

The Exodus and the House Church

By Michael Clark

In the early days of the Church in the first century there was explosive growth. Under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit and humble, broken men and women, the Church grew and multiplied until its impact upon the Roman empire was felt right into the very houses of its emperors and leaders. Of these humble believers who poured out their blood as if it was an honor in the service of their savior it was once said, "these are they who turn the world upside down." (Acts 17:6). For three hundred years these humble saints met together as families in their humble homes.

But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. (Exodus 1:7, NKJV).

I was born into the kingdom during a move of the Holy Spirit that was sweeping the nation of America in the early '70s. This phenomenon was known as the Jesus Revolution and it seemed to spring up almost over night everywhere, finally spreading to Europe and parts of Asia. It was an exciting time to be a Christian as we saw "signs follow those who believed." It was like reliving the book of Acts itself. Thousands of young people came to Christ, demons were cast out, and people were healed of serious drug addictions and diseases as we laid hands on them and prayed.

Almost overnight, "Christian houses" started popping up and they all seemed to be given Bible names. In Spokane we had the house of Abraham (where single brothers lived), the house of Sarah (for the single girls), the house of David (where our band lived), and the house of Manna (where we gathered for meals and Bible study).

We found these believers' houses and Christian coffee houses everywhere we went across the country and in Europe by 1974. It was "just Jesus," doing it all, not any organization or by any pamphlet, but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere the Church was meeting and eating together in homes. And the meetings were alive and dynamic with everyone able to contribute and be part of the family. Imagine our excitement as we discovered while feeding on the Bible that this was how the early church got started and met, too! (see Acts chapters 1-6).

In the following years Christian home meetings started becoming more and more popular. Institutional Churches, wanting to share in this dynamic life that we were experiencing, started opening up their own "coffee houses," sponsoring house church meetings, and sending their people out on the streets to "witness."

The only trouble was that often their "coffee houses" were in the church basement, their home meetings were a mini-Sunday service dominated by the pastor, and their people on the streets were there without the youthful zeal that we knew as we shared our new found love for Jesus with the lost. What the Holy Spirit sovereignly did among America's once drug-sick youth culture could not be cloned by dead traditional Churches. As time went on, many of the "Jesus People" either joined these institutions or created ones of their own, and soon the light went out. By 1976 the Jesus Movement had lost almost all signs of life. The new wine of the Holy Spirit had turned into vinegar in the old wine skins. As Don McClain sang in his popular song "Bye, Bye, American Pie" it seemed that we had seen "the day the music died."

Imitation and Acceptability

Satan had once again had drawn a trick called "Imitation and Acceptability" from his bag. This was the very thing that derailed the early Church when Constantine took control of it, and as the emperor, patterned his version of Christianity after the Old Testament Temple worship.

This temple system of worship which was popular among the pagans in the third and fourth centuries of the Roman Empire, had a centralized government that taxed the believers, built great temples, and even built a Holy City or two, i.e., the Vatican and Constantinople. Down through the ages the system of "taxation" and building has remained intact. Even after two great "reformations" that swept the world, bringing the importance of the Bible and salvation by faith, worship and the importance of the Holy Spirit to the believer, we are still "hiding under a bushel" as we worship and preach. Our task masters still require the tithe and more that they might build these great cities, universities, temples and ministries "for the glory of God" while they name them after themselves, "Joe Shmoe University," "Jumping Jack Flash ministries," Lutheran this and Wesleyan that. Like that line from *Paint Your Wagon*, "They civilize left, they civilize right, until nothing is left and nothing is right!"

Exodus Stage Left! First a Prepared Messenger

Some of us have despaired at all of this "organization begging for life," but I believe that God has his plan as well and it is found in Exodus.



And he [Pharaoh] said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; "come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their

burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously: and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and all kinds of labor in the field, and all their labor which they rigorously imposed on them. (Exodus 1:9-14, NASB).

As it was in the days of Israel's captivity, the Church seems to be held captivated by the building of "supply cities" so the people can "bring their tithes and offerings into the store house." Our focus is no longer on that "city who's builder and maker is God," made of living stones, but rather a city that brings glory to men made of bricks and mortar.

Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 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? Are you intending to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and said, "Surely the matter has become known." When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well. (Exodus 2:11-15, NASB).

Like Moses, many of us tried to remain in and change this task oriented Church system and we grieved for the people who we saw being abused and spoke out about it, even attacking the "task masters" with our words. Some of us didn't even have to speak out; we were just different and they knew that we were not one of them. Either way we eventually had to flee for our lives. We were disillusioned with the way we were treated and the vanity of what was being created by these Church leaders as they demanded "more bricks, more bricks! Get your own straw!" What made it worse, many of the oppressed sided with them against us!

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?" So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds; and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." And he said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat." And Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." (Exodus 2:16-22, NASB).

Seven daughters, seven Churches! Even in his forty years of wilderness, Moses longed to protect the "Church" and its flocks from the evil shepherds. But he was still a stranger in a strange place for all of those years. This was a common occurrence among God's men and women of faith spoken of in the Old Testament.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13, NKJV).

Moses was dying inside. He was separated from his family, rejected by his country, and a condemned man surviving among a strange people. God was using this forty years in

Midian to kill any vestiges of the arm of the flesh left in him that would try to do God's work for Him. That took time.

