Introduction and perspective

1. Introduction

a. This series is a re-visiting of some of what we have taught over the past 15 years on the biblical foundation for night and day prayer and worship – as times and seasons change some of this will need to be re-evaluated.

   i The problem of dullness through repetition and familiarity

   ii The need to re-focus and re-evaluate to maintain sharpness

   iii New perspectives of Jesus cause a deeper love and partnership with him

   iv Desire for the inhabitation of God and his manifest presence

b. Biblical Foundation for the House of Prayer – a framework of biblical principles that undergird everything that we do and give us a blueprint with which to build. The House of Prayer is a container for the end-times prayer movement. What the bible has to say about why day and night worship and prayer are essential in God's purposes for this generation.

c. In his parable of the widow and the judge in Luke 18, Jesus makes a clear statement regarding the necessity for night and day prayer:

Luke 18:7 *And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?*

   i it is the persistence of the widow that causes the judge to spring into action. In v7 Jesus transfers this imagery to God's response to our prayers – the foundational principle of night and day prayer. What do we mean by prayer, where does worship fit in, and what do we mean by day and night prayer? All of these and many other questions will be answered as we pursue this subject.

d. God is jealous for his <u>name</u>. Similarly, when speaking of his <u>house</u> God says that his house is to be called a ***<u>house of prayer</u>***. That is how he chooses to identify his house and what happens in it, so we must apply ourselves to understanding the implications of this.

2. The starting point

a. <u>Day and night worship and prayer is about an intentional and purposeful focus on unceasing devotion to Jesus</u>. Mary of Bethany sat at Jesus' feet in a focused place of love and devotion. This becomes the reference point from which we evaluate everything else that we give ourselves to. This is the key that unlocks everything else, if this lifestyle of devotion is in place, everything else falls into its place.

b. To get to this place requires four things:

   i **Conviction of its validity**. We have to be convinced for ourselves that this is what the scriptures demand and what we want to devote our lives to. God is both creator and redeemer. The world God created was perfect in every way; Adam's rebellion brought sin and death and we still live with the consequences of that today. But because God is also redeemer he provides a way for us to live our lives in opposition to the law of sin and

death, through the shed blood of Jesus and his power at work within us. So the work of the cross is more than enough and demands our lifelong devotion.

ii **Clarity on its significance**. God is preparing a people who are the Bride of Christ. We are in a season of preparation and purification, being made ready to be a people who are equally yoked to our Bridegroom God. To understand the significance of our devotion to Jesus is vital in embracing his end-times plans and purposes. Unceasing devotion to Jesus, especially in the corporate environment of the house of prayer will keep our hearts steadfast in the time of trouble.

iii **Understanding the calling vocationally**. The call of devotion to Jesus is something that all believers must respond to. However, full time involvement in the house of prayer isn't something that every believer is called to; for some there may indeed be a calling to be involved for a lifetime, but for others it may only be for a season. But just as with any vocational calling, what you get out of it is significantly dependent on what you put into it. If the house of prayer is your primary calling as a believer, then you must be prepared to become properly equipped by the Lord in order to remain faithful in our devotion to him.

iv **The need for consecration**. Following Jesus is costly, the bible makes that quite clear. Devotion to Jesus will make demands upon our lives, particularly in areas such as holiness and purity, diligence and faithfulness. The use of our time and resources must be disciplined and a lifestyle of prayer and fasting brings its own rigours. This is as much about lifestyle as it is about theology. But there are good things too:

Joshua 3:5 *Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will perform miraculous deeds among you."*

As with any calling from the Lord, there is a need for co-operation, and that means that if we want to be able to sustain faithfulness for decades, then we must set our hearts towards obedience.

c. How do you remain steadfast and faithful day in, day out, over a sustained period of time? Several times in the bible we are exhorted to persevere in prayer:

Ephesians 6:18 *With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.*

Colossians 4:2 *Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.*

Luke 18:8 *I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

i Boredom, persecution, misunderstanding and trouble will oppose the awakening to our calling to be devoted to Jesus. We strive towards longevity in worship and prayer, remaining faithful, not giