

## **1. The Clash of Kingdoms**

### **What's God Doing with Israel and the Church?**

Often, we don't see the forest because we are looking at the trees. For most of us, we are so focused on our daily lives that we find it difficult to see the big picture of world events and get a clear view of what is going on. There is a cosmic battle unfolding right before us, which has been raging for thousands of years. This warfare is increasing rapidly as we were told it would. For those of us who are looking daily at world events, we see evil things happening on a massive scale before our eyes, e.g., a world that, for the most part, has abandoned all sense of moral values and is hurtling on a downward slide into corruption. Is this happening by chance? No, I believe it is by design for the coming of an utterly evil being called the Antichrist. This is not science fiction; it has been foretold in the book of Revelation. God reveals His work to us through the prophetic Scriptures as He promised (Amos 3:7).

In this series, we will focus on God's plan in our present day. Now is the time for us to take heart and see the big picture! We live in exciting times where the Father is at work, and he desires that His people be awake and take part in His plan. So, amidst these troubled times, rather than allowing your heart to be overwhelmed, I invite you to take a closer look and see what God is doing behind the scenes. Let us be awake, joyful, and vigilant as we see His invisible hand at work. God will not allow the enemy to stride forward unchecked. There is a response to the darkness, and it is emerging as a powerful wave, which will bear His people up and cause them to rise above the darkness. (Isaiah 60:1-2). Now, let us examine a natural phenomenon and see how it reflects this wave of the Spirit.

### **The Coming Tidal Convergence**

What is a tidal convergence? There are geographic places on earth where ocean currents meet, sometimes as an ebb tide meets a rising tide. These places are often found at river estuaries where tidal flow coming out of a river meets a tidal flow passing along the coast. The result is often marked by rough weather in open sea, or if it has a geographic bottleneck, it can produce a tidal wave or what's known as a Tidal Bore.

The Severn River Bore is one of Britain's truly spectacular natural phenomena. It is a massive surge wave that can be seen in the estuary of the River Severn where the tidal range is the second highest in the world, being as much as fifty feet (approx. 15.4m). That means that, if you are a fisherman needing to land your fish on the quay and you were to come in at low water, you have to pull your fish up fifty feet to the top of the pier; whereas, if you came in at the high tide, you could just pass your fish on to the dock. That is a remarkable difference!

When the tide turns in the Severn Estuary, the Bore is a wave of water that has been as high as 9¼ ft. (2.8m), one of the biggest in the world. The shape of the Severn estuary is such that the water is funneled into an increasingly narrow channel as the tide rises, thus forming the massive wave. The river's course takes it from five miles wide to several miles later, less than a hundred yards across, maintaining this width all the way to Gloucester.

As well as the width of the river's decreasing rapidly, so does the depth of the river floor also change quickly, thereby forming a funnel shape. Therefore, as the incoming tide travels up the estuary, it is routed into an ever-decreasing channel — consequently, the surge wave or tidal bore forms. Steve Ling is the current Guinness World Record holder for the person who has surfed the furthest on the Bore —an impressive 9.25 miles. Breaking the record is extremely difficult as the crest of the wave moves around from side to side reaching speeds of more than ten miles per hour.

Like the Severn Bore, many see a time of spiritual convergence ahead for the world. The deceptive downward trend towards evil is becoming clear for all to see what is really on the bottom of the seabed at low tide. The result will be a concerted effort by the people of God to turn the tide and begin to pray and intercede for a spiritual revival. This will cause a remarkable Tidal Bore wave of the Holy Spirit that will resist the evil that has become so powerful in this world system.

This writer believes that a tidal wave of the Spirit of God is beginning to take shape where many millions of lives will be touched with salvation in Christ. God has been allowing the spiritual tide to go out to awake people that are spiritually asleep. Just as the ten virgins were all asleep before the coming of the Bridegroom in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25), the Church has been, for the most part, sleeping to the nearness of the hour. God is preparing a powerful wave of the Spirit by bringing about a convergence of many different tidal streams or rivers that will bring about a massive revival all over the world.

It is my conviction that, at the center of this spiritual bore wave, will be Messianic believers (Jewish people that believers in Jesus) in Israel, but more of that later in this series. Even the enemy, who is called the prince of the power of the air, is being used to help quicken and usher in this new wave. What do I mean by that? Satan has thwarted his own plans and devices. True to his destructive nature, he has accelerated his work so relentlessly and rapidly that it is causing some who have been asleep in the church to awaken out of their slumber. The scales are coming off the eyes of those who have formerly been content to ignore the signs of the times. The enemy has “shot himself in the foot,” so to speak. As people awaken, they begin to pray. God will always answer the cries of His people when they call out to Him. This is causing a massive wave of the Holy Spirit. Satan has been incrementally working for centuries to propagandize the human race to believe that we are a product of evolution and not the creation of God.

We have seen many false theories arise that seek to blind and deceive man as to his origins. We are made in the image of God, but the enemy is a liar, and he has tried to weave a different story. Over the centuries, we have been deceived. We are now in a time where there is full-spectrum spiritual warfare occurring. What do I mean by that term? There is an awareness beginning to come to many people that the enemy has infiltrated our educational facilities as well as our banking and monetary systems. Large corporations now control our medical system and our food resources and dare I say it; even our religious thinking is being controlled less and less by the Word of God; thus, this is a full-spectrum attack. We have seen some church leaders not clearly explaining the Gospel and motivated by selfish gain rather than love for God and others. As it has been foretold, the love of many has grown cold (Matthew 24:12). Just as when the tide goes out and all the wreckage of centuries on the bottom of the seabed is revealed, we see the reality

of our situation. Things harmful to us are being exposed and laid bare for us to see. We are becoming more aware of spiritual forces at work and how these forces affect our lives. John, the Apostle, talked about this very thing in his first letter: “**We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one**” (1 John 5:19). If that was so when John wrote his letter in the first century, it is even more so now. It is time for the tide to turn.

### God is Working in Two Arenas at the Same Time

For us to see what God is doing and going to do, we need to go back and look at the promise that God gave Abraham, the father of the faithful:

<sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>And I will make of you a great nation, and **I will bless you** and make your name great, **so that you will be a blessing**. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you **all the families of the earth shall be blessed**.” <sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran (Genesis 12:1-4).

Question 1) God said to Abraham that He would bless him and, through him, bless all the families of the earth. When you think of a blessing, what comes to mind? What is a blessing, and how shall all families on earth be blessed?

A blessing is a spoken endowment. To speak or impart a blessing is to endow the person or thing that is blessed with a potency of life to flourish in an intended fullness. Speaking a blessing was considered to be a transaction of life-giving power and not a mere utterance of words.<sup>1</sup> The blessing of Abraham was that God would make his seed into a great nation (v. 2) and that through that nation all the families of the whole earth would be blessed. The Lord said that He would take of Abraham’s seed and make a great nation of them.

### God Expands Abraham’s Vision to the Stars of Heaven

There are times in our walk with God where we need reminding of what the Lord is doing because we often try to work out God's plans in our way. This was what happened to Abram. He began to be fearful that he had missed God in some way. The Lord had promised him a son and heir, but the dream-vision began to grow dim when Sarah failed to fall pregnant, and both were far beyond the age and vitality needed to bear children. Abram started to think that, maybe, his servant, Eliezer, would be his heir. At such a time, God graciously visited Abram to renew his perception of what God was going to do:

<sup>1</sup>After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “**Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.**” <sup>2</sup>But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup>And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member

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<sup>1</sup> Steven C. Hawthorne. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Published by William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA, page 7.

of my household will be my heir.” <sup>4</sup>And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” <sup>5</sup>And he brought him outside and said, “**Look toward heaven, and number the stars**, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “**So shall your offspring be.**” <sup>6</sup>And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:1-6).

Question 2) What do you think Abraham’s fear was? (v. 1). What was so wrong with Eliezer of Damascus? How did the Lord reply to his concern?

When I was younger and working with my father on his commercial fishing boat, miles from the harbor and working during the night on my own, I would fix the autopilot on our boat’s navigation system and go outside on the deck and lay looking at the stars. When one gets away from the pollution of the towns on a clear night and looks at the stars, it is a wondrous experience to view the heavens. I would dream of doing something different than fishing for a living and wonder what God would do with me if I would leave the sea and my nets. In the passage above, the Lord was gracious to renew Abram’s vision by taking him outside his tent to look up at the stars. God said that, if Abram could count the stars, so he would be used of the Lord to birth a great multitude of people that would be like the stars of the sky. The promise of God was that Abram’s reward would be very significant (Genesis 15:1). But that wasn’t the end of the vision; it was expanded at a later date.

### Abraham’s Vision of Multitudes of Stars and Grains of Sand

<sup>15</sup>And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup>and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as **the stars of heaven** and as **the sand that is on the seashore**. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, <sup>18</sup>and in your offspring shall **all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice.” <sup>19</sup>So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba (Gen 22:15-19).

For many communicators of the Scriptures, including myself, there is the belief that in the above passage of Scripture God is talking about a heavenly spiritual seed as well as an earthly natural seed. The nation of Israel is represented as the sand on the seashore while the stars of heaven are a picture of those who are the *ecclesia*, the called-out ones, otherwise known as the Church. God promised Abram that all nations (v. 18), not just the physical seed of Abraham, would be blessed through the Seed who would come from Abram, talking about the Messiah, Jesus. When the end of this age comes, the called-out-ones will shine like the heavenly stars:

Then the righteous will **shine like the sun** in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear (Matthew 13:43).

This concept of the righteous shining like the stars is not just a New Testament concept, for in the Old Testament, all those who receive the blessing of the New Covenant were seen as stars

that will shine forever and ever. The prophet Daniel also wrote of the glory of Messiah that comes to Jews and Gentiles alike:

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, **like the stars for ever** and ever (Daniel 12:3).