Many of us who find ourselves "outside the camp" with Jesus in his suffering and rejection (Hebrews chapter 13), have found a camaraderie and place of God's provision at a "table in the wilderness" with a few of God's people. We at first licked our wounds and traded war stories of excess and abuse in the institutional church, but even that got old and wasn't enough. We had to go deeper in our search, even to the back side of the wilderness all alone, not being satisfied until we reached the mountain of God.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3:1-5, NKJV).

Back in Egypt Moses "got burned!" He was burned by Pharaoh and he got burned by his own people who rejected him and his help. Now he wondered how a bush could be so engulfed by fire and not be consumed. Hundreds of years later in Babylon, three Hebrew children would enter their own "burning bush" and would find fellowship there with "one who was like the Son of God," and they would come out of it without the slightest smell of smoke hanging onto them or their garments.

When your old nature and its defenses have been dealt with in the wilderness of God, you are ready to go up to the mountain of God, turn aside from your old ways once and for all, unto Him and Him alone in the midst of the fire. From then on no man can burn you, for the fire is now within you. The One who now shines forth from you is that "One who is like the Son of God."

Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not. (Jeremiah 20:9, NKJV).

Have you ever wondered why God required Moses to remove his sandals? Weren't his feet dirty, sweaty and smelly from the hot desert sun? Why would God want such defilement in contact with His holy ground? I believe that Jesus had already washed Moses feet, and God wanted those lovely feet of his in contact with and in fellowship with His holy ground.

Jesus said to a protesting Peter when he bowed before him to wash his feet, "[He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean...](#)" (John 13:10, NASB).

Moses was about to go back down that mountain with good news from God for His people and bad news for Pharaoh and his taskmasters. This time, God deemed Moses ready, and when our time has come, because of His work in our hearts, we too will no longer smell of the smoke of being burned. Then and only then, with hearts filled with His love, can we go back to His people and be used as God's extended arm to set the people free, while we proclaim, "Our God Reigns!" Who knows, maybe He will even give us signs to perform before them that they might believe as He did with Moses and the Apostles of the early Church.

[How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"](#) (Isaiah 52:7, NKJV).

Then, a Prepared People!

How does God prepare a people to leave Egypt? Forty years earlier, they were not ready to leave. Why now? Was the change that came upon Moses enough? I don't think so. God had to turn their hearts away from Egypt if He was to get them to leave, and He did so through tribulation.

[Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.](#) (Exodus 2:23, NKJV).

[And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows."](#) (Exodus 3:7, NKJV).

In today's institutional Church false shepherds, false teachers, false prophets and false apostles are ever increasing and with their delusive teachings they more and more are gaining power over God's people. With each new level of power that is granted to them comes greater abuse and a greater lust for more power and money.

Jesus warned His Church, "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24, NKJV).

Many of those who were pastors in the last decade are now claiming to be prophets. Many who claimed to be prophets in the last decade are now claiming to be apostles. There is an ever greater ascendancy and lust for power. Can't you see that this is the antichrist spirit [the Greek word for "antichrist" means to take Christ's place]? What's next? Will these so called apostles in a few short years claim to be Jesus himself? What a far cry from the progression of titles that Paul claimed to himself, i.e., "chief of sinners," "the least of all the saints," "unworthy to be called a believer."

We have gone full circle and become that same self centered Church that Jeremiah prophesied against in His day. We have no fear either of offending God or of abusing His people.

But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you. For among my people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men.

As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have becomes great and gown rich. They have grown fat; they are sleek; yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless; yet they prosper, and right of the needy they do not defend. Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?' "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"

Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? get back to your labor." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words." (Exodus 5:4-9, NKJV). [See also Matthew chapter. 23].

Jesus said: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30, NKJV).

And of Him it was prophesied:

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2, NKJV)

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise his voice, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law."

Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house." I am the LORD, that is My name; And my glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to carved images. Behold, the former

things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isaiah 42:1-9, NKJV)

What a contrast between our Lord and the false teachers, prophets, and apostles if you have eyes to see and know His voice. Yes, The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" What will His Church do in these end times? How much will it take to awaken her?

"And I said: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from my people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them in pieces like meat for the pot, like flesh in the caldron..." This says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray; who chant "Peace" while they chew with their teeth, but who prepare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths: "Therefore you shall have night without vision, And you shall have darkness without divination; The sun shall go down on the prophets, And the day shall be dark for them. So the seers shall be ashamed, And the diviners abashed; Indeed they shall all cover their lips; For there is no answer from God.

But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. Now hear this, You heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And pervert all equity, Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity: her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, 'Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us.'

Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest. (Micah 3:1-12, NKJV).

Yes, Jesus will come for His bride and they shall be a separated people who know His voice when He calls and "another they will not hear." He has promised to break every yoke of the task master. They are coming out from among them and refusing to touch that unclean thing called flesh and pride. We are being made ready for a second Exodus where we shall cry with His mighty voice, "Let my people Go!"

God's people must first tire of the known security of a diet of leeks, onions and melon sermons, special events, and programs found in the bondage of Egypt and step out into the wilderness with Jesus in the lead where the only diet promised is manna [The people of Israel called it "What is it?" for they knew not what it was]. They must long for that food of faith, the food of angels that is unknown to the carnal Christian, which comes down to each one who seeks it. They must come to that place where Moses was when he grew to abhor the fattening food of Pharaoh's house, but rather chose to suffer with the people of God.

Suffering is surely coming to the Church in America and God will have His true apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers tried, humble and ready to lead a holy people out to meet their bridegroom. Amen! Come quickly Lord Jesus in us.