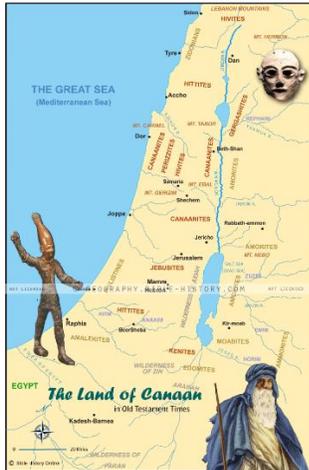


Powerful prayers



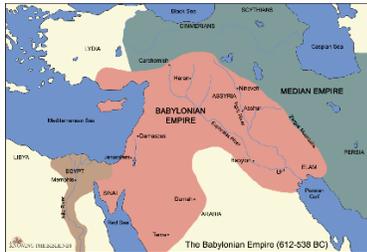
God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, the Jews. Through Moses God made a covenant with the Jews. He told them if they obeyed the terms of the covenant, He would bless them. He told them if they rejected the terms of the covenant, He would judge them by removing them from the land of Canaan. (Leviticus 26:14-46)



In 930BC, the Jews had a civil war and the nation was split into two kingdoms.

The northern kingdom rejected the terms of their covenant with God. They were conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 722BC. Thousands died. The survivors became servants to the Assyrians. Most of the survivors were relocated to other cities within the Assyrian Empire.

The Jews in the southern Kingdom of Israel the terms of the covenant with God. They were conquered by the Babylonian Empire in 586BC. Thousands of them died. The survivors became servants to the Babylonians.



There was a small number of survivors that remained in the land of Canaan. Most of the survivors were relocated to other cities within the Babylonian empire.

What a tragedy. Thousands died. They lost their land in Canaan and most of their property. Their homes and land were desolate. Families were divided by the relocation. Their living conditions in their new land was difficult. They were servants and slaves to the citizens of the cities they inhabited. The Jewish men could be forced into labor for their enemies and their women and children were not safe from abuse. It did not appear that there was a great future for their families, and it appeared that their nation was dissolved and scattered forever.

Before these events occurred, God gave Israel prophets that accurately predicted two these future events. These prophets also predicted that God would intervene and save them. They predicted that by His divine power God would...

- Send the Jews a messiah to rule over them.
- Make a new covenant with them.
- Cause them to keep this new covenant.
- Restore them to their land.
- Restore their national sovereignty.
- Make them a blessing to the whole world.
- Judge the wicked.

During their exile in Babylon, a series of very strange and miraculous sequence of events occurred. These events caused the Jews in exile to gain the favor of their rulers and their rulers sent them home.

As the people returned, they were disheartened. The temple of God had been leveled to the ground. The city of Jerusalem had been leveled. The temple and the city of Jerusalem was the hot spot of God's presence among the Jews. The temple and the city were the center of worship for the Jews.

Also, their land was heavily populated by new inhabitants that did not want them to return or to rebuild the temple or to rebuild Jerusalem.

God gave the Jews prophets to give them hope for their future and to encourage them to cooperate with God. Zechariah was one of those prophets.

One of those prophets was named Zechariah. Zechariah was a Levite and a descendant of priests in Israel. He was a righteous man and never forsook God for false gods.

While in exile, Zechariah began to receive prophecies from the Lord about the future of the nation of Israel and he delivered these prophecies to the Jews after the exile.

The book of Zechariah in the OT is the written record of the prophecies of Zechariah.

Zechariah predicted what other prophets had predicted before Him with some additional information.

- The messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)
- The messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12-13)
- The messiah would remove their iniquity from the land in one day. (Zechariah 3:9)
- The messiah would be rejected first and the Jews would grieve over what they did to Him. (Zechariah 12:10-14)

Zechariah said that when the Jews repented, wonderful things would happen to the city of Jerusalem.

Listen to chapter 8.

Zechariah 8

1 Again the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying,

2 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.'

3 "Thus says the Lord: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'

4 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age.

5 The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'

6 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?' Says the Lord of hosts.

7 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west;

8 I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.'

9 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Let your hands be strong, You who have been hearing in these days These words by the mouth of the prophets, Who spoke in the day the foundation was laid For the house of the Lord of hosts, That the temple might be built.

10 For before these days There were no wages for man nor any hire for beast; There was no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in; For I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor.

