. Paul's admonishing to Timothy supports the prayer which has to be said on behalf of those in authority and also adds impetus to the fact that authorities have been set up to fulfill God's will (1 Tim. 2:1).

In support of respect for authority, Apostle Peter also states that believers should be subject, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by God to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. He added

that it is God's will that by doing good believers should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:13-15). Therefore, the believers of old submitted to authorities set up by God, except on occasions where they defended God's precepts against that of men.

Any worshipper of God who recognizes that the state's authority and ministry comes from God will do his/her best to submit to its authority, honor its representatives, pay the required taxes as Jesus also did (Matt. 17:27), and pray for its welfare. Such people also encourage the state to fulfill its God appointed role and in so far as they have opportunity, actively participate in its work.

### **Paul engaged in well organized follow-up**

The greatest miracle that can occur in a man's life is the conversion of his soul from darkness into light, the fruit of our witnessing. Now after a person is "born" in the Lord (or converted into Christ), how do believers ensure that the convert is fed with the right food at the right time? How can the person grow into a mature Christian and be able to stand on his/her faith in all situations?

Follow-up is a process of bringing up converts to one's faith to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (Col. 1:28; John 15:16). Background questions like the following are helpful:

- What is follow-up and why is it necessary?
- How is follow-up related to effective witnessing?
- What is involved in follow-up?
  - i) Who should begin the process?
  - ii) What should be discussed during the follow-up?
  - iii) What materials are needed in the follow-up process?

iv) What message is needed to challenge the converts?

Apostle Paul made sure that he met all the required steps to convert and also nurture the person into maturity. He was able to achieve his objective through effective follow-up processes. There are enough records in Acts of the Apostles, especially between chapters 13 and 20 to show Paul's outreach to some cities in the then known world with the message of Christ and the follow-up to the converts he made. This also means that not until enough steps are taken to address the myriad of challenges that confront people daily, there remains a lot to be done in the quest to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **Paul purposed to make disciples not just converts**

Successful evangelism is not the making of converts but the making of disciples through follow-up. In all the books of the Gospel, those who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry were called disciples. Additionally, the Great Commission that the Lord Jesus Christ gave in Matthew 28:19-20 shows that He was not only expecting people to just respond to the message of the gospel; He wanted those He had sent to make disciples of the converts. In other words, the aim of the Lord is to make His followers to see themselves as disciples and also accept the responsibility of making others disciples (1 Peter 2:21; John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:2).

The word "disciple" simply means "one who learns instruction from a master." The word is also used for a transformation of an apprentice to a tradesman. In applying the definition to Christianity, a disciple is one of the following:

- A disciple is a person who lives continually by the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not an occasional follower of the words of Jesus but rather committed to follow the teaching of the master in a disciplined way.
- A disciple is a person who commits his/her life completely to the Lordship of Christ. This commitment should be total. Jesus, apart from laying down His life for us, is totally committed to us, so He wants his followers to demonstrate the same commitment.
- A disciple is one who is dedicated to the fulfillment of Christ's commission (Matt. 28:18-20). The goal of every disciple should be that the converts they win also become disciples. It is the command of the Master. Every obedient disciple would be thus minded.

**Disciples have privileges:** Being a disciple is a firm decision to follow the Lord without turning back. The disciple needs to see God as a loving Master who only wants the good of His people. What is the disciple's position in the Lord? Being well convinced in his position as a child of God having peace with the father, the disciple comes to the position that nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Pet. 2:21; John 8:31-32; 2 Tim. 2:2). The disciple is a privileged person because of the following reasons:

- The person is called by God (Eph. 1:4-5).
- The Lord Jesus is his/her Savior (Rom. 5:8).
- He/she is a child of God (Gal. 4:6-7).
- The Holy Spirit empowers him/her to witness (Acts 1:8).
- The person has peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

**Disciples need great care:** In light of some of the privileges of disciples, it will be expedient for them to have regular self examination. For example, as disciples we should not be living as we want, but as God wants in every situation. We should always be guided in the things of Christ Jesus and live our daily lives manifesting “Agape” love towards God and others as God commands (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 John 4:10-11; 16:13-14; 22:37-39).

In summary, a Christian disciple is a person who is determined to follow Jesus Christ with the desire to learn from Him and live according to His example. Such a person lives in fruit bearing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:4-5), and is committed to showing sacrificial love for others (John 13:34-35). This love is a selfless one that does not look for return, i.e., ‘Agape.’ When a tree is full of sap it can no longer hold, the result is fruit-bearing. In the same way, when a Christian is filled with the spirit of Christ, the result is fruit bearing. Until a disciple is able to bear fruit for the Master, the person’s growth and maturity is somehow impaired. Such a person becomes a stunted Christian.

### **Paul became a spiritual warrior**

Life is warfare because scripture says that mankind is continuously wrestling not with flesh and blood but with spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12). These forces comprise Satan and his host of fallen spirits (demons) that were cast out from heaven and have formed a kingdom to counter the perfect plan of God for mankind (Rev. 12:7-9). The Lord Jesus Christ himself faced Satan during His earthly days and overcame him. The devil sought to frustrate God’s plan for

His life by putting him into great trials and temptation. But the Lord still prevailed; He hated sin and feared God. In the end, He went to the cross and purchased salvation for all mankind. That is how the Lord overcame Satan, by going to the cross to defeat him by His death and making an open show of His triumph over the enemy.

The devil sought to frustrate God's plan for Joseph's life by putting him into great trials and temptations by using his master's wife to seduce him. When Joseph prevailed by fleeing from her he was framed and sent to prison. Yet Joseph held on to His God until He brought him up and honored him in the whole land of Egypt. He rose to the position of next in command to the Pharaoh in Egypt, the land of his enslavement. In the same way, the devil sought to frustrate God's plan for Paul's life by putting him into great trials and temptations and imprisonments. In spite of all these, Paul also held on to His God and never gave up. He noticed that the devil was always on the move and so he had to travail in prayer in order to take authority over everywhere the Lord would lead him.

As Christians, we engage in spiritual warfare when we realize that without Christ, the world would be overwhelmed by the evil one through all the unpleasant things he has planned and executing. Engaging in continuous spiritual warfare may cost us a lot of things; education, privacy, time, money, etc, but we still need to do it because we are living in a world which has a lot of attractions to sin. The world hates believers without cause because they testify to the truth of salvation in Christ. Thus, there are many types of baits and schemes that Satan employs to trap believers. Fortunately,

believers continue to overcome and escape these traps because the Lord Jesus Christ continues to fight for us.

### **Paul mentored other potential leaders in ministry**

In spite of Paul's numerous engagements, the apostle Paul still took pains to develop other leaders.

**Timothy**: He was one of such NT leaders that Paul developed. He was a native of Lystra; his mother was a Jewess and his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). His mother and grandmother had instructed him in the scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Timothy was esteemed by the believers of both Lystra and Iconium that the leaders of these cities persuaded Paul to take him along when the latter visited them (Acts 16:2). So, during Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy was circumcised by Paul (Acts 16:3) and was added to the team. Timothy thus became a 'son' to Paul and accompanied the apostle in a lot of his missionary trips. He also became a regular messenger of Paul to some of the churches he established.

Timothy accompanied Paul on the trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-5), and was also with Paul during the Apostle's trip to Rome where he wrote three of his prison epistles (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Phile. 1:1ff). During one of Timothy's trips to Corinth Paul encouraged the believers to accept him (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11). On another occasion when Paul was quite busy visiting some of the churches, he left Timothy at Ephesus to take care of the church there (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul instructed 'his trusted son' to deal with false teachers, supervise public worship, and assist in the appointment of

church leaders. Timothy is believed to have become the first bishop of the Church at Ephesus. Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy from prison in Rome (2 Tim. 1:8; 4:16-18) towards the end of his life around AD 66. In this letter, Paul encouraged Timothy in the work of the ministry. Among other important issues, Paul urged Timothy to exercise his spiritual gift (2 Tim. 1:6), and to hold on to the strong testimony for Christ in the wake of obvious apostasy (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

**Titus**: He was another New Testament leader that Paul developed. He was likely a Gentile from Macedonia (Gal. 2:1-5), who was led to Christ by Paul (2 Titus 1:4). Titus was probably part of Paul's team in Jerusalem at the time some Jewish Christians insisted on his circumcision which Paul refused. Like Timothy, Titus also became a 'son' to Paul and most probably accompanied the apostle in a lot of his missionary trips. For example, Titus was connected with the church at Corinth as one who enthusiastically volunteered to help. With time, he developed great affection for the believers there (2 Cor. 7:15; 8:17).

After Paul's release from his house arrest in Rome, it is believed that Titus travelled with him to do missionary work in Crete, an island on the Mediterranean, and also evangelized some towns in the region. When Paul was unable to stay, he left Titus at Crete to complete the organization of the congregation in that region, an issue that led Paul to write to Titus to find out the progress of the work and to encourage him (Titus 1:5).

### **Paul was able to share his faith through the Epistles**

To ensure that the gospel was firmly established in the areas that he had ministered, Apostle Paul used the medium of letter writing to leave a lasting impression on the Church. He wrote more letters (or epistles) than any of the OT or NT authors. While some of the letters were written to the local churches he established in some of the cities, others were written to individuals on various issues. While some were written when he was living as a free man, others were written when he was in prison.

As examples of this discussion, the letter to the Ephesians is believed to have been written by Paul while in prison in Rome (Eph. 1:15) to the gentile believers (Eph. 2:11) living in that region of Asia Minor. Accordingly, Paul established these churches on his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23), and wrote this Epistle to the Galatians from either Ephesus or Corinth, sometime between AD 53 and 57. Paul's letter to the Philippians was probably addressed to the nucleus church at Lydia's house (Acts 16:15). The Church had been founded by the Apostle Paul in AD 52, and it represented the first major penetration of the gospel into the Gentile territories (Phil. 4:14-15).

At the onset of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, Apostle Paul went to Galatia during his second missionary journey after he left Athens (Acts 16:6; 18:23). It was probably at Galatia that he became acquainted with Priscilla and Aquila with whom he stayed and joined in the tent making business. After Paul left the place, he wrote to the church in Galatia to reject the teachings of some "apostles"

to observe the law of the Jews. He argued that the Jewish law was just temporary and was intended to come to an end with the arrival of Christ.

During the spread of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD the Apostle Paul came to establish a church at Thessalonica, during his second and third missionary journeys. Timothy's report from Thessalonica after Paul had left and had sent him to check on their welfare led Paul to write to the Thessalonians. Paul probably wrote the letter to the Romans, a body which was composed largely of gentiles and a small Jewish group (Rom. 1:13), for the purpose of instructing the church in the basic doctrines related to salvation, the unbelief of the Jews, and how Gentiles had benefitted from such attitude of the Jews. When Paul was later imprisoned, he might have heard about the problem in Colossae from Epaphras and thus he wrote the letter to the Colossians to rebuke, correct, and teach them the truth of God's word.

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, written as personal letters, have always been regarded as forming a separate group of letters. The two epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus, because of their special instruction for church leaders, are commonly known as Pastoral Epistles. In these letters, Paul communicated his thoughts and feelings in ministry to others. Paul's letter to Philemon is somewhat a personal one, though it was addressed to a specific individual, Philemon, about Onesimus, a slave believed to have come from Colossae (Col. 4:9). He was perhaps guilty of stealing from his master, Philemon, and had escaped

from Colossae to Rome. Apparently, therefore, Paul wrote to reconcile these two people.

### **Paul worked to create funds to support the ministry**

Apostle Paul did not want to become a burden on the church or individuals. Neither was he prepared to let monetary constraints hinder the move of the gospel. So he created a means to financial independence such that he was able to take care of himself and his followers. Paul's approach to economic independence and self-sufficiency led him to engage in what is called 'tent-making (Acts 20:34-35). Also, in Acts 20:33, it is written: "I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions."

But does the practice of the Apostle to self-sufficiency in ministry apply to contemporary ministry? By all means, yes! In his preamble to a detailed discussion on this issue, one scholar noted:

In Western Christendom the order or office of ministry most commonly takes shape in the tradition of a professional clergy with a professional theological education. But this form of ministry, if held exclusively or normatively, has proven inadequate to the contemporary mission of the church both in the industrialized metropolis of the West and in the rural areas of Asia and Africa. So the cry arises for a so-called "tent-making ministry," for the ordination of men authorized to serve as priests or pastors while earning their living, like the Apostle Paul, at secular occupations.<sup>189</sup>

As a pacesetter, the apostle engaged in the tent ministry not only because he could use his experience to challenge his immediate mentees and later generation Christians and ministers, but to also help the needy. So in Acts 20:33, it is written: “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak.” It is incumbent on the Church to understand and accept that:

The ordination of persons engaged in secular occupations may well provide pastors and priests in areas of Africa and Asia where the church is weak, may open new possibilities for metropolitan missions (especially among groups with whom the minister seeks to establish his identification by participating in their work and their common life), and may even serve to enrich the congregational life in churches which have not known such a ministry. When such results ensue, no man makes tents in vain.<sup>190</sup>

If we consider the challenging financial situations that some ministers of the Gospel have faced and continue to do so, we cannot agree more with the above quotation. Some have been through financial hell and fought both spiritual and physical battles to gain economic independence. And some of us are still engaged in such warfare. But one day, hopefully, all will be over; for now though, it is not.

### **Paul lived all his life for Christ**

At the close of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that He had

taught them (Matt. 28:18-20). As a result of the Great Commission, Paul decided to become fully committed to this life-long process and live all his life to fulfill this purpose. He once said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..." (Rom. 1:16). It is imperative that we obey the Great Commission. How did Paul ensure a continuous increase in his service to the Lord? He counted all earthly pleasures and possessions as nothing compared to the desire to experience Christ more and to live and serve Him better (Phil. 3:7-10).

The apostle's effectiveness at winning people for Christ is a testimony to this fact. The Apostle demonstrated that the believer needs to understand the fundamental issue of Christian witnessing; that Christ's death has given mankind salvation and his resurrection had brought us hope, should be a basic message that every believer can present (1 John 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:1ff). Additionally, believers need to know why it is necessary to present such a message to others. As is practical in the Christian life, we are supposed to follow Paul's example.

Believers need not to be only hearers of God's word but to be doers and also to practice what is professed. To pursue such agenda effectively, every believer needs to learn how to witness, i.e., to know some ways of presenting the message of the gospel effectively. Christian service is pledging or yielding oneself to the Lord and being loyal to every cause that He takes. This means that one sees the Lord as the Master and oneself a servant. What is demanding is one's level of commitment which would reflect

from the one's spiritual growth. Every believer's service enables the person to live in expectation of Christ's coming. Service also results in a believer's gradual transformation into the image of God, and thus becomes much more committed to Christ (Luke. 21:36; Mark 14:38; 1 Cor. 11:26; Acts 1:8). Service will plunder your ambition and bring honor to your Master. The following steps might be of help:

- Believers need to love and serve God first, others second and ourselves last. In every situation in which they find themselves, every disciple of Jesus should ask the question, "What would Jesus do"?
- Believers need to live continuously in God's word as His disciples so that we will know Him better, and then we will have increased ability to know what Jesus would do in each situation.

The word of the Lord applies equally to us who believe in Jesus and we have a responsibility to pay heed to them. Every Christian has been commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to be "fishers-of-men," and this life-long occupation can be an exciting adventure. In the contemporary world we can be effective in fishing for lost souls and continue to disciple these converts.

### **Paul pressed on to the end**

Though Paul's initial ministry was within the Jewish community, as a result of the Jewish persecutions, he had to turn from them to the gentiles. But after a long period of ministry in the gentile world, Apostle Paul returned to Jerusalem. It was during this time that he was caught by the Jews and brought before the Sanhedrin. Paul faced a series

of trials in which he realized that the Jews ultimate plot was to eliminate him. Fearing for his life, he appealed to Caesar during his trial before Festus in Caesarea. This necessitated that he be brought and tried in Rome, so the apostle Paul was transported to Rome, where once again, he faced a series of trials.

Before his last trial, Paul wrote to Timothy thus: "...The time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith..." (2 Tim. 4:6-8). The maestro of Christ's ministry to the Gentile nations now admitted that the time had come for him to depart this temporal world for the eternal one. Indeed, he pressed on till he breathed his last for Christ. As a true commander of God's army, and a General as such, Paul became totally committed to Jesus, making Him Lord of his life till the end. Paul is believed to have been martyred for the sake of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in Rome during the Nero persecutions between AD 64 and 68. The legacy that he left for the Christian Church is too huge to be quantified.

### **Chapter summary**

So far, we have considered how Paul fulfilled his divine mandate. He became an ambassador of Christ and championed the true message of the gospel. Paul purposed to make disciples rather than converts so he engaged in well organized follow-up to nurture his converts. In order to overcome the enemies of the gospel, Apostle Paul became a spiritual warrior and engaged in continuous spiritual warfare. He mentored other potential leaders and oftentimes

delegated some to perform important duties. When his movements were hindered, he share his faith through the epistles, and used the same as a tool for follow-up. Paul determined to live all his life for Christ and therefore pressed on to the very end. But how was the apostle able to excel in all these areas? Was his great expertise a result of his educational background and ministerial training? We would see how these questions would be addressed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PAUL'S EXPERTISE: IS IT A CASE FOR MINISTERIAL TRAINING?**

Education has always been primary in the scheme of God. The Bible shows clearly the link between wisdom, knowledge, and discretion (Prov. 8:12). Right from the genesis of the formation of his chosen nation Israel, God gave indication of one major reason why Abraham had been called. God said of Abraham: "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19).

By this intimation, God made the fore-patriarch an instructor, and his family and household students of divine revelation. After the chosen nation had been formed, God reiterated this vision to them as part of the stipulations of the covenant. In Deuteronomy 6:7, the Lord instructed the leaders of the Israelite community concerning the teaching of the Law: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Now the issue is whether acquisition of knowledge through formal education is important for ministerial service. The answer is obviously yes, and there is ample evidence

from scripture to prove this point. Right from the period of the Judges, Prophet Samuel, after the death of the High Priest, Eli, and upon his assumption of office as Eli's successor, saw the corruption that had engulfed the ministers at the Tabernacle and set up what is believed to be the first ministerial school in the Bible, the 'School of the prophets,' at his hometown, Rama (1 Sam. 10:5; cf. 19:19). With time, many of such prophetic schools (or guilds) spread to other parts of Israel such that at the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, such schools existed at places like Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and Samaria (1 Kings 20:35-37; 2 Kings 2:1-15; 6:1-7). The prophetic schools probably continued even till the days of the ministry of the Minor Prophets (Amos 7:14).

In the NT, the Lord Jesus Christ himself took his disciples through regular tutelage for not less than three years before sending them out. This clearly demonstrates the foundation that the Lord laid for formal ministerial training before anyone is ushered into the field to engaged effective Christian service.

### **Paul applied knowledge in ministry**

If there is any tool that was Apostle Paul's greatest asset after his encounter with Christ and subsequent transformation then it is education. The Apostle to the Gentile world was able to serve God in various capacities, and make very significant contributions to the growth of Christianity mostly because of his educational background. Paul understood the importance of knowledge as a minister of God, for it is written, "...My people are destroyed from lack

of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject as my priest..." (Hosea 4:6).

Paul was a Pharisee who studied under one of the reputable Jewish leaders at the time. He testified in Acts 22:3 as follows: "...Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers..." In addition to that, Paul made strenuous efforts to have engagement with the issues of Christ after his conversion, and he became very knowledgeable. As a result, he understood the scriptures and could deal with most of the defenders of Judaism with maximum competency. It is thus not surprising that Paul lectured in the school of Tyrannous in Ephesus, and was able to engage and challenge and probably defeat some of the Greek philosophers. Besides, Paul stood and defended the Christian faith in the face of the Roman authority, as attested to by the many courts of the leaders where he was dragged in order to defend his faith.

Above all, Paul's contribution of thirteen books to the New Testament, and the legacy that he left in terms of expansion of the Church, his demonstration of zeal, working of miracles, and other virtues cannot be overemphasized. The Apostle's ministry revealed that he was not only knowledgeable, because though knowledge in itself is power, it puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1). He was one person who effectively combined academic 'know-how' with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to achieve break-through in the gentile world. Both Prophet Daniel and Apostle Paul's success in ministry testifies to the fact that having the gifts of the Holy Spirit and zeal are not just enough for ministry; formal training is

very important in smoothing all the rough edges and further equipping the person.

Apostle Paul, realizing the importance of acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills for effective ministry, advised his 'son' Timothy thus, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, the importance of education to the minister cannot be over-emphasized, and Paul's expertise and effectiveness in ministry is not only an advert for ministerial training but a pointer to that direction. In fact, his success in ministry is an excellent case for a systematic approach to the study of the scriptures and ministerial services under the tutelage of matured and qualified persons.

However, somehow, some of the expectations of God are not being fully realized today. The reason is that some of the people He decides to use for ministry are deviating from the right course, thereby bringing the ministers into disrepute and dragging the image of the Church into the mud.

### **Not overnight prophets with 'big titles'**

Any sensitive observer might have seen that there is a new trend presently concerning a good number of Christian ministers. It is becoming apparent that quite a number of the ministers are not prepared to pass through the rigorous exercise of ministerial training in order to become well equipped to meet the ever increasing challenges that false religions are offering. They claim to have been called

and given spiritual knowledge by God so there is no need for formal theological education. All of a sudden, it appears like assuming the office of the prophet has become the most lucrative ministry in Christianity. While some are laying claims to divine powers given to them by God to work all sorts of miracles, others hide under the guise of spiritual discernment to give all forms of strange directions and counseling to gullible and unsuspecting followers.

Let me be candid enough to say that I am not underestimating the power of God to perform these feats. It is important that we should not forget the warning that scripture provides that Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Therefore, when the body of Christ begins to have a boom of ministers who have strong dislike for studying scriptures, but show great interest in the miracle-working power of scripture, then we ought to be careful. To make matters worse, it is not only the lack of formal education that is becoming a challenge to Christianity in contemporary times in our part of the world, there is now a hot chase for 'big titles' in order to cover up the deficiency and rather gain recognition.

### **Importance of ministerial training in colleges/seminaries**

In Romans 10:14-15; Apostle Paul raised some key questions on the training and commissioning of ministers. He asked: "How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" But the follow-up questions should be, how can they be sent unless they are trained? Speaking on the topic, "The importance of Education to the Minister," at the graduation

of Certificate in Theology graduands of Ghana Christian University College, at the satellite campus, Kumasi, Francis Asante-Duku, a Lecturer of the institution emphasized the importance of education to those who are in charge of God's congregation. He described some of the very strange and unhealthy developments in Christianity during the period of the rise of 'Charismatism' and 'Pentecostalism,' particularly in Ghana by quoting another scholar thus:

...Most of the new charismatic and Pentecostal churches were accusing the mainline churches of religious titles and subsequently condemned it with no uncertain terms. However the tables have turned. Now the leaders of these charismatic and Pentecostals churches are scrambling for the religious titles, as though one needs them to be able to enter heaven. Proper formal education therefore may lead one to acquire appropriate and dignified academic or religious titles deserving of the status rather than hoisting self acclaimed titles on their heads where they call themselves Doctors and Professors.<sup>191</sup>

To forestall this trend, it is imperative to create platforms that will challenge our audience to the importance of formal education in ministry. Seeking ministerial training is thus one of the most positive steps towards achieving effective goals in our God-given mandate on earth; the mandate of reaching the lost world for eternal glory. Additionally, such a step is necessary since some of the people have wrong perceptions and orientations to what happens in most of the institutions of ministerial training.

The engagement in Christian training and the study of Christian doctrine are often thought to be dry, uninteresting and even unspiritual. Some people believe that the study of theology will rather destroy one's faith. This is a wrong notion. For we need to systematically identify all that God has done for us so that we can enjoy the privileges given to us. The training of the minister exposes him to a world of knowledge and skill to efficiently handle the responsibilities that go with his ministry.<sup>192</sup>

There should be a calculated mechanism to address the negative mentalities. This can be done by seizing some of the opportunities that come our way to make a strong case in defense of the importance of education to the Christian minister. By such deliberate and collaborative effort, ministerial training will be appreciated, attractive to many, and people will pride themselves in it rather than in their ignorance.

In the world over, every professional prides himself or herself in the knowledge he or she has acquired in the field of his or her carrier. Clients who seek services from these professional persons and agencies look for qualification, proficiency and competence before they opt for their services. However, more often than not Christians do not want to care about the qualification, proficiency or competency of anyone who claim to be a man of God. They are satisfied in seeing him in a clerical collar or having a Bible in his hand. This is rather unfortunate. For which one of us would want to risk his life in the hands of a person who claims to be a medical practitioner but having no medical training and only prides himself by the use of

common sense in his diagnosis. Yet Christians do not care about who is leading them on the most important journey of life into heaven. As a result ministers pride themselves in their ignorance of the very profession they have been called into.<sup>193</sup>

The preceding quote ends on a rather unfortunate note. The careless attitude of those who lead the church in recent times has become a recipe for a stunted, compromising, and unproductive body that cannot make any meaningful and fruitful impact as far as the Great Commission is concerned. There is reference to the period after the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD when Christian heretics were defeated by knowledgeable Christian leaders, particularly the Church Fathers.

From the second century after the deaths of the apostles, the emergence of false doctrines and teachings such as Marcionism, Gnosticism, Montanism, etc., would have truncated the life of the church had it not been the grace of God given to such men as Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Origen, Alexander Bishop of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Cyprian, etc, with profound educational background from the Catechetical schools and other theological seminaries. These men rose to the occasion and defended the faith in the face of persecutions and heresies. Similarly, I believe God would also want us to be equipped to be able to defend the faith in the phase of religious liberalism and pluralism in the era of the new age be it Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, occultism, etc.<sup>194</sup>

There is the need for the Church to see formal education of its ministers as a necessity and not only a challenge, and then support ministers to pursue same in order to equip them thoroughly to face the present world. This is not to indicate that nothing is being done by the Church along that line. Obviously, there are some that are making efforts to educate their ministers. This is lauded by one writer thus:

In some of the orthodox churches, prospective pastors enter pastoral formation with first degree level qualifications and spend up to ten years in advanced academic and theological study up to the doctoral level, while being taken through their moral and spiritual paces to affirm their commitment to life-long uncontaminated pastoral work.<sup>195</sup>

Not only the Orthodox, but quite a number of Pentecostal and independent Charismatic churches are also making strides along that line. Nevertheless, much effort must still be put to arrest any unhealthy practices in Christian ministry. There is no doubt that for many of the ministers, clear evidence of their calling exists. What is left, however, is the knowledge base that will enable them to engage in a holistic ministry as the Lord himself and Apostle Paul practiced.

### **Financing ministerial training: the players**

The big issue is how ministers can be trained when there are no financiers. In order to address our topic, it is

important to establish the biblical context and background to ministerial training by considering the following questions:

- a)** When Samuel was given by the parents to be trained for God's ministry, who were responsible for financing his education? (1 Sam. 1:27-28; 2:11, 18-19, 26; 3:19-4:1)
- b)** Who were those responsible for providing the needs of the OT Prophetic guilds that were began by Prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 10:9), and later continued by Elijah, Elisha, and the other Prophets?
- c)** When one comes to the NT period, "who were responsible for the upkeep of the disciples that were called and trained by the Lord Jesus Christ?"
- d)** In Luke 10:2, the Lord Jesus Christ asked the disciple to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more people for the harvest because the harvest was plenty but the laborers were few. Who were to be responsible for the needs of the respondents during their training before they could be sent?

Understandably, in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century more than ever, there is an increasing need for quality Ministers to counter the spate of worldliness that is engulfing the Church and the world as a whole, and to nurture and equip the increasing number of converts in the body of Christ. But the big question is: who and where are the financiers of ministerial training? On the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Grant Hall, Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana, which fell on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2010, I delivered a talk on "Partnership in financing ministerial training," and raised a lot of pertinent issues. The talk is

premised on the observation that in contemporary times, financing ministerial training has become a major issue. It came out that it is about time the situation is considered seriously. That is, there is need to relook at the issue and address it in its proper context, in order to achieve the desired expectation. Some of the key issues are provided here for our perusal and subsequent appropriate action.

### **God: the main financier**

From the biblical point of view, God is the main financier of ministerial training. Yes, He is the one who calls people for His business, and it is He who trains and sends them out to do His work. Indeed, God provides all the means for anyone He calls during the period of training. God's providence is seen in terms of the way He leads the trainee into safe hands, provides means for food, shelter, protection, etc. For example, Moses was taken into the house of Pharaoh in Egypt, and then led into the house of Jethro in Midian, by God, where in both cases he received the needed training for ministry. God was with Samuel, in the days of his training in the hands of Eli at Shiloh. God made sure that the prophets and all who were involved in ministry, even in the NT period, were taken care of.

It was the Lord Jesus himself who cared for all the Apostles during their training time as disciples. God took care of Paul when he was called, and directed Barnabas to care for him. As the main financier of ministers-in-training, God has never failed in fulfilling His responsibility. He as Father is the one who continues to call and lead all of us

to the appropriate places in ministry. Now, if God is indeed taking care of all those that He calls, why are we not getting all the needed support from Him? Why are there lots of financial constraints in all ministerial training institutions, and a good number of trainees under financial pressure to meet demands for stationary, resource materials and other logistics, food, etc.? Definitely, there are key answers to these questions.

### **God's key partners and their roles**

The fact is, in God's divine plan, He chooses co-workers for His work (1 Cor. 3:9; 6:1). Thus, as the main financier, He has chosen some identified groups or parties to partner Him in the business. These responsible groups constitute what I refer to as 'the multi-lateral financial partners' to help God execute His purpose. This is where partnership in financing ministerial training is embedded. It is when these partners of God fail in their responsibilities that financing ministerial training becomes a problem. The groups or parties involved here are:

- the ministerial training schools
- the Church and Para-Church organizations
- state, societies, and organized bodies
- parents, family, philanthropic and concerned bodies
- the trainees or ministers themselves

The discussion would look at each partner briefly.

**1. The role of Ministerial training schools:** In the Biblical times, ministerial schools were under the supervision of experienced ministers of the day and it was the responsibility of these human authorities of the schools to cater for their trainee. For example,

- It was Jethro, a Priest of Midian, and his family that took care of Moses during his forty years training in the 'Wilderness Theological Seminary.'
- It was Eli's duty to find means to care for Samuel.
- It is likely that Samuel took charge of the members of the Prophetic guild at Naioth at Rama (1 Sam 19:18ff).
- Prophet Elijah, and later Elisha also shouldered the responsibilities of all under their care at places like Gilgal, Jericho, Samaria, etc. (2 Kings 20-4).
- The Lord Jesus Christ himself was responsible for the care of His disciples, that is, those that were called and trained by Him.

**2. The role of the Church:** The whole community of Israel was involved in ministerial training. Part of the food and provisions they brought to the Tabernacle were used to take care of young priests. In this way the church was playing her part either directly or indirectly. The situation did not change much in the NT period. The Lord's ministry was enhanced by the supplies that came from individual contributors and quite obviously the offerings from His congregation. Again, it is likely that a good portion of the supplies that Apostle Paul received from the churches were used solely to take care of all the ministers in training like

Timothy and Titus. Time will not permit me to elucidate on the support from the some of the churches to monasteries over the years.

**3. The role of the State:** In the days of the OT when the church was not different from the state, the ministers were supported by what the whole state brought to the treasury of the church. During that time, it was a Church-State unity, where the state saw the role of the ministers as complimentary so the two organs operated as a unit. To this end, all the OT kings of Israel, both of the United and Divided kingdoms, who recognized the important role of the servants of God and supported them did well, while the kings who did heed to their messages failed.

Examples are:

- Kings like David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, are prominent among those who recognized the complementary role of God's servants, so they did well.
- Kings like Saul, Joash, Ahab, Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, etc., refused to recognize the role of God's servants and they failed.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD till very recent past, there has existed a clear separation between church and state such that each has tried to exist independently. While the church has made efforts to resist any state control, state on the other hand has tried to prevent the church from meddling in its affairs. From the latter parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century AD, there is appreciable level of collaboration between these bodies for the betterment of society.

#### **4. The role of parents/philanthropic/concerned bodies**

The parents of Samuel used to visit Shiloh regularly, bringing with them supplies to the young minister. Also, in the OT, concerned individuals made a lot of contribution towards the upkeep of the ministers in training. In 2 Kings 4:42, a concerned individual brought some supplies which Elisha used to feed the prophets in training. Obadiah took care of 100 members of the prophetic bands (1 Kings 18: 3-4). During the earthly ministry of the Lord, a lot of women who had been saved supported Him (Luke 8:1-3).

**5. The role of the Ministers-in-training:** The person at the centre of God and the other financiers is the trainee. In the OT period, some individual students/trainees took the initiative to provide for their needs. For example, Moses had to work as a shepherd during his training at the feet of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Again, the students of the prophetic school themselves were concerned about their needs; food, hostel, etc, so they moved out to find these resources (2 Kings 4:39; 6:1-6).

#### **The contemporary challenge**

In contemporary times, there appears to be an appreciable drift of interest or lack of zeal in pursuing ministerial training. This might be as a result of lack of adequate support. One of the major factors that account for this is that some of the key partners of the past are now relegating their responsibilities to the background. Little wonder, the number of qualified personnel is few and the untrained have seized the field and are causing a lot of

havoc in the ministry. Attention is focused mostly on what will come from the trainees themselves and to some extent, the Church. Unfortunately, the Church now focuses a lot of its budget to the development of physical structures so what comes out for ministerial support is woefully inadequate. This is to the detriment of those who have to be trained for the job.

Additionally, a lot of interest groups who were hitherto involved in sponsoring these trainees have also shifted their focus. Although in recent periods, the Church has risen to her responsibility of playing a complimentary role and acting as a major check on any state or government, it is unfortunate that the state has not reciprocated this gesture. The state is rather interested in sponsoring bodies and professions which are directly involved in the running of the state than those who are called to serve in the Church. This imbalance must be seriously and properly addressed and corrected by all concerned.

Equally unfortunate is the fact that quite a number of donor organizations, parents, and philanthropic individuals nowadays have developed biased mentalities; they are interested in the training of people in secular schools more than those in Bible schools. While some might argue that since those in ministerial training have been called for God's work, it is God himself who will take care of them, others do not see the importance of ministerial training, so they do not want to invest in them. The bottom-line is that a good number of people prefer to sponsor those who are pursuing programs that will graduate into very attractive professions like lawyers, medical doctors, engineers, and

bankers than a minister of the gospel. So they direct all their resources into these areas. To compound the matter, some of the trainees are failing to move out to seek means to address their situation. Instead of them stepping out to knock at the doors of financial support for positive results they prefer to wait for opportunities to beckon at them.

The overall effect of the flow of inadequate funds is that enormous financial constraints are shifted to the training institutions. It is quite ironic when one considers how some of the ministerial training institutions have lapsed in widening their support base.

### **Consequences of inadequate financial support**

Definitely, the lack of adequate financial support for ministerial training will not be without cost to the Church, society, and state as a whole. They include the following:

- a.** A lot of ministerial trainees will continue to be in need, or will be under-resourced during their education. The overall effect is that the concentration of the students is divided and their output is lowered.
- b.** There are lots of genuine believers who are called by God into ministry but for lack of support will not be able to receive the required training in order to function effectively. Thus, only a handful of trained qualified personnel are in the field, and a lot of the untrained have seized the field and are causing havoc to the ministry and bringing shame to the Church and God.

- c. Additionally, both the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Church will be greatly affected. Qualitatively, there will be a great lack of quality Bible expositors or exegetes and apologists, a situation that can lead to a boom of worldliness and charlatans in the Church. Quantitatively, the Church will become stunted as it will no longer possess the power of the gospel to convert lost souls. The worst scenario is that the church will become a body full of entertainers; a house of comic ministers speaking to audience with itchy ears for words of excitement.
- d. The state also loses in terms of getting a lot of skilled ministers to handle issues related to religion in general and Christianity in particular. Issues like professional counseling on moral issues at all levels of education especially at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, and even in governmental departments should be handled by well trained and qualified ministers of God. And particularly the state has to be committed financially in order to achieve this goal.