### Why Was the Messiah Not Received by Israel?

Question 3) What went wrong for Israel? Why was Christ not received? When Jesus came, why was the kingdom not ushered in?

God hates spiritual pride: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6). After the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE and the seventy-year captivity to Babylon, the Jewish people began to look closely at their failure to keep God’s Law. The result of their introspection was a pursuit of righteousness by a strict observance, not only of the 613 laws in the first five books of Moses but also by additional rules and observances, too. A sense of elitism arose in the nation, an elitism in the bloodline of Abraham, whereby they could not believe God had a plan to bring Gentiles into the Covenant of Abraham. When Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, was arrested in the temple, he had a chance to share his testimony of what God had done in his life. Take note of the elitism that arose when Paul told them that God had a heart for the Gentiles, too:

<sup>19</sup>““Lord,” I replied, “these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you.<sup>20</sup>And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’<sup>21</sup>Then the Lord said to me, “Go; **I will send you far away to the Gentiles.**”<sup>22</sup>The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!” (Acts 22:19-22).

They listened to Paul until the point in his testimony where God told him to go to the Gentiles to bring them into the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31). He was not fit to live if he was to go to the ungodly Gentiles. During His incarnation, Jesus had warned the nation that the kingdom of God would be taken away from them:

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be **taken away from you** and given to a people producing its fruits (Matthew 21:43).

The Lord Jesus did not say that the kingdom of God would be given to another nation; no, instead, the kingdom of God would be given to a people who would bring forth the kingdom’s fruit. When Paul preached to King Agrippa that God had a plan to extend forgiveness to Gentiles, Herod Agrippa’s response was, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind” (Acts 26:22-24). We saw this same attitude in the prophet Jonah. He was angry because God wanted him to preach to Gentiles, and in his heart, he knew that God wanted to extend mercy towards Nineveh, but he thought that they deserved judgment (Jonah 4:1-3). Even the Apostle Peter had to have a vision shown to him three times before he would go and preach the Gospel to a Gentile household (Cornelius the centurion, Acts 10).

This attitude of spiritual pride and self-righteousness was what caused the branches of the Israelite people to be broken off of the Olive Tree of faith (Romans 11:17). Paul writes that the Gentiles, whom he sees as a wild olive shoot, are being grafted into the olive tree of faith:

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root (Romans 11:17).

However, even this breaking off of the majority of Israelites was foreseen and used by God to bring blessing to the Gentiles and to make Israel jealous. Paul, the Apostle, later wrote to the church at Rome:

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious (Romans 11:11).

Thank God for those Israeli Messianic believers that took the Gospel from the Middle East and abandoned everything into the hands of God and brought the Gospel to the Gentiles. We are spiritually indebted to the Messianic believers for what we have received. It is incumbent on us to return the favor now that many Jews are back in the land and still walking in unbelief toward the Gospel. We must do what we can to bless the Messianic believers in Yeshua and help them in whatever way we can. Why? Because we have been grafted into the covenant given to Abraham:

<sup>5</sup>So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? <sup>6</sup>So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>7</sup>Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you. <sup>9</sup>So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. <sup>10</sup>For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” <sup>11</sup>Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” <sup>12</sup>The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” <sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” <sup>14</sup>He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (Galatians 3:5-14).

### **God Was Creating a Heavenly Seed (Stars) as Well as an Earthly Seed (Sand)**

Right from the very beginning, God had in mind a body of people called the Church, i.e., those drawn into a covenant relationship with Christ. He used the Jewish people to bring forth His Word and His promises and then sent those early Jewish believers into all the world to proclaim the message of forgiveness of sin and deliverance from Satan. Paul wrote to Gentile believers in

Ephesus that, at one time, they were strangers to the covenant of promise, but now through the Gospel, God is drawing Gentiles as well as Jews into one covenant of the promise of Abraham:

<sup>11</sup>Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup>remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup>And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22).

In the temple of Jerusalem, there was an outer court specifically for the Gentiles to come and worship. This was the same court in which the ruling leadership set up their money-changing racket. The Court of the Gentiles was separated from the Court of Israel by a wall and sign with an inscription warning any Gentile who crossed the barrier with death: "Whoever is captured will have himself to blame for his subsequent death." Through the Gospel, the wall that separated the Gentiles from drawing near to God has been broken down, and along with the Hebrew believers, we, the heavenly spiritual seed of Abraham, have been brought into the New Covenant.

The sand of the sea and the stars in the sky all represent the children of Abraham, the father of a multitude. Those of us who are Gentiles have been grafted into the original Olive Tree of faith. We are all one in Christ. Messiah, Himself is our Peace. As those who have been grafted onto the original Olive Tree (Romans 11:17), we should rejoice that we are being made into the Temple of God. His Temple is His household, made up of Jew and Gentile. In our next study, we will examine how God has worked throughout history to bring His people together as One Body. As one body of believers, God has made us joint-heirs.

Prayer of Thankfulness: Father, thank You for Your kindness toward Jew and Gentile alike. May we walk in a spirit of humility as faithful believers and look for every opportunity to bring others to know Your mercy and grace. Amen!

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