

Going Deeper into the HWECC teaching

The Church as the agent of change

Receiving God's hope

Isaiah 11 is a chapter that is prophetic about Jesus, and is all about reconciliation between the most unlikely partners!

Vs 3 is very significant. 'He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears.' If we do that in our nations, we can rarely have hope! We must receive our hope from the God of hope (Romans 15:13). We need to be able to communicate God's hope to the community around us. Hope is like the engine that drives the car. Without hope, we have no motivation to seek transformation.

Haggai 2:4b-7 'Be strong, all you people of the land, declare the Lord, 'and work for I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.' This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory', says the Lord Almighty.

These are days when all human systems and nations are being shaken. Western democracies and financial systems are being shaken as never before. That which people have trusted for security is being shaken. But God's word to His people is that we should not fear, but be strong and continue to work, because His Spirit is still with us. Then comes the wonderful promise, which is the basis of our hope. *The desired of all nations shall come.*

All nations desire justice, peace, righteousness, freedom from corruption, conflict, poverty. All would-be politicians promise these things in order to get people's votes, but once they get into power, sadly they cannot deliver. People around the world are getting cynical and disillusioned. Is there no hope for their nations? The eternal truth is that there is only one hope, and that's Jesus, but most people don't realise that He is their heart's desire. But one day they will! *The desired of all nations will come!*

This is promised again in Malachi 3:1-4. 'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come', says the Lord Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in the former years.

We see that what we desire will come, but not without shaking. There has to be a refining. It's the Levites who need to be purified first – the priestly tribe. We, the church, are the royal priesthood and we are told that judgement is to begin with the family of God (1 Peter 4:17). But His purpose is totally good. The analogy of purifying gold and silver is used. The way this was done was by putting the metal into a big pot and lighting a fire under it. As it melted, the impurities would come to the surface, and the refiner would skim it off the surface. The process would continue until he could see his own image in it.

The writer of the book of Hebrews takes up this same theme in chapter 12:26-29. God is shaking everything so that whatever is not founded in Him and His kingdom will be removed, and what cannot be shaken may remain. Our response is to trust Him, be thankful and worship.

Suffering and a God of Love

See the teaching 'Picking up an offence against God.'

God's response to human suffering

Vulnerability

Someone said recently that mankind's greatest problem is a fear of being vulnerable. This is true of individuals, communities, tribes, even whole countries. It is probably at the root of all conflict. We attack as means of defence against a perceived threat that someone will take advantage of us. No-one wants to be vulnerable! It goes against our human nature.

What was God's response to this problem that we face? It's shocking. God responded by making Himself totally vulnerable to us! First of all as a totally helpless baby, completely dependent on fallible human parents. Jesus is the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:3) and shows us the Father (John 14: 7-11), but did you ever consider how as a new-born baby He showed us the Father? It's mind-blowing!

Then of course when He allowed Himself to be arrested, treated brutally, ending with crucifixion He made Himself totally vulnerable to His enemies. He could have called the armies of heaven but chose not to. And this was His way of disarming and transforming His enemies!

What can we learn from this??

Who is worthy to carry out God's purpose on earth?

Revelation 5

This is a scene in heaven which John saw in his amazing vision. The question is asked as to who is worthy to open the scroll to carry out God's purposes. The tragic answer was – no-one! It caused much weeping, until Someone was found to be worthy – the Lion of the tribe of Judah. But the Lion turns out to be Slain Lamb! He is only worthy because He has made full atonement for all the sins of

the world by His sacrificial death. He has fully paid the price. It is finished. This is then the cause for much rejoicing.

As we look at our countries, who is worthy to carry out God's purposes there? Is there anyone without guilt? We have to humbly accept and confess that no-one is worthy! So what is the hope for our countries?

We can also say that Only One is worthy – only the Slain Lamb. He has made full atonement for all the sins of our countries! The cross is not only for us individually. It is for ALL the sin of the world. It includes absolutely everything, every sinful event in human history. We are to take the sins and wounds of our countries to the cross too. That is our only hope – to give the responsibility to the Slain Lamb and trust in His atoning sacrifice.

Let's explore the word 'atonement' further to understand it better. The word means to completely cover, to appease, reparation, to make amends, to cleanse, to cancel, to reconcile. The first time it is used in the Bible is when it describes Noah completely covering the ark with pitch. It implies that Jesus' sacrificial death completely dealt with, covered and wiped out our sin.