### **Agenda for Action**

Apparently, all work that honors God and renders useful service to humanity can be appropriately termed as God's work. But scripture clearly says the work of the minister of the gospel "is a noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1). Thus the training of such ministers should be one of the top priorities, if not the topmost. There is therefore an urgent call for pragmatic

actions to facilitate the financing of ministerial education. The following are some suggestions:

1. All ministerial training schools should intensify their prayers and never give up in crying to the Lord of the harvest to open doors of support for this noble cause. He is the God who hears and answers prayers.
2. The Church as a body is supposed to accept the challenge to raise its own support to fulfill its God-given mandate. If appreciable portions of the budgets of our prominent churches are assigned to the training of ministers and to theological institutions, there will be a great improvement. Also, there is the need for the church to use its platform to educate the members to accept their responsibility as partners with God in raising people for His work of saving souls.
3. When it comes to partnership with the state, let us consider the following Ghana News Agency (GNA) report in the Daily Graphic, Thursday, November 11, 2010. It reads:

The Vice-President, Mr. John Dramani Mahama, has given the assurance that the government will forge a closer relationship with the church to inculcate moral and civic responsibilities in the youth. "As a government, our concerns emanate from the fact that the youth hold the key to our future and therefore need to be morally disciplined to appropriately handle their position," he said.<sup>196</sup>

A similar report is also found on the front page of Saturday, November 13, 2010, of the same newspaper. Such reports

show the likelihood of some states or governments beginning to recognize the important and complimentary role that the church plays. Of particular mention is the role of the Church in standing against vices and serving as effective watch-dogs of the society. The Church does not only act as a check on society but is mandated by God to turn people from wickedness to righteousness.

With such awareness already created, ministerial training institutions and the Church as a body should seize the opportunity to hold the state to be responsive to the needs of theological institutions. In Ghana for example, organized bodies of the Church like the Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Pentecostal Council, National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches, and similar Christian associations, must also add their voice and consciously put pressure on the state to rise to its responsibilities as partners of God in His work. This is where state sponsorship of ministerial training takes center stage and becomes pressing. In fact, it is where the Church-State partnership in financing ministerial training should be enforced. It is expected that the state would support accredited ministerial training institutions just as it does to the secular universities.

**4.** Additionally, conferences and seminars should be organized by ministerial training institutions for civil organizations, NGOs, and individuals, where they should be encouraged to see the support of ministers in training as very important, and part of their divine obligation.

**5.** Pragmatic steps should be taken towards innovative and flexible approaches to education that will bring more ministers out of their shells. It is observed that the main challenges of ministers in the field towards training are not only how to separate from their families or step out of their support base but it also has to do with what impact their absence will have on their churches. For many of them, it is likely that with some reasonable level of assurance over these areas, they will step forward. Such ministers might probably be very comfortable with training programs that will engage them many days over extended periods of time and might appreciate with shorter durations. There are some which are effective and are worth exploring.

**Distance education/online programs:** These will allow ministers to stay at home and be with their churches while still engaged in some form of productive skill acquisition as confirmed by current investigations:

...International research confirms that more and more students are moving towards distance education...reasons, namely that they do not want to leave their place of employment, they do not want to leave their family and they do not want to pay the higher prices of residential programmes...A growing trend is e-learning...<sup>197</sup>

**Weekend programs:** These usually begin from Friday evenings and end on Saturdays. Such arrangement allows for some freedom for most periods of the week where a lot of ministry work could be planned and executed. It also permits

the minister to have oversight of the major Church service which usually happens on Sundays.

**Sandwich programs:** These though intensive will take the ministers away from their churches over shorter periods of time. These are usually two weeks, one month, eight weeks, etc., up to a maximum of three months depending upon the curriculum. Nevertheless, such programs still offer the expected opportunity to the ministers to remain with their families and churches for a greater period of the time.

**6.** Ministerial institutions and the Trainees themselves should become very proactive in their quest for the needed financial support. The attitude of wait and receive, or the period when ministerial trainees sat down inactively only waiting to be paid some support should be a thing of the past. Now it is expected that all Trainees become directly involved in wooing people; their family, the church, society, and the state at large, to support them. Sometimes, just by stepping out in faith to approach people, doors are opened to great support. But care must be taken because any unethical methods to get money will not be endorsed by God, and will not go unpunished, as happened to Gehazi (2 Kings 5:19-27).

We should not forget that we can very much win favors even by our moral lives as Samuel was able to do and won the heart of all Israel (1 Sam. 3:20). In the extreme situation, the trainee should be able to find some simple job to help his or her own pocket needs. There is a saying that, "service to the self is never slavery."

I believe it is high time the ministers who need training and the church as a body arose and directly approached all the identified stake-holders in order to convince them to perform their roles as partners of God in His Kingdom work. If we have to appear before them with collection bowls in our hands, it will be a direct application of what the scriptures say in Matthew 11:12: "...The violent shall take it by force..." But the question is, "are we prepared?" As God creates this awareness, all other stake-holders in financing ministerial training must be quickened to act in order to fulfill the will of God.

### **Chapter summary**

We have seen that Paul did not lay any claim to big titles in ministry and did not become an 'apostle' overnight. His success stems from the fact that he was studious in the pursuit of the requisite information, the appropriate skills, and the acceptable character that would enhance his ministry. His expertise was no doubt as a result of sitting at the feet of experienced people to be schooled, as well as making frantic efforts to upgrade his information base through the practice of ministry with those who were ahead of him. Though ministerial training comes with a price: money, time, energy, and other challenges; and especially in the current era when interest in sponsorship has waned drastically, it should still be seen as an investment that would yield divine dividend and produce an eternal harvest to the glory of God.

Thus, every effort should be put in to help people who have been called by God for His work to be properly trained,

so that they can advance transformational services in the church and every community they would find themselves. The discussion would be climaxed by considering some lessons from the 'pacesetting' exploits of Apostle Paul in the last chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LESSONS FROM PAUL**

Apostle Paul sets the pace as a persecutor of the body of Christ who later converted and no doubt became its greatest defender in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. But for Paul to serve as Christ's Ambassador and for the full impact of the vision from Heaven and his ministry to be operational and experienced by the world he needed to undergo a process of transformation. This would also enable him to face all challenges and have answers to his role as a successful minister. Paul thus faced many difficulties and endured a lot of hardships but in the end these paid off; Paul became apostle extraordinaire and a successful minister of the gospel.

Comparing and contrasting the life of Apostle Paul with ours in areas such as prayer, desire for knowledge, loyalty, obedience, commitment, availability, faithfulness, and zeal, will enable us to serve the Lord better than we are doing. That is, by aspiring to succeed in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ we need to learn some lessons from Paul's experience. As a pacesetter, he laid some foundation in ministry worthy of emulation. Some of the areas that we should consider as people who would like to learn from Paul have been discussed in the subsequent section.

### **Understand your call to serve the Lord**

When we look at the redemptive work of Christ on the cross on our behalf, we have no alternative but to surrender our all and to love Him (Matt. 25:23; John 15:1-8). Unfortunately, a number of Christians are not decisive in their services to the Lord because they do not know what they have been called to do and even if they did know, do not seem to have the means to do it. The temptation here is to just copy what other people might be doing. While this might work within certain circumstances it is nevertheless not the case at all times. This is because every believer is unique and might therefore demonstrate some kind of difference in one way or the other. Generally, though, our maturity will show the level of our commitment (Eccles. 7:8). As Christians, what we can learn from the life of Paul including the following:

- **Accept your uniqueness:** This means that you do not have to compare yourself with another person in order to be abased or exalted in yourself. Apostle Paul was probably not a man of stature; perhaps vertically challenged, and most likely not an orator or charismatic in speech. When he intimated a special challenge in his body, i.e., the thorn in his flesh, a number of scholars explained it in many ways. Some said it was a body deformation or handicap which would always make him appear inferior, or some kind of torturing pain from epilepsy or malaria by which the apostle was frequently attacked, or an eye defect which made him to use large characters in his epistles, and so forth.

While some expected that such a “thorn” could produce a temporary and consistent embarrassment of some kind to make him less acceptable as a preacher, it was never the case. The Apostle indeed acknowledged his weakness, but never allowed it to affect the kind of excellent services required of him.

- **Be bold to confess the Lord Jesus Christ:** Wherever he found himself, Paul maintained integrity as a minister of Christ graced with God’s word and power to be effective in service. The Apostle accepted his unique call and appreciated God by serving him to the end. It is unfortunate that sometimes people forget that Christ is the only one who makes the difference for the better. Constant failure to trust God and confess Christ as Lord will be a disobedience and disappointment to the Lord.

- **Show love and service to people:** To challenge others to do same, Apostle Paul demonstrated the need to reveal the life of Christ. He wanted people to know whom he had really believed and depended upon. He also showed deep compassion and love for those who were without Christ and are under the influence of Satan in order to portray the true character of Christ and win them. This is what is known as ‘the Christian’s message to the world without words.’ It is preaching Christ through our character.

Apostle Paul reveals in 2 Corinthians 5-6 that certain attitudes of Christians can bring honor to God wherever they find themselves, e.g., accepting to serve the Lord at church. Service is part of the process of the believer’s integration

into the family of Christ (1 Peter 2:20-22; Exod. 20:2-6). Since the true revolutionary is Christ, and our commitment to serve him must be total without reservation. Such Spirit-led Christian service will also plunder a believer's ambition and bring honor to the Lord.

### **Be quick to overcome your negative past**

Many are those who think so much of the past that they are not able to focus on the present let alone project into the future. Often, such people are not able to overcome their previous mistakes or what others have committed against them in order to forge ahead in life. This is a negative attitude to life and only compounds a perceived hopeless situation. The Patriarch David nearly became a victim of such a mistake. While living as a fugitive and a wanderer in the Judean wilderness, David and his troop of mercenaries left their camp at Ziklag to help King Achish of Philistine to fight Israel. But the king declined David's offer of help on the basis that when the battle becomes fierce David and his men might turn and fight on the side of Israel. Thus, David and his troops turned back towards their camp.

When David and his troops reached Ziklag, the Amalekites, a wandering group in Palestine that descended from Amalek, one of the grandsons of Esau (Gen. 36:15-16), had come and ransacked the camp. Two wives of David, his children, and all the families of his men had been taken by the roving Amalekites, together with all their possessions. Scriptures reveal that David and his men could not stand this misfortune (1 Sam. 30:1ff). The thought of the loss was so heavy on them that they forgot all the strategies that could

lead them to recover their lost possession. They broke down and wept until they could have no strength to weep again. It was at the juncture where all his natural strength was gone that David realized that the real strength to overcome life's challenges does not come from the flesh. Then the men began to apportion blame; they accused David for their woes and were considering stoning him.

But was there not a way out for David to overcome the situation? Yes there was, only that David dwelt so much on what had happened at that moment and failed to connect to his source of strength. It was like the overwhelming anguish cut him off from the unlimited grace of his God. He was lost and operating out of the spiritual coverage area. This is a situation that a number of people encounter in life daily. When a person fails to discover his/her present source of success, such a one will not easily experience the expected future restoration. But this situation as the 'Lord's anointed' faced, should not happen to any spiritually sensitive person.

When he came to himself, he realized that with God on his side all was not yet lost, 'For with God all things are possible.' Upon such realization, David found strength in the Lord (1 Sam. 29:1-30:20). Immediately, he turned his attention to God and went into prayer by seeking for God's guidance from the priest. Upon assurance of victory if he moved forward, David and his men engaged in what can be termed, 'Operation march forward to retrieve the loss.' They were able to not only recover what belonged to them but received what the enemies had taken from others who could not pursue them. This is what scripture refers to as 'receiving double for the losses' when the spirit of the Lord

comes upon a person (Isa. 61:1-7). Surely, there is a way out for everyone to overcome the negative past and wasted opportunities.

As Christians, we should work our minds to reject negative attitudes and accept positive ones. Apostle Paul is a typical example of the Bible heroes who were able to overcome their past and develop a transformative mindset to life. In his Epistle to the Philippians, he said: "...One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14). Not only did he make this a principle in life, the Apostle was led by the Spirit to encourage all progressive Christians to develop such a positive mental attitude. He added this in the subsequent verse: "All of us who are mature should take such a view of things...Join with others in following my example, brothers [and sisters], and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you" (vs. 15-17).

### **Define your vision and set goals to achieve them**

No one can set off on a journey without first knowing the destination or having an assurance of it. The Bible says: "Without vision my people perish (Prov. 29:18)." Vision, as have been discussed already (in Part II chapter 3), can be an inspiration from God to believers which helps them to strive towards a target not clearly defined initially. Some people receive theirs in the form of revelation, dreams, burden, etc. When God called Abraham, He commanded him to leave his country and father's house to a land (or place) that He would show him. This clearly means that

Abraham was going to have a sense of direction from God, i.e., where he was to pass to his final destination.

In the same way, God spelt out to Paul His reason for his call and the details of his ministry for which the latter could later testify that he was not disobedient to the 'heavenly vision' (Acts 26). This is an indication that a person is able to take full control of the future when the one is able to harness aspiration, build enough capacity, and is able to operate within the maximum potential. Thus inspiration can bring aspiration which generates imaginations that lead to fulfillment. Apostle Paul's testimony also points to the fact that a person's achievement can never be bigger than his/her vision (or dream). It was the vision Paul saw that catapulted him to the heights he reached. Clearly then, how great a person's vision is can energize the one to greater achievements. Therefore, we need to develop great visions or dream big!

Whatever vision (or dream) that God has given to us requires goals to fulfill them. A goal is the driving force that leads a person to fulfill life's vision. It might be quite broad and generally vague, but it provides a person with a general framework of action. So, setting goals to bring a vision home is important. The starting point of goal-setting is from God because He says he has His own plan for our lives (Jer. 9:11). Considering the properties of 'vision,' it needs to be crystallized with a well-defined orientation. With time, we convert a vision into goals and later objectives. These are some suggested steps:

- First, one needs to pray and ask God about it (Jer. 33:3), i.e., be led by the Holy Spirit, your senior partner, and then ask yourself the following questions
  - i. What do I want to achieve in ministry/profession?
  - ii. Why do I want to take up this ministry area?
  - iii. What are the benefits of the goal that I have set?
  - iv. How do I start working towards my set goal?
- The next step towards setting life's goals is to get a counselor to provide the needed guidance. Here it is better to consult an experienced person for assistance (preferably, somebody with appreciable experience in that field should be a priority).
- It is important to have a definite purpose and allow oneself to be guided by it. Be specific about what you want to achieve in your call to serve God. The starting point of all individual achievements is the adoption of a definite purpose and/or plans. Defining one's purpose has great advantages: personal initiative, concentrated efforts, self control, self reliance, and so on.

Sometimes people derive their objectives from their ministry goals because such goals are quite specific in stating the targets or course of action. Objectives are mostly measurable and often associated with some standards. This is to mean that they are more sharply focused than goals. Consequently, they are used as yardsticks or bases for appraising performance (i.e. evaluation). All in all, the goals and objectives must be realistic, attainable and time-bound. With careful but aggressive attitude in pursuing the

aforementioned points, any seriously minded believer can be a faithful and fruitful steward of what God has entrusted to his/her care.

### **Be informed and strategic in planning your ministry**

As discussed in chapter 3, the extent to which Paul's knowledge base helped him in ministry cannot be over-emphasized. To become an efficient Lawyer (Pharisee), he had to study formally under a very reputable and excellent scholar, Gamaliel. Thus, the Pharisee-turned-Christian made immense strides in the apologetic ministry because of his exceedingly great knowledge in matters of Jewish religion. Most importantly, he received direct insight from the Lord after his conversion to enrich his spiritual base. He also had to study hard to be informed and be abreast of issues that concerned Christ, the Messiah, from existing scriptures (the Hebrew Scriptures).

In fact, the onus rested on Paul to understand the deep revelations of the gospel that he continued to receive from the Lord. Such deep insights and the understanding into them were Paul's greatest tools needed to defeat all who opposed him, whether Jewish religious leaders and Greek philosophers or Roman authorities. It should be understood that in both cases some personal and decisive steps were required from the Apostle himself. Paul's success story in ministry based on the preparations he took time and pains to undergo make a strong case and appeal for formal ministerial training. Inadequate preparation might no doubt lead to under-performance.

In line with Apostle Paul's standard for effective and successful ministry, a person should be able to seek knowledge through formal and regular in-service training (besides any informal sessions). This is to acquire the requisite skills and insight needed to follow the rules of engagement in Christian ministry. This applies to all areas of Christian services; pulpit ministry, Bible class teaching, ministry leadership, ushering, etc., although the extent of the training might differ for the various areas. This apparently underpins Paul's admonishing to his 'son' Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The Apostle was emphasizing to Timothy the importance of knowledge of God's word in order to become an effective servant of God.

Apostle Paul's statement to Timothy also means that knowledge can add value to a person's life by making him/her a recipient of a special award, "God's approval for excellence." There are undeniable facts to show that those who receive proper training for ministry, particularly in Christendom, are able to provide much defined and refined services. In fact, such people are able to make full proof of their calling than those who just "jump the queue and enter the wagon of God's service" in the name of anointing, special gifts, and extreme zeal, etc. Either the latter group of ministers is ignorant of Apostle Paul's description of "some people not knowing the righteousness of God because they have zeal without knowledge" (Rom. 10:2), or they simply overlook such an important platform for launching into excellence in transformation services.

Whichever way, the fact still remains that quality formal training allows for enough time in which a person becomes pregnant not only with knowledge and skills but experience, all of which are needed to give birth to excellent ministry. Everyone who desires to be in Christian service should be up to speed with both scriptures and current issues of our global village and computer age, with all its information communication technological advancements. Obviously, any 21<sup>st</sup> Century person who lacks expertise in these areas is many million times behind current trends in life and can make an impact only in the world of the archaic. This fact is usually reflected in the difference in terms of quality of congregations of the trained minister and the untrained.

Adequate knowledge also enhances proper planning of a person's life and self-development both of which are based on proper sensitivities and abilities. If one does not know what he/she is capable of, the person may not be motivated to do anything. Hence, the choice and responsibility for self-development is basically in the hands of every individual. No one should be coerced, but people can be advised to pursue appropriate skills and expertise through timely utilization of available resources (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

Additionally, when a person is able to strategize life visions or plans, there is improved performance. Basically, strategies are concerned with the means and methods of reaching our goals and objectives. By strategizing, one is likely to deal with relevant issues that boarder on questions related to the what, how, when, where, and who in his/her

plans. Having received from the Lord what to do, one needs also to know how to do it, when to start it, where to locate the activity, and most importantly who to consult for assistance. These call for proper programming of activities and time. One must be bold to consult others for advice; if possible, use someone as a mentor and feel free to share the whole vision with such a person. With such a galaxy of experienced resource persons around us, we cannot fail on the grounds that there was nobody to consult for help.

### **Learn to be prayerful all the time**

If there was anything that was dear in Paul's life it was prayer. The Apostle became so prayerful that much of his time was dedicated to this spiritual discipline as revealed in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. For believers to follow the footprints of the Master himself and a chief follower like Apostle Paul, we should take note that:

- The Lord's prayer-life was exemplary, and what He demonstrated publically was the result of closet prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). Therefore, except we follow his footprints for prayer, we are never going to be victorious.
- If we take constant meditation of scripture and prayer out of our lives, we will study the Word without coming to the knowledge of the truth (John 5:39). The reason is that the light of the Holy Spirit that illuminates God's word brightens up when we are in touch with him (John 16:14).
- Persistent prayer is the answer to Christ's victory over the devil. Notice that although Jesus fasted for 40 days

and nights before he began his ministry he never stopped praying throughout his ministry, and anytime he prayed power from on high girded him for good works.

The lessons that the above summary teaches is that if we pray continuously we would shine even under the darkest shadows. It was the power of prayer that enabled Christ to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary. Believers are to pray and faint not; we should pray without ceasing. We have the hope of becoming the very substance of which Christ is made when He appears. To achieve this calls for emulating the very example of Christ (1 John 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:19).

### **Be zealous, focused, and determined in your service**

Develop an interest and enthusiasm in your goal. Note that determination is the fertile soil in which success grows, and enthusiasm can discourage all forms of negative thoughts and helps to keep one pressing on (Phil. 3:14). Enthusiasm is the eagerness to do something or the energy to achieve a goal. It is the power-house that generates zeal, the energy required to fulfill a task. You can only be successful if you are enthused with what you are doing. Develop enthusiasm for your goal (Neh. 4:6; 2:20). It has the following advantages;

- i. It inspires personal initiative.
- ii. It gives power to purpose.
- iii. It builds self-confidence.
- iv. It overcomes laziness.

This energy from enthusiasm is translated into useful work in life provided there is no loss of focus. If you are a Christian who is desirous of achieving a purpose in life, you should be able to stay focused on the goal(s) of your vision. You should be very careful of the things that you set your mind on, for you may surely achieve it either positively or negatively. Additionally, you should be able to keep your mind on the things you want and off the things you do not want (Prov. 23:7). You should be motivated by the prospect that every reasonable goal is achievable.

In life, one should never be discouraged by failure, but to keep pressing till one achieves the expected results. Failure may only be a temporary set-back. The will of God will never take a believer to a place (point) where the grace of God cannot reach him. When there is a vision from God, He makes available the means for accomplishing it. But determination is the key to unlock the doors to success. It's been observed that where determination reigns supreme no amount of failures or temporary set-backs can dismantle the flag of success. Do not fear to make mistakes. Man is supposed to learn from mistakes committed. Develop a positive mind towards your goal; have the mind to succeed.

### **Learn to create funds to support your ministry**

God has a purpose and a definite plan for everyone, especially the believer, according to His word in Jeremiah 29:11. This means that it is His ultimate aim that it should be well with His children. In the Parable of the talents, God wanted individuals to have fruitful minds with honest profit as their goal (Matt. 25:14-29). The text also indicates that God

is interested in every individual realizing his or her potentials or capabilities and developing it to its fullness. To realize this, each person must conceive and pursue productive goals in life. Though the circumstances and realization of such goals are quite different and varies from person to person, everyone should be prepared to press on without looking back until he/she achieves set targets and fulfills life goals (Phil. 3:12-14).

The Lord said in Deuteronomy 8:18: “It is I who gives you the power to make money.” Wealth therefore comes from God, and its creation requires acknowledging that God is the owner of all that one may acquire and the person is only a steward. Ethically, it is important for every believer to follow the defined and acceptable conduct for life. This is applicable to every sphere of life, particularly with regards to the pursuit of money. If possible, every person must endeavor to earn an income. That is, there should not be any idle hand, because God has given all believers the power to make wealth. This applies even more to ministers in the Lord’s vineyard.

A lecturer in Pauline Epistles shared some light on the factors that contributed to the success of Apostle Paul’s ministry during one of his sessions. According to him, the Apostle worked hard to become economically independent ‘so that he would not become a burden to the Church or individuals.’<sup>198</sup> He based his expatiation on Paul’s second epistle to the Thessalonians 3:6-10 where it is written:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you,  
brothers to keep away from every brother who is idle and

does not live according to the teachings you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you.

He said that Paul's standard policy with regards to meeting his financial needs can still be pursued today. He therefore advised that in situations where the church is not financially strong to take full responsibility of the minister it was prudent for the one to engage some form of 'tent making' than for the person to confront the church to have needs met.

Not that only, but the Christian, more so, the minister of the gospel, must strive hard to earn honest money in order to stay away from some of the negative means to wealth-making such as fraudulent transactions, speaking lies, and all the prevailing vices to become rich. Thus, we should be guided by what one of the richest kings who ever lived, King Solomon, and the likely author of the book of Proverbs says about money-making. He says: "The blessings of the LORD bring wealth and he adds no trouble to it" (Prov. 10:22). That is, we must not set our eyes on making money, or be anxious to become rich in monetary terms. This is because the solution to any economic breakthrough lay with God. So, we must strike a good balance between ministry and any money-making venture in order not to be influenced by the latter.

**Be generous and share with those in need**

The secret of blessing is that believers should not withhold from God. So when the fruits of the wealth created above begin to show up, be prepared to honor God with the first-fruit. This includes paying of tithes and giving of offerings. As a believer, one ought to be faithful to God in times of increase, pay tithes, and also give to support others (Prov. 3:9, 10). There are lots of blessings in sharing, and one of them is that it brings God's promise of prosperity into fulfillment. Scripture says in Proverbs 11:24-25: "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Therefore, no matter our economic situation we should be able to practice giving and also practice hospitality.

The Bible has records of both the rich and poor who were generous and were either commended or reaped proportionally from their step of faith and generosity by God. Typical examples are what the poor widow at Zarephath did for Elijah (1 Kings 17: 7-16), what the rich woman at Shunem did for Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-3; 7:8-9), the Lord's statement about the poor widow (Luke 21:1-4), and what Mary did with the precious perfume (John 12:1-8). The Bible says that the Lord loves a cheerful giver, so be sure to practice your alms-giving with a sincere and willing heart. But be careful of the way you give in order not to be seen and praised by people or not in the hope of receiving back from the same source. This will prevent the real blessings that the Good Lord can bring to you.

### **Accept that you are Christ's Ambassador**

Being a Christian means that you should be identified with Christ all the time. It also means that you should be prepared to reveal Him to others wherever you find yourself. This makes you an ambassador of Christ. The subsequent outline gives you some steps as the Lord basically instructed for effective witnessing and discipleship. Be sure you are a Christian and that there is no 'unconfessed sin' in your life. Be sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit and prepared to share your faith with others. Make a list of people who need Christ and pray for them, and talk to them about Jesus Christ and expect results.

- Be at the right place at the right time, and be ready to act.
- Do not assume that every person you encounter is a Christian. On the other hand, do not consider people to be completely ignorant of the issues of Christ. So be careful in your approach.
- Keep your presentation simple; share Christ and let the Holy Spirit do the convicting. Be sincere with any questions that are raised (If you don't know the answers to a question admit it).

If your lifestyle or word of testimony brings somebody to Christ you must be prepared to nurture the convert to maturity. Discipleship is a life-long process; Paul continued in it till he went to be with the Lord, and so must we.

### **Be self-disciplined and do regular evaluation**

One of the excellent qualities that made Paul fruitful a minister is self-discipline. This is a matter of adopting

constructive habits towards life. This is the ability to subject one's self to certain principles. Every guide to self discipline should set rules for a person in ministry, business, family, recreation or entertainment, etc., and demand faithfulness to any such rules. Regular self-evaluation and reviewing of performance is very important and necessary. Self-discipline goes with regular evaluation of the rules. These processes usually serve as guides to assess a person's performance from time to time. This will enable the one to be in line with set plans and to know at once where there is deviation (Phil. 3:3-14). Assess the amount of time devoted to spiritual things, the level of interest in prayer, bible study and witnessing.

A person's best plan would realize very little unless the one considers the following:

- i. Willfully commit your plans to the Lord (Prov. 16:13).
- ii. Try to be disciplined and sensitive to the demands of your plans.
- iii. Give copies of your goals to trusted friends, elders, brethren, etc., and entreat them to be a check on you.

Take regular spiritual, family, and business evaluation very seriously, e.g., ensure it weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Do not hesitate to retreat and review your progress in life if you find it very necessary. By so doing, you would know your performance and which areas of your life and services need some adjustments. Apostle Paul was careful that while ministering to other people he would always 'bring himself under subjection' so that at the end he would not be cast away.

**Be prepared for persecution and suffering**

Paul was somebody who understood suffering and persecution. Nevertheless, in all, he remained loyal, faithful, obedient, and dedicated to his call in the Lord. Thus, it is important for people to study the sufferings and persecutions that Paul went through so as to be toughened for ministry (Phil. 1:21). In a period when materialistic tendencies have found their way into the Church and faith has come to mean nothing more than getting things from God, it is worthy to note that when Paul talked “about being able to do all things” in Philippians 4:13, he means both in times of suffering and enjoyment.

However, to suffer and continue to dedicate their whole life to the work of God is not part of Christianity for many believers. For some of such people, the prevailing circumstances of this world challenge their faith and are a recipe for compromise. Consequently, some prefer to live care-free lives because they are not prepared to go through any hardship in their Christian life. Therefore, as believers, we should be prepared to face similar situations at any time in order for the cause of Christ to be advanced (1 Cor. 15:58; John 16:33; Heb. 12:2; 1 John 4:14).

**Set your mind and heart on the eternal hope and glory**

The last and most important issue to consider in this section is to set your mind and heart on the eternal hope in the Lord. If there is a better reward for all services rendered, it can never be received in this present life. While declaring to the people the wrath of God for disobedience, and God’s promise of preservation of a remnant, most of the true

biblical prophets also did well by casting the peoples' eyes from their immediate to the distant future. This would be the period when the promised Messiah would come and restore perpetual peace and eternal life. Prophet Micah gave some messages concerning the hope of the people that would be restored in the dispensation of the Messiah (Micah 2:12, 13; 3:12; 7:18-20). Amos also mentioned the entering of the people into God's covenant blessings in the future period of the Messiah (Amos 9:13-15). After the Jews returned from captivity, the prophet Zechariah revealed the prophetic fulfillment of the Messiah in the role of Joshua the High Priest, the Branch from the stump, and the Stone which would become the head of the corner, the Cornerstone (Zech. 3:1ff; cf. 1 Peter 2:4-5).

In fact, the Messianic passages and the promises concerning His coming were also directed to serve as a bridge between the gentile nations and the remnant of Judah (or the nation of Israel as a whole). Hitherto, they had been enemies and the gentiles were not regarded as God's people, but in the dispensation of the Messiah the Gentiles would rejoice in the promised Messiah of the Israelites. What this means to the Christian is to focus all attention on the hope of eternal rest when the Christ of God, the Messiah, finally appears. And if there is any hope of reward for any meaningful sacrifices and services in the Lord, that hope should be built on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah. He will be the Restorer of perfect peace to mankind (Isa. 66:10-14; cf. Rom. 15:10-13).

The Messiah should be our only source of hope for the eternal glory for which we continue to live for God and serve

Him. It is this hope for eternal life that should be our main motivation for all the endeavors and challenges in the Lord.

### **Application and Conclusion**

All the things that Apostle Paul suffered were not enough to soften him but helped him to renew the hope and expectations of eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The encounter that Paul had with the Lord should serve as great lessons to all believers who might be passing through periods of hardship to be mindful that there is hope in the end. Present day believers of God should find enough evidence of **the pacesetters** and other Bible characters who did not allow their predicament and circumstances to prevent them from fulfilling their God-ordained destiny for their lives. Of course when everything is completed according to the plan of God, the right to shift one away from the scene of events is also His prerogative.

There is now the urgent call and need for people to rise up like Paul of Tarsus, accept challenges, and make the necessary positive impact wherever God has put them, so that “the earth becomes full of the knowledge of the LORD’S glory as the waters cover the Sea” (Hab. 2:14). Whenever and wherever there is a will there will surely be a way. This means that we will not say “no” whenever we are called to serve the Lord. And it is on this positive note that I would conclude the discussions in this book. I wish you God’s blessings. Amen.

## ENDNOTES

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### PART I

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16. Merrill, p. 101.
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18. For purposes of uniformity, all the spelling of this name in this book is "Thutmose" (even as part of a quote).
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## CHAPTER 2

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34. Petrovich, p. 101-110.
35. Dylan Bickerstaffe, "The Discovery of Hatshepsut's Throne": *KMT- A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 2002), p. 71-74.

The throne chessboard and chessmen of Hatshepsut had been discovered in Egypt in 1886, and though it was in pieces, it was skillfully reassembled and exhibited at the Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester in 1887.

When the exhibition ended, Jesse Haworth, a Manchester businessman and a supporter of Edward's Egypt Exploration Fund, who purchased it in Luxor presented it to the British Museum. The finds were part of the funerary furnishings of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. Bickerstaff states that he could only assume the items must have come from a tomb.

A promising source for the throne was the Tomb of Rameses XI, in which were found various wooden items, including fragments of furniture, some of which appeared to have come from the burials of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut.

He continues that there were fragmentary wooden panels decorated with a distinctive running-spiral design found on similar pieces, and fragments from an anthropoid coffin which, from the feminine grammatical forms in the text and from the overall style, appears to have been prepared for a female ruler of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, presumably Hatshepsut.

36. Quoted by Bickerstaffe, p. 73.
37. Comberiate [online source]; cf. Petrovich, p. 101-102.
38. Michael Harbin. *The Promise and the Blessing*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press, 2005), p. 122.
39. Hoffmeier, p. 138.
40. Ibid, p. 138-140.
41. Michael Comberiate. "Moses," [online source] accessed on October 21, 2006, available at <http://www.nasamike.com/main/book/4i.htm>
42. Schultz and Seidel, p. 144.

- 43. Nisbett.
- 44. Ibid.
- 45. Hoffmeier, p.142
- 46. Ibid. p. 143
- 47. Argubright.
- 48. Merrill, p. 102

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- 49. Hoffmeier, p. 142
- 50. Veith.
- 51. Grimal, p. 207.
- 52. Schultz and Seidel, p. 144.
- 53. Wilson.
- 54. Petrovich, p. 85.

### **CHAPTER 4**

- 55. Nsiah, and Budu, p. 46-48.

### **CHAPTER 5**

- 56. A thorough discussion has been done on Transformation and transformational leadership in chapter one of *Can You Be God's Transformational Leader? Yes You Can!* by James Yamoah, p. 13-21.
- 57. All the Hebrew texts in this book are accessed from WTT BHS [from [BibleWorks.com](http://BibleWorks.com) – [c:\program file\bibleworks 7\init\bw700.swc].
- 58. Nsiah, and Budu, p. 46-48.
- 59. Ibid.

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- 60. Cornelis Den Hertog. "The Prophetic Dimension of the Divine Name: On Exodus 3:14a and Its Context." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, (2002), p. 228.
- 61. Petrovich, p. 81.

## CHAPTER 7

62. Note: Nsiah, and Budu (p. 46-48), provide the list of the gods of Egypt that the God of Israel attacked through the plagues by Moses is as follows:

**BLOODY NILE, 7:14-25:** This was Jehovah's attack on the very life of Egypt- economic, political, religious and social. He raised questions in the minds of the people about the gods and deities associated with the Nile. He attacked Khnum- guardian of the Nile sources; Hapi-the spirit and dynamic essence of the Nile and Osiris whose blood stream was the Nile.

**FROGS, 8:1-15:** The frog represented fruitfulness, blessing and the assurance of a harvest. Heqt- a frog- was wife of Khnum and was symbol of resurrection and emblem of fertility. Involuntary slaughter of a frog meant death. Their invasion was a frustration and bred hatred for Heqt and Hapi. Their death was also enough to send them into mourning for the helplessness of Heqt and Hapi.

**LICE, 8:16-19:** What it attacked is not very clear but it could have affected the religious functions and ceremonies. The priests were noted for their purity and this was actually a requirement for their ministry. Impurity from the lice would affect their ministry and thus deny the people their spiritual desires. Also would disgrace the god Thoth who was credited with the invention of magic or the secret arts. He could not aid in duplicating this plague.

**FLIES, 8:20-32:** This would be similar in effect to the third plague.

**LIFE-STOCK, 9:1-7:** Cattle and domestic animals were very precious to the Egyptians. This plague had economic consequences for them. Religiously, it humiliated such gods as Hathor- the cow- goddess. Also Apis (bull) and the sky-goddess Nut (Has cow bearing stars affixed to her belly) and the god Ptah.

**BOILS, 9:8-12:** Brought disgrace and rendered impotent the gods and goddesses regarded as possessing healing powers and the capability of stopping such plagues.

Examples are: Thoth, Isis, Ptah, Serapis, Inhotep (god of medicine and guardian of the healing sciences). The priests were also rendered impure and unable to perform their work.

**HAIL, 9:13-35:** Nut was the sky goddess. This plague had come from her domain without restraint and destroyed crops. The plague was also on Isis and Seth who had responsibility for Agric ventures.

**LOCUST, c10:1-20:** Spelt defeat for the gods thought to ensure bountiful harvest, example, Min, the protector god of crops. This plague meant famine widespread robbery and serious social unrest.

