

NCMI EQUIP South Africa 2013

Session 5



A Prophetic Summary

by Ash Bell

There are several prophetic pictures I humbly submit here, which I have submitted to Tyrone and the NCMI team, that represent something about the enormity of the task before us. I've done several studies on the scriptures where the young boy brings only five loaves and two fish and the enormity of the task there was to feed 5,000 people but yet we see an incredible dynamic of 12 basketfuls left over. God is a god of increase. There is a desire in his heart that we don't just stumble into our future but that there is a picture for us to aim towards.

Recently I was in Europe assisting with a church launch in Milan, Italy, and I was spending some time with God and praying and thinking of the scripture where the Lord asks Jeremiah, "What do you see?" (Jeremiah 1:11.) Jeremiah probably could have said many things but he said, "I see the branch of an almond tree." God responds, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching over my Word to perform it." (Verse 12.) Then God asks Jeremiah what else he sees and Jeremiah says, "I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north." And God says that this is true and there is a judgement coming on his people from the north. And as I was thinking about this and walking and praying, I began to notice things around me and took out my mobile phone and snapped away.

I went back to our hotel room and, in my heart, as I reflected on the images, I felt these were a reflection of what God has for us in our partnering together as we go to the ends of the earth.

So here are the first two (next page):



I feel that God has not only called us to countries and places of comfort but also to countries and places of conflict. Both images above are the antithesis of one another, but if you look at the one on the right – and if we think of the translocational and apostolic – we know that in the distance God has always called us to the unknown. (You can see there's a mist in the background.) There's always going to be an expression of faith in our activity together; there's always going to be a stepping out into what we perhaps can't see very well and there's a mist that God in his time will light up.

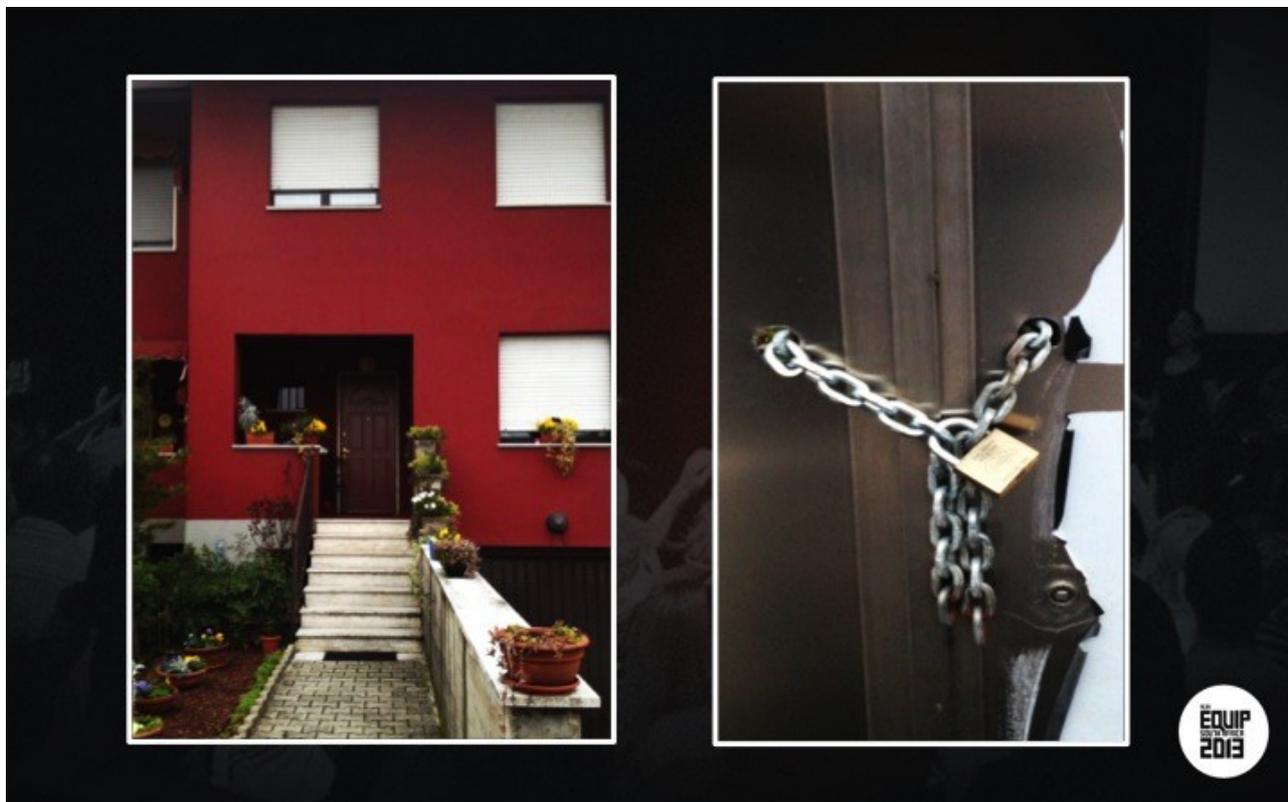
The very next day I came to the same spot and what was behind the mist had cleared up and you could see the Alps, presenting themselves against the backdrop of a crystal blue sky. We've been called to a promised land of milk and honey. But to get there there is the first, second, third and fourth watch (as Alan Parfitt spoke about – see <http://ncmigauteng.co.za/getting-to-the-other-side/>). There is a big distance between what God has promised and where we're presently at. We're not to be afraid of that. This picture represents a road into the areas that we would describe the “global north” – first world communities.