11 But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,' says the Lord of hosts.

12 'For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, And the heavens shall give their dew — I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these.

13 And it shall come to pass That just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.'

14 "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Just as I determined to punish you When your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'And I would not relent,

15 So again in these days I am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.

16 These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;

17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the Lord."

18 Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying,

19 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'The fast of the fourth month, The fast of the fifth, The fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts For the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.'

20 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities;

21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also."

22 Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.'

23 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'""

NKJV

1. The city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt.

It would be a glorious city. God would dwell in the midst of the city and people's lives would be blessed and transformed.

2. The city of Jerusalem would be a safe place for the Jews protected by God from the threat of their enemies.

It would be safe place from their enemies but also because of the way the people loved one another.

3. The city of Jerusalem would be filled with people.

In Zechariah 2 the city is described as a city without walls because the walls of the city could not contain the number of people that would live there. Both the young and the old would dwell there and fill the streets of the city.

4. The city of Jerusalem would become the center of worship for people that were not living in Jerusalem. People would travel there just to worship there. The city would be called the city of truth. The Jews and the city of Jerusalem would be a blessing to the whole world.

Zechariah gave the people incredible hope with this prophecy. But he also challenged them to obey God. The prophecy was sure but the timing of the fulfillment of the prophecy would be determined by their obedience to their messiah.

As we know now, the Jews rejected their messiah. His name was Jesus. The rest of the prophecy of Zechariah will not be fulfilled until the Jews are awakened to what they did to their messiah and repent. They will be awakened, and they will repent!

Romans 10:1

10 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.
NKJV

Romans 11:25-29

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

NKJV

We are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the Jews to be saved based on prophecy.

Powerful prayers are prayers that we pray based on prophecy!

There are many things in scripture that reveal the future to us. Our knowledge of these prophecies is critical to the power of prayers for others. If we believe the prophecy, we will pray fervently for those we love. If we do not believe the prophecy, we will not pray fervently.

God has revealed the future to us.

Hebrews 9:27

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
NKJV

Matthew 16:27

27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

NKJV

Matthew 24:30-31

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

NKJV

Matthew 25:31-34

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

NKJV

Matthew 25:41

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

NKJV

We should earnestly pray for the salvation of others based on our knowledge of the future.

What about the future of our church?

In 1984, like Israel, our church and its people did not appear to have a lot of promise for its future. The church had been in decline since the early 70's. One Easter Sunday in the 1960's, about 1600 people attended the service. In 1984, the church was averaging about 60 people in the Sunday morning worship service. There were three services a week in 1984 but the only service in this auditorium was on Sunday morning in order to save money on utilities. The church had paid off the debt it owed on the buildings the church owned but there was a lot of maintenance and updating that needed to be done to the buildings. The church was barely scraping by financially. There were only a few youths that regularly attended Western Hills. They did not need the church bus the church owned at that time. They could get their whole youth group in a volks wagon. There was only one child under the age of three to care for in our nursery wing.

Not only had the church been in decline but the community was in decline. The median income in this area was one of the worst in Oklahoma. The crime rate in this area was one of the worst in Oklahoma. This area is still called Felony Square by members of the highway patrol. When I drove around the area, I noticed so many of the windows of homes had bars. Before I accepted the call, I did a survey of the 21 SBC churches that were within 2 miles of this campus. They all had seen a decline in attendance from 1978-1984 except one. Many believers that lived in this area were driving outside our community to attend church. Through man's eyes, it did not appear that this church had a lot of promise for growth for impacting this community or OKC.

In August 1984, I accepted the call to be the Pastor of our church. I was 29 years old. Debbie and I had two children. The leadership of the church said they could pay me 25k a year to be their Pastor. That was the same salary I made as the youth minister at my previous church. At my previous church, I had just taken 120 people to Falls Creek. The youth group I pastored was twice the size of the entire congregation at Western Hills.

Why would I accept this call when it did not appear that the church had a lot of promise?

There were several reasons.

I believed God said that my ministry at our church in Yukon, Ok. Was finished.

I believed God said I was ready to serve a congregation as their pastor.

I believed God was calling me back to serve on the south side. I believe that God moves people by calling them to a place.

But why Western Hills? There are lots of churches on the south side of OKC.

This ancient prophet Zechariah and his prophecy about Israel had come to mean a lot to me personally over a year before I was contacted by the people of Western Hills about being their Pastor. We thought so much of this prophet that we even named our second born son after him.

My decision to accept the call was based on my faith that what God did for Israel, God would do for this church.

1. **The church would be rebuilt.**

God would rebuild it by His Spirit. The church is people. It would be a glorious group of people. God would dwell in their midst and people's lives would be transformed.

2. **The church would be a safe place.**

The people would be protected from it's enemy, Satan. It would be a safe place because of the way the people loved one another.

3. **The church would be filled with people.**

It would be a church without walls.

The walls of these buildings would not be able to contain the number of people that attended here.

Both the young and the old would worship here and fill these buildings.

The church would grow outside the walls of these buildings. As people met our members, they would say let us go with you for we have heard that God is with you.

4. [The church would become a center of worship for people that were not living here.](#) People would travel here just to worship with this local church even though they did not live here.

People would even move here just to be a part of what God was doing in our church.

God would call them here from all directions.

After accepting the call as Pastor, one Sunday morning, I shared what I just shared with you with those 60 people.

I would like to tell you that the people stood up and clapped because of their faith in the vision. There were a few that believed. There were some that were stirred to have hope. But, for the most part...not so much.

It seemed impossible and it was.

It would mean changing some things that were important to the older members. Nearly all 60 people were the older members.

It sounded like a lot of work.

I began to pray fervently for this prophecy to be fulfilled. I then lead the church to pray fervently for this prophecy to be fulfilled. We started early morning prayer meetings at 6am Monday-Friday and those that gathered prayed fervently for this prophecy to be fulfilled.

What I can tell you is that all four of the things I predicted would occur, occurred.

1. The church was rebuilt.
2. The church was safe place.
3. The church was filled with people.
4. The church was a center of worship for people that were not living in OKC.

From August 1984-August 1985, the number of people attending our Sunday services grew from 60 to 120. This steady growth on Sundays would continue for several years until we

were having nearly 600 people on average by 1990. We also had people attending every Sunday that lived in Norman, Edmond, Yukon, Shawnee, and other towns outside of OKC.

We started a worship service once a month on a Friday night and Saturday night, and in each service about 800 people would attend. For these services, people were driving from cities even further away than OKC to be a part of the service. These services would last from 2-3 hours.

People started moving to OKC just to be a part of our church.

When our church met for worship here and in small groups in homes in our community, people's lives began to be transformed. There were powerful testimonies of salvation and freedom from besetting sins and sins that had been in families for generations. One Sunday I preached a message on who we are in Christ and over 70 people wanted to be baptized.

Many of the people whose lives were transformed during that time entered full time ministry.

So, what happened? Why am I still here? Where do we go from here?

What happened?

Sin happened.

It was my fault as a leader. I was immature. I was unwise. I lead the church wrong.

I lead the church to make worship in song the main engine of our church. I was wrong. It was my fault.

That main engine was eventually replaced in the mid 1990's by raising up fathers to disciple their families. I was wrong. It was my fault.

Both worship in song and fathers discipling their families are very important, but they should never be the main engine that powers a local church.

The main mission of the church is to make disciples that make disciples.

[Matthew 4:18-22](#)

[18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.](#)

[19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."](#)

[20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.](#)

[21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them,](#)

[22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.](#)

[NKJV](#)

[Matthew 28:18-20](#)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

NKJV

Because I lead the church wrong, what God built did not last. I was wrong.

Why am I still here?

I believe that God wants to do it again but even better. I believe that God has begun something here that God is going to bless in a way that will be even greater than anything our church has known in the past. I may not lead it. I may not live long enough to see it. But I believe it!

(Video of home group meeting)

Where do we go from here?

- Release the past
- Relaunch the prophecy
- Relocate the property

Your church needs to be wherever you gather with other believers for discipleship.

The people of our church may not always meet in this building for Sunday morning worship service. The demographics of our community have changed so dramatically in the last 20 years that it may be best at some point in the future for a Hispanic Pastor to be leading a Hispanic congregation in this building.

But wherever we gather for worship on Sundays now or in the future, the church needs to become wherever and with whoever you gather for discipleship.

Based on what we know about the future...

1. Let's pray fervently for the lost to be saved this morning.
2. Let's pray fervently for the vision of our church to be fulfilled.