**DARKNESS, 10:21-29:** Struck the very heart of Egyptian worship and humbled one of the greatest gods. Ra (Re) was the sun god and the chief or national god. Thus the gods and goddesses associated with the sky were disgraced.

**DEATH OF FIRSTBORN, (12:9-36):** This resulted in the greatest humiliation of the gods. The death of Pharaoh's son meant the death of a deity, their god in human form. It was also a punishment on the whole people of Egypt.

## **CHAPTER 8**

63. Huston, p. 105.

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- 64. Longman III and, Dillard, p. 273-74.
- 65. Douglas W. Redford. (The Missionary Message of Isaiah: A Thesis Presented to the Bible Dept. of the Grad. School of CCS. 1978.), p. 39.
- 66. Redford, p. 39.
- 67. Albert Barnes. *Notes on the Old Testament: Explanatory and Practical. (Isaiah)* Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962.), p. 9.

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69. Ibid, p. 1166-67.
70. Daniel Dyke. "BOT 661: Isaiah." [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University: OH, Spring, 2007).
71. William L. Holladay. *Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978.), p. 28.

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72. Archer Jr. p. 331, 332.
73. James Lloyd. BOT 680: "Studies in Old Testament Prophetic Literature." [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH, Fall 2006.).

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76. Rick Marrs. "The Prophetic Faith: A Call to Ethics and Community." *Restoration Quarterly* p. 308.
77. Ibid.
78. Holladay, p. 19.
79. Ibid, p. 29.
80. Dyke, 2007.
81. John N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah (1-39). The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Pub. Company, 1986.), p. 179.
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83. Oswalt, p. 179.

84. Dyke, 2007.
85. Barnes, p. 73.
86. Staton Jr., p. 54.
87. George L. Robinson. *The Book of Isaiah*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954.), p. 20-21.

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90. Marrs, p. 308.
91. Oswalt, p. 177-180.
92. Dyke, 2007.
93. Ibid.
94. Hailey, p. 76-77.
95. Dyke, 2007.

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96. Oswalt, p. 176.
97. H. L. Ellison. *The Old Testament Prophets, "Men Spake from God."* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976). p. 49.
98. Staton Jr., p. 54.
99. Robinson, p. 22.
100. Holladay, p. 42.
101. Robinson, p. 22.
102. Ibid, p. 23.
103. Dyke, 2007.
104. Ellison, p. 51.
105. Ibid.
106. Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965.), p. 285.
107. Robinson, p. 22.
108. Halley, p. 285.

109. "Isaiah" [Internet source]; Accessed: April 13, 2007, from: (<http://www.answers.com/topic/isaiah>).
110. Dillard and Longman, p. 283.
111. Ellison, p. 51.
112. Robinson, p. 22-23.
113. Halley, p. 285.
114. Barnes, p. 9.
115. Robinson, p. 285.
116. Dyke, 2007.
117. Barnes, p. 10-11.

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118. Robinson, p. 285.

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120. VanGemeren, William A. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990.), p. 341.
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123. Archer, p. 423.
124. Longman III, and Dillard, p. 375.
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126. Longman III, and Dillard, p. 375.
127. Ibid.
128. Halley, p. 342.

129. Hill, and Walton, p. 452.
130. Ibid, p. 453; cf. Longman III, and Dillard, p. 373.
131. VanGemeran, p. 341.
132. Longman III, and Dillard, p. 376.
133. Ibid, p. 391.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Halley, p. 342.
137. Hill, and, Walton, p. 456.
138. Archer, p. 421.
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141. Ibid, p. 393.
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151. Smith, p. 284.
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154. Ibid, p. 339.
155. Butler, p. 37.
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172. Lawson, p. 74.
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177. Merrill, p. 309.
178. Wood, p. 141.
179. Shea, p. 68-75.
180. Smith, p. 297.
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- ***Can You Be God's Transformational Leader? Yes You Can!***
- ***Amazing Grace: A Guide To Spiritual Formation And Discipline***
- ***Suffer to Gain: How the Righteous should overcome Difficult Times***
- ***Always Ready: Over 150 Messages To Help You Study, Teach, Preach, & Live the Bible Systematically***
- ***A Model for Hebrew - English Translation and Application: The Biblical Hebrew Student's Companion***

James combines the sensitivity of an ordinary person and a theological mind with a Pastoral heart, so all his books are thought provoking, informative, educative, inspiring, practicable, and very appropriate. All readers will find fulfillment in the living waters that flow from his teaching ministry. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith Huston. *The World's Religions: (revised and updated edition of the Religions of man)* New York; HarperCollins Publisher, 1961.), p. 105.

#### CHAPTER ONE

<sup>2</sup> NOTE: NAS is New America Standard. But unless otherwise stated as in the case above, all Scriptural passages in this text is in the New International Version (NIV).

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): 81-110.

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<sup>4</sup>Aling [online source] p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Dyke, Dyke, Daniel J. "BOT 642; The Exodus: A Historical Quest" [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH), Fall 2006

<sup>6</sup> Bryant G. Wood. Adapted from the ABR article: "The Sons of Jacob: New Evidence for the Presence of the Israelite in Egypt." [online]; accessed on 13 Oct. 2006; available at [http://christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr\\_a027.html](http://christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr_a027.html)), p. 2-3

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): p. 101.

<sup>8</sup> Wood [online source], p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Clayton, 93

<sup>10</sup> Dyke, Fall 2006

<sup>11</sup> Eugene H. Merrill. *A Historical Survey of the Old Testament*. (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1966), p. 100- 112

<sup>12</sup> James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for The Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, (Oxford Univ. Press: Oxford, 1996), p. 109

<sup>13</sup> Peter A. Clayton. *Chronicles of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by Reign record of the rulers and dynasties of ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc.,1994) 4-5

<sup>14</sup> Schultz and Seidel, 143

<sup>15</sup> Walter J. Veith. "Egypt and the Bible," [online] accessed on 14 Oct. 2006; available at [http:// www. amazingdiscoveries.org/articles/bible-insight/display/article/egypt-and-the-bible/](http://www.amazingdiscoveries.org/articles/bible-insight/display/article/egypt-and-the-bible/)

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- <sup>16</sup> Merrill, 101
- <sup>17</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): P 81.
- <sup>18</sup> For purposes of uniformity, all the spelling of this name in this book is "Thutmose" (even as part of a quote)
- <sup>19</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): p. 86-87.
- <sup>20</sup> Dyke, Fall 2006.
- <sup>21</sup> Merrill, 102
- <sup>22</sup> Nisbett [Online source]

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- <sup>23</sup> "When a Woman ruled Egypt" Biblical Archaeology Review; Mar/Apr2006, Vol. 32 Issue 2, p. 64-70, 7p, 4c
- <sup>24</sup> Nicolas Grimal. *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 207.
- <sup>25</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): 101-102.
- <sup>26</sup> Elizabeth B. Wilson, "The Queen Who Would Be King" *Smithsonian*, 00377333, Sept. 2006, Vol. 37, Issue 6.
- <sup>27</sup> Grimal, 207.
- <sup>28</sup> Biblical Archaeology Review, 64-70.
- <sup>22</sup> Biblical Archaeology Review, 64-70
- <sup>23</sup> Regine Schultz, and Matthias Seidel. *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*: (Cologne: Konemann, 1998), p. 299.
- <sup>30</sup> Grimal, 207
- <sup>31</sup> Schultz and Seidel, 186.
- <sup>32</sup> Wikipedia [online source]

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<sup>33</sup> Dyke, Daniel J. "BOT 642; The Exodus: A Historical Quest" [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH), Fall 2006

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): 101-110.

<sup>35</sup> Dylan Bickerstaffe, "The Discovery of Hatshepsut's Throne": *KMT- A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 2002), 71-74

The throne chessboard and chessmen of Hatshepsut had been discovered in Egypt in 1886, and though it was in pieces, it was skillfully reassembled and exhibited at the Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester in 1887.

When the exhibition ended, Jesse Haworth, a Manchester businessman and a supporter of Edward's Egypt Exploration Fund, who purchased it in Luxor presented it to the British Museum. The finds were part of the funerary furnishings of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. Bickerstaff states that he could only assume the items must have come from a tomb.

A promising source for the throne was the Tomb of Rameses XI, in which were found various wooden items, including fragments of furniture, some of which appeared to have come from the burials of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut.

He continues that there were fragmentary wooden panels decorated with a distinctive running-spiral design found on similar pieces, and fragments from an anthropoid coffin which, from the feminine grammatical forms in the text and from the overall style, appears to have been prepared for a female ruler of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, presumably Hatshepsut.

<sup>36</sup> As quoted by Bickerstaffe, 73.

<sup>37</sup> Comberiate [online source]; cf. Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): 81-110.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Harbin. *The Promise and the Blessing*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press, 2005), p. 122

<sup>39</sup> Hoffmeier, 138

<sup>40</sup> Hoffmeier, 138-140

<sup>41</sup> Michael Comberiate. "Moses". [online source] accessed on Oct 21, 2006, available at <http://www.nasamike.com/main/book/4i.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Schultz and Seidel, 144

<sup>43</sup> Nisbett. [online source]

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<sup>44</sup> Nisbett [online source]

<sup>45</sup> Hoffmeier, 142

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 143

<sup>47</sup> Argubright [online source]

<sup>48</sup> Merrill, 102

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<sup>49</sup> Hoffmeier, 142

<sup>50</sup> Veith [online source]

<sup>51</sup> Grimal, p. 207.

<sup>52</sup> Schultz and Seidel, 144.

<sup>53</sup> Wilson [online resource]

<sup>54</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): p. 85.

### **CHAPTER 4**

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Nsiah, and Manuel, Budu A. *Old Testament History*. (Handout prepared at Ghana Christian University College: 2000), p. 46-48

### **CHAPTER 5**

<sup>56</sup> A thorough discussion has been done on Transformation in chapter one of *Can You Be God's Transformational Leader? Yes You Can!* by James Yamoah.

<sup>57</sup> All the Hebrew text in this book are accessed from WTT BHS [from [BibleWorks.com](#) – [c:\program file\bibleworks 7\init\bw700.swc].

<sup>58</sup> Nsiah and Budu, p. 46-48.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

### **CHAPTER 6**

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<sup>60</sup> Cornelis Den Hertog. "The Prophetic Dimension of the Divine Name: On Exodus 3:14a and Its Context." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, (2002): p. 228.

<sup>61</sup> Douglas Petrovich. "Amenhotep II and the historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17/1 (Spring 2006): P. 81.

## CHAPTER 9

<sup>62</sup> Note: Nsiah, and Budu, p. 46-48, provide the list of the gods of Egypt that the God of Israel attacked through the plagues by Moses is as follows:

**BLOODY NILE, 7:14-25:** This was Jehovah's attack on the very life of Egypt-economic, political, religious and social. He raised questions in the minds of the people about the gods and deities associated with the Nile. He attacked Khnum-guardian of the Nile sources; Hapi-the spirit and dynamic essence of the Nile and Osiris whose blood stream was the Nile.

**FROGS, 8:1-15:** The frog represented fruitfulness, blessing and the assurance of a harvest. Heqt- a frog- was wife of Khnum and was symbol of resurrection and emblem of fertility. Involuntary slaughter of a frog meant death. Their invasion was a frustration and bred hatred for Heqt and Hapi. Their death was also enough to send them into mourning for the helplessness of Heqt and Hapi.

**LICE, 8:16-19:** What it attacked is not very clear but it could have affected the religious functions and ceremonies. The priests were noted for their purity and this was actually a requirement for their ministry. Impurity from the lice would affect their ministry and thus deny the people their spiritual desires. Also would disgrace the god Thoth who was credited with the invention of magic or the secret arts. He could not aid in duplicating this plague.

**FLIES, 8:20-32:** This would be similar in effect to the third plague.

**LIFE STOCK, 9:1-7:** Cattle and domestic animals were very precious to the Egyptians. This plague had economic consequences for them. Religiously, it humiliated such gods as Hathor- the cow- goddess. Also Apis (bull) and the sky-goddess Nut (Has cow bearing stars affixed to her belly) and the god Ptah.