But the road on the left would suggest that we're called to areas and regions of conflict. In our testimony, as a partnering group of churches and teams, we've been able to go into regions that are particularly dangerous. Now it's not true that angels are frightened to go to certain places and so people sometimes say, "You guys go where angels fear to tread." In fact we're well aware of angelic presence when we do go into regions that are even at war.

But we don't know what's hiding behind one of these trees (referring to the picture on the left) and God's called us to stay focused and keep remembering that there are people we need to be reaching that he has marked to come walk with us. So there is a desire in our hearts that we would not be afraid

to go into those regions that are full of conflict. Here I think of the regions in Arabia. God has called us to be courageous people.

Here are the next set of pictures:



Let's look at the picture on the left. This is in a rather affluent region in Milan and clearly the little gardens are well manicured. But the door there is closed; the shutters are down; and the people inside are afraid of what's happening outside. It reminds me very much of Jericho - that's how it was described. It was a tightly shut city and what it needed was a people that were strong and courageous. And that thing of courage has come through over the last while when we've been gathering together and particularly our time at Equip SA 2013. Joshua was told on many occasions to "be strong and courageous". There are Jericho's that are over our skylines that God wants us to reach and he's wanting us to do it in a courageous way, with an element of his strength in us.

On the right we see a padlock and chain and I think of Isaiah 61 – a text that was spoken over us in the early days when this was just beginning – about the Spirit of the Lord being upon us and having anointed us, to set people free and see chains broken. We heard a prophetic word from Ren Bester about freedom during this time together and Grant encouraged us to tear down fine sounding arguments that have established themselves as strongholds (see <http://ncmigauteng.co.za/spiritual-warfare/>). God is calling us in our togetherness to break these chains.

The devil goes about seeking who he may devour. There are many devoured people but Jesus was manifest to destroy the works of the devil and he healed people who were oppressed by the devil.

Signs and wonders will accompany us when we preach the gospel and we're expecting chains to be broken off people – clearing the heavens so that cities are free and the people can come out and express their worship and love for God.

We're not to be afraid of these Jerichos. God is giving us strategies to take the cities that are tightly shut. Who would have thought you could pull down a city just by marching around it? But it was a God strategy. We're anticipating God's strategies. God said he would do it – I think again of this text with Jeremiah where God says he is watching over his Word to perform it. God is calling us to go out there, to take the land.

Here are the next set of pictures:



When I opened up the curtains at our hotel room I couldn't believe this one (on the left). Here was this great big Pioneer sign staring at us. I feel that this is God reminding us that that's what we are – pioneers. It's essential to our DNA. What's coming through clearly for me over this season is that God is not changing his mind on this. He's simply saying that there are places and regions where we are to pioneer.

In the image on the right we see a big truck carrying vehicles and this was on that smooth road we saw earlier. This spoke to me of translocal teams and business people travelling together – a fresh definition of the two by two going out where there will be a business person and someone that perhaps represents what we might call “clergy”. And together they make up the presbytery of the church.

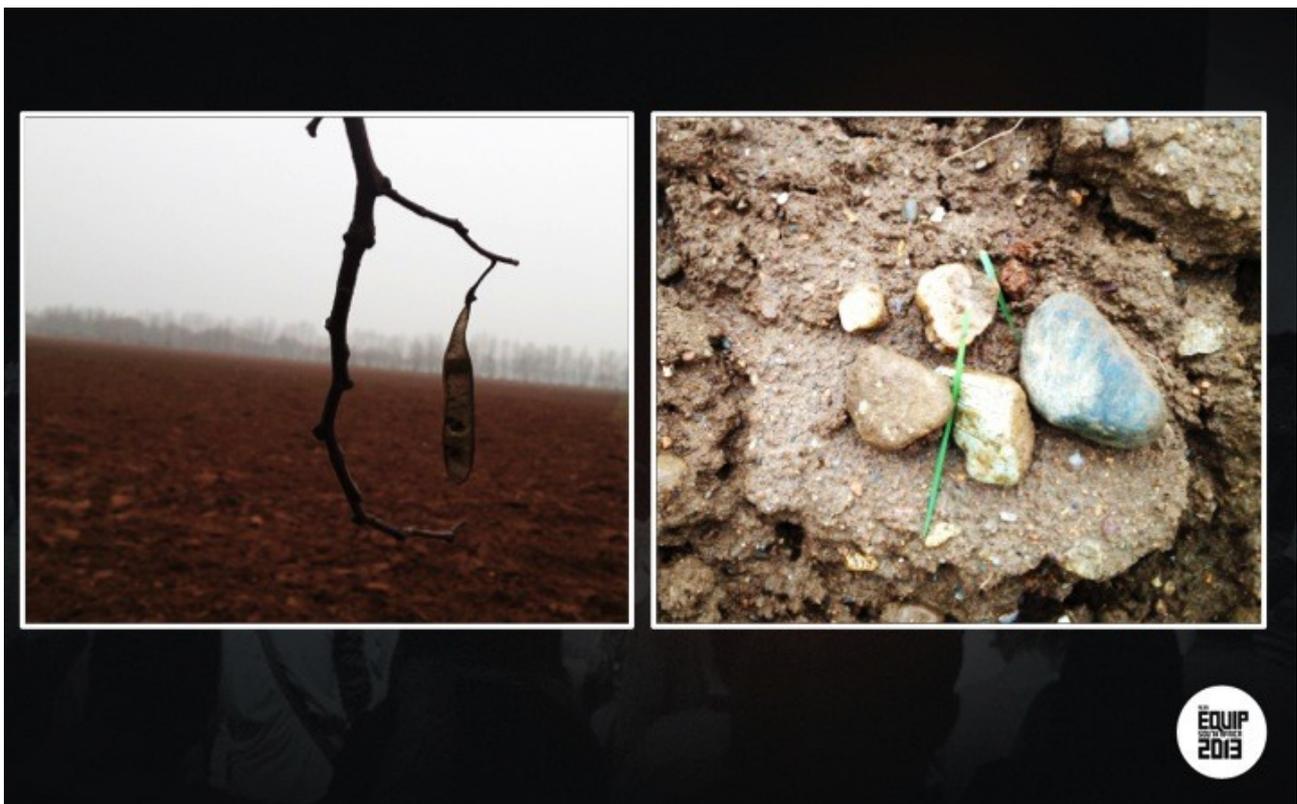
It's not how it used to be. God is raising up business people and, as Billy Graham once said, the

greatest revival that's about to break is going to happen in the marketplace. We're looking forward to the accompaniment of business individuals on trips. It doesn't make them the kings and us the priests – we're both kings and priests together.

You know what's nice about travelling with business people? When you read a newspaper together they read different stuff. They're looking at other things because their gift and leaning is a little different.

In some nations you can't get in as a pastor but as a business person you can. It's a Trojan horse strategy where business people can go in and set the church up. We had a word in our time together about increase and are we believing for that increase? Are we calling those things that aren't as though they are? That's faith and that's where our courage is. God is preparing business people and preparing us in our Ephesians 4:11 gifts and there's opportunity here. When preparation and opportunity mix you have a Kingdom explosion. Hundreds of us will be travelling together, partnering, and enjoying the pioneering heart that God has given us to enjoy.

Onto the next set of pictures:



The picture on the left is of a field that had been recently ploughed and it has a close-up of a seed pod. But there's one seed left. Remember that scripture that says unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground you're not going to see any life (John 12:24 – 26)? I think God is beginning to put his finger on individuals and saying that they need to lay certain things down.

I had a businessman send me an email not too long ago and he's a very successful surgeon in this city.

He said, "I want to give it all up and sell my house. Right now I'm positioned – you tell me what I must do." There was this realisation of Jesus' statement that if any man come after him he must deny himself (Luke 9:23), which means you give up the right to your own life. In our opulent, affluent community it's very easy to demand the right to your own life but what happens when God puts his hand on you and says you need to let that fall to the ground and die? We have an incredible testimony of a businessman who did just that, and the way he told it was intriguing as he outlined how God brought life back into what he's doing. God is calling us to to lay down certain things.

On the right you see five stones that came out of this great big field they were ploughing. When David picked out five smooth stones from the brook when he faced Goliath, some people say he had no faith as he should have picked out one. But this was a man who was well skilled in throwing stones with a sling and he knew how each stone would fly through the air. Goliath disdained him but David responds with something like, "You come with your sword and all these armies and your big talk, but in my pocket I've got weapons of mass destruction. And your head is coming off. I come to you in the name of the Lord, the all-existent one..." and you know the rest of the story.

God is saying that as we plough our fields and do the work he has called us to do, we're going to discover weapons of mass destruction – living stones; people; individuals that God has put into our mix and clearly designed to be with us. They're going to look different; these stones in the picture don't all look the same and probably if I had to wash them off you'd be able to see different colours. There is diversity, variety and colour that God is placing within us. When I look at one team and another team I just see variation and this is what God has in mind. He's put us together as a body and he's going to equip us.

He's going to make sure that you are going to be a weapon of mass destruction for him because you were discovered when the church was ploughing fields. There's a big harvest coming. So God says go and plough and you'll gather stones and they'll kill giants.

Now onto the next picture (next page):



We're talking about the harvest but there's some work to do. I love Anton's story (see <http://ncmigauteng.co.za/ordinary-to-extraordinary/>) about his encounter with God that happened alone. There's an encounter that God has for you in your private world. Go into your closet and call unto God because he's going to show you and reveal things to you. That's what I call ploughing – a great season of praying.

You'll notice in this picture that there are ruins in the front. I think of the text in Isaiah that speaks of re-establishing ancient ruins (Isaiah 58:12.) There are inheritances that were forfeited or stolen or lost, but God is saying that there are things he wants us to go back to and breathe life into – we must prophecy life into those dry bones (Ezekiel 37.)

In this picture you can also see cranes in the distance. I was reading the Financial Times from London and it was talking about how disappointing it is to see so few cranes on the horizon of London as it indicates that the economy isn't in a good place. For me, I look at that and I feel God is saying, as far as the church is concerned, that we're not to be governed by the world's economy. It's not our source of supply. If God chooses to use it that's fine but God will make sure you and I don't go without. From a point of view of what he's pointing us towards and what he's wanting us to embrace by way of an inheritance, God's will is God's bill, and so where he leads he will provide for us.

That, for me, speaks about a prosperity that's coming into the church. I think of the four lepers that were sitting outside the city and they concluded, “If we stay here we'll die and if we go inside they're going to chase us, but maybe there's a chance we'll get a plate of food. Let's go to the Aramean camp, there's prosperity there.” And then when they go to the Aramean camp there was no one there. (See 2 Kings 7.) They realise they can't keep all the plunder to themselves so they invite everyone else to join

them. God arranged a bit of an economic boost for his people and he's putting cranes into the life of the Church and our future. He's going to provide for us.

As a business person you may have fished all night and caught nothing, much like Peter in Luke 5, but if you go out and fish again in response to Jesus' command to do so, you'll find you'll need partners because now your boat is suddenly overflowing with fish. God is calling us to something that's huge and he's not going to let us stumble – he will provide for us miraculously.

Next picture:



I was in the Middle-East about two years ago as Dan and Starla Webster were getting their church plant off the ground. I was out praying in the desert and, in that place, you're surrounded by nothing but different shades of brown. But down at my feet I noticed this little shrub, a delicate flower pushing through, and I marvelled at its robustness.

I felt God saying that there's lots of adversity in the area of that church plant. “You probably think that this is a miracle that this plant can grow?” he asked. I said, “Yes, absolutely.” Then God said to me that that church that was about to be launched is like that plant – in the midst of great adversity, God will prove himself to be spectacular.

That's what he's saying to us. I said, “Oh God, now I can pray with faith,” and I began to pray for that church because I saw this little flower. I mean, who would give it a chance? It was about the size of my fingernail. I think of that adversity and harsh environment – everything that would suggest that the plant was going to die – and God is saying that he is calling us to plant churches not only in places of

comfort but places of conflict and we can go because just like this little plant he sustains it and gives it life. He will build the church and you happen to be present while he does it with you.

Onto the next set of pictures:



In Europe and in particular France or Italy, they prune trees severely and the trees bleed from their wounds. I couldn't put my arms around this tree pictured on the left, that's how big the trees are that they prune. I was admiring this tree because, while you might look at it and think it's dead, there's sap running out of it and it's so full of life.

If you're a gardener you know the benefits of pruning. And in our togetherness we've been pruned. This isn't just a little sapling but a massive tree that's not man-made but designed by God. Then, walking back to the hotel, I saw this incredible blooming tree with amazing flowers, each one the size of my forearm (pictured on the right). I felt God say that we've been pruned but there's a massive fragrance that's going to come from us.

I think of worship expression when I think of fragrance. Of prayer. Of incense rising up before the throne of God as we begin to pray and find that secret place in him. And our hearts being knitted together and unity – that beautiful picture of oil running down Aaron's beard. There's a fragrance that comes from a people who are together and a power that comes. I see that for us – something new and fresh.

Next picture (next page):



In parts of Europe and Africa all you see is Graffiti. Sometimes its offensive but after a while it really does become attractive. Here was a piece of raw graffiti and I felt God say that there's a groundswell of young people he is raising up. The thing about a groundswell is there's actually no leadership, it's just a dynamic that's happening, and I love that because it means God is behind it.

There's a groundswell of radical young people that are beginning to have their hearts stirred to forsake all those things that distract and bind as they look to Jesus. Jesus is who they know, he is the one they want to sing and talk about. There's this move away from rebellion and a move towards getting into the house of the Lord.

This current young generation is different to us older folk. God is raising them up.

Next photo (next page):



This gentleman was up every morning dressed in his orange outfit serving the community by sweeping and cleaning the area. I thought it remarkable that you would have a person who serves invisibly. For me, he stood out, and I know the scripture that says in the day of your strength, your people will be willing (Psalm 110). I say this with respect and humility – we've never been in a place of strength like right now. We're all incredibly grateful for what God has done with us. That scripture applies – our people will be willing.

This man stood out and there are going to be some stand-out servant hearted people that God is going to stir in our body and our partnering. They don't want to be seen – they're out there, behind the scenes, just serving, not looking for credit or entitlement. It will not be a case of, “What's in it for me?” but a case of, “What's in me for this?”

Stand-outs in servant heartedness is what we're going to walk into, directly equated to the strength that God has allowed us to enjoy. How many of you know that servants are great to have around, not so that you can be served but because the job gets done?

Now onto our final picture (next page):



We're a battleship, not a cruise liner. This is a picture of people waiting to dock at a city and God's saying that he wants us to dock at many cities and these cities will be our lentil patches – we're going to give our lives for these cities and defend them, saying that they are God's territory and the people there belong to God.

I see brave, courageous individuals who are going to be standing their ground who are full of the Word – individuals like Joshua who are strong and courageous and ready to take the land.

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