**BOILS, 9:8-12:** Brought disgrace and rendered impotent the gods and goddesses regarded as possessing healing powers and the capability of stopping such plagues. E.g. Thoth, Isis, Ptah, Serapis, Inhotep (god of medicine and guardian of the healing sciences). The priests were also rendered impure and unable to perform their work.

**HAIL, 9:13-35:** Nut was the sky goddess. This plague had come from her domain without restraint and destroyed crops. The plague was also on Isis and Seth who had responsibility for Agric ventures.

**LOCUST, 10:1-20:** Spelt defeat for the gods thought to ensure bountiful harvest. E.g. Min, the protector god of crops. This plague meant famine widespread robbery and serious social unrest.

**DARKNESS, 10:21-29:** Struck the very heart of Egyptian worship and humbled one of the greatest gods. Ra (Re) was the sun god and the chief or national god. Thus the gods and goddesses associated with the sky were disgraced.

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**DEATH OF FIRSTBORN:** This resulted in the greatest humiliation of the gods. 12:9-36. The death of Pharaoh's son meant the death of a deity, their god in human form. It was also a punishment on the whole people of Egypt, 4:22, 23.

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<sup>63</sup>Smith Huston. *The World's Religions: (revised and updated edition of the Religions of man)* New York; HarperCollins Publisher, 1961.), p. 105.

### **PART II**

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<sup>64</sup> Longman III, and, Dillard. p. 273-74

<sup>65</sup> Douglas W. Redford. (The Missionary Message of Isaiah: A Thesis Presented to the Bible Dept. of the Grad. School of CCS. 1978), p. 39.

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<sup>66</sup> Redford, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Barnes. *Notes on the Old Testament: Explanatory and Practical. (Isaiah)* Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962). p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> "Time line." *The NIV Life Application Bible:* (Colorado, International Bible Society, 1978.), p. 1167.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 1166-67.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel Dyke. "BOT 661: Isaiah." [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University: OH, Spring, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> William L. Holladay. *Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978). p. 28.

<sup>72</sup> Archer, Jr. p. 331, 332.

<sup>73</sup> Lloyd, James. BOT 680: "Studies in Old Testament Prophetic literature." [Lecture] (Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH, Fall 2006.).

#### **CHAPTER 4**

<sup>74</sup> Rick Warren. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message & Mission.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> J. D. Douglas, and Merrill C. Tenney. *New International Dictionary of the Bible.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963.), p. 390.

<sup>76</sup> Rickr Marrs. "The Prophetic Faith: A Call to Ethics and Community." *Restoration Quarterly* p. 308

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<sup>77</sup> Rickr Marrs. "The Prophetic Faith: A Call to Ethics and Community." *Restoration Quarterly* p. 308.

<sup>78</sup> Holladay, p. 19.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

<sup>81</sup> John N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah (1-39). The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), p. 179.

<sup>82</sup> Staton, Jr., p. 63.

<sup>83</sup> Oswalt, p. 179.

<sup>84</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

<sup>85</sup> Barnes, p. 73

<sup>86</sup> Cecil P. Staton, Jr. *Interpreting Isaiah for Preaching Teaching*. (Greenville, South Carolina: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1991), p. 54.

<sup>87</sup> George L. Robinson. *The Book of Isaiah*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954). p. 20-21

<sup>88</sup> Paul House. "Isaiah's call and its context in Isaiah 1-6." *Criswell Theological Review* 6.2 (1993): p. 217.

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<sup>89</sup> Homer Hailey. *A Commentary on Isaiah: With Emphasis on the Messianic Hope*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 138.

<sup>90</sup> Rickr Marrs. "The Prophetic Faith: A Call to Ethics and Community." *Restoration Quarterly* p. 308

<sup>91</sup> Oswalt, p. 177-180.

<sup>92</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Hailey, p. 76-77.

<sup>95</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

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<sup>96</sup> Oswalt, p. 176.

<sup>97</sup> H. L. Ellison. *The Old Testament Prophets, "Men Spoke from God."*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976). p, 49

<sup>98</sup> Staton, Jr., p. 54.

<sup>99</sup> Robinson, p. 22.

<sup>100</sup> Holladay, p. 42.

<sup>101</sup> Robinson, p. 22.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

<sup>104</sup> Ellison, p. 51.

<sup>105</sup> Ellison, p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 285.

<sup>107</sup> Robinson, p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Halley, p. 285.

<sup>109</sup> "Isaiah" [Internet source]; Accessed: April 13, 2007, from:  
((<http://www.answers.com/topic/isaiah>)).

<sup>110</sup> Dillard and Longman, p. 283.

## CHAPTER 7

<sup>111</sup> Ellison, p. 51.

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<sup>112</sup> Robinson, p. 22-23.

<sup>113</sup> Halley, p. 285.

<sup>114</sup> Barnes, p. 9.

<sup>115</sup> Robinson, p. 285.

<sup>116</sup> Dyke, [Spring, 2007].

<sup>117</sup> Barnes, p. 10-11.

## **CHAPTER 8**

<sup>118</sup> Robinson, p. 285.

## **PART IV: CATCH GOD'S VISION LIKE DANIEL**

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<sup>119</sup> Hill, Andrew E. and, Walton, John H. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), p. 454; cf. Longman III, Tremper, and Dillard, Raymond B. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), p. 373.

<sup>120</sup> VanGemeren, William A. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), p. 341.

<sup>121</sup> Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), p. 445.

<sup>122</sup> Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 341.

<sup>123</sup> Archer, p. 423.

<sup>124</sup> Longman III, and Dillard, p. 375.

<sup>125</sup> Archer, p. 423.

<sup>126</sup> Longman III, and Dillard, p. 375.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Halley, p. 342.

<sup>129</sup> Hill, and Walton, p. 452.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p. 453; cf. Longman III, and Dillard, p. 373.

<sup>131</sup> VanGemeren, p. 341.

<sup>132</sup> Longman III, and Dillard, p. 376.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 391.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 391.

<sup>136</sup> Halley, p. 342.

<sup>137</sup> Hill, and, Walton, p. 456.

<sup>138</sup> Archer, p. 421.

<sup>139</sup> VanGemeren, p. 344; cf. Hill, and Walton, p. 459.

<sup>140</sup> Longman III, and Dillard p 392-393.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p 393.

<sup>142</sup> Smith, Gary V. *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets*. (Nasville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holding Publishers, 1994), p. 288-289.

<sup>143</sup> Longman III, and Dillard, p 386-388.

<sup>144</sup> Hill and Walton, p. 458-9.

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<sup>145</sup> Jim A. Cornwell. "The Tower of Babel and Babylon, Gilgamesh, Ningizzida, Gudea." *The Alpha and the Omega Home Page* [web site]; accessed October 30, 2006; available from <http://www.mazzaroth.com /ChapterThree/TowerOfBabel.htm>

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<sup>146</sup> Cornwell, [web site]

<sup>147</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. "The Babylonians." [web site]; accessed October 30, 2006; available from <http://www.angelfire.com/empire2/unkemptgoose/Babylonian.html>

<sup>148</sup> Dean Saunders. "An Ancient King's Dreams". *The Bible Study Collection Home Page* [web site]; accessed October 29, 2006; available from <http://mcdonaldroad.org/bible/study/dream.htm>

<sup>149</sup> Walter Brueggemann. "At the mercy of Babylon: A subversive rereading of the Empire." *TBL HOU* (2991): p. 4.

<sup>150</sup> VanGemenen, p. 339.cf. Archer, p. 421.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, p. 284.

<sup>152</sup> William H. Shea. "Daniel and his friends in Babylon." *ARCHAEOLOGY and Biblical Research*, 4, no. 2 (Spring, 1991): 57-64.

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<sup>153</sup> VanGemenen, p. 23.

<sup>154</sup> VanGemenen, 339

<sup>155</sup> Butler, 37

<sup>156</sup> Alexander Mileant. "Prophet Daniel." Selected Lives of Saints of November and December. *Missionary Leaflet # EA6 Home Page* [web site]; accessed October 30, 2006; available from <http://www.fatheralexander.org/>

<sup>157</sup> Walton & Chavalsa.

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<sup>158</sup> Michael Loewe, and Carmen Blacker. *Divination and Oracles*. (London: George Allen and Irwin, 1981), p. 201.

<sup>159</sup> Tony Crisp. "Babylonian Dream beliefs" [web site]; accessed October 30, 2006; available from <http://www.dreamhawk.com/d-babal.htm>

<sup>160</sup> Loewe and Blacker, 147.

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<sup>161</sup> Paul T. Butler, *Daniel: Bible Study Textbook Series*. (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1982), p. 93.

<sup>162</sup> VanGemeran, 343

<sup>163</sup> Leon Wood. *A Commentary on Daniel*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1973), p. 75.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>165</sup> Desmond Ford. *Daniel*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>166</sup> Eugene H. Merrill. *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*. (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1966), p. 308.

<sup>167</sup> Jack N. Lawson. "The God Who Reveals Secrets' : The Mesopotamian Background To Daniel 2.47" *JSOT 1A* (1997): 61-76.

<sup>168</sup> VanGemeran, p. 343.

<sup>169</sup> Joseph Nsiah. "The Credibility of the Epistle of Nebuchadnezzar to the World." (A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School Cincinnati Bible Seminary, May 1979), p. 16.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> A.O. Hudson. "Daniel in Babylon" [web site]; accessed October 20, 2006; available from <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?id=1074&rc=1&list=multi>

<sup>172</sup> Jack N. Lawson. "The God Who Reveals Secrets' : The Mesopotamian Background To Daniel 2.47" *JSOT 1A* (1997): p. 74.

<sup>173</sup> Wood, p. 142.

<sup>174</sup> Merrill, p. 309.

<sup>175</sup> Wood, p. 25.

## CHAPTER 5

<sup>176</sup> Nsiah, p. 64.

<sup>177</sup> Merrill, p. 309.

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<sup>178</sup> Wood, p. 141.

<sup>179</sup> Shea, p. 68-75.

<sup>180</sup> Smith, p. 297.

<sup>181</sup> Smith, p. 287.

<sup>182</sup> Cox, p. 67.

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<sup>183</sup> Ford, p. 83.

<sup>184</sup> Douglas and Merrill, p 987

## **PART V: CATCH GOD'S VISION LIKE PAUL**

### **CHAPTER 1**

<sup>185</sup> Douglas and Merrill, p 987

### **CHAPTER 2**

<sup>186</sup> Johannes Munck. *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1959), 24-35, quoted in Charles W. Hedrick. "Paul's Conversion/Call: A Comparative analysis of the Three Reports in Acts." *JBL* 100/3 (1981): 415-432; cf. Robert G. Hoerber. "Paul's Conversion/Call." *Concordia Journal* April 1996. p. 186-187.

<sup>187</sup> Douglas and Merrill, p 64

<sup>188</sup> Douglas and Merrill, p 64

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<sup>189</sup> Ronald E. Osborn. "A Historical Case-Study in a "Tent-Making Ministry" *The Eldership among Disciples of Christ* p. 74.

<sup>190</sup> Ronald E. Osborn. "A Historical Case-Study in a "Tent-Making Ministry" *The Eldership among Disciples of Christ* p. 111.

<sup>191</sup> Francis Asante-Duku. The importance of education to the minister; Ghana Christian University College – Kumasi campus graduation; 19<sup>th</sup> April 2008. P2-3

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid p.10

<sup>192</sup> Ibid p.7-8

<sup>193</sup> Ibid p.7

<sup>194</sup> Ibid p.6

<sup>195</sup> Daily Graphic, Friday, August 26, 2011, Page 7. Letter To Jomo: The Rapper, The Priest And The Reporter By George Sydney Abugri.

<sup>196</sup> Atta-Quayson B 2010 (11 Nov). Vice President promises closer Partnership with the Church. *Daily Graphic*, 16.

<sup>197</sup> Reuben van Rensburg. "e-Learning – a growing trend in distance education." online article at; <http://www.satsonline.org/content/e-learning—growing-trend-distance-education>; Date accessed: Sept. 14, 2011.

<sup>198</sup> David Kalb. "Pauline Epistles." [Lecture] (Ghana Christian College and Seminary, now Ghana Christian University College: Accra, 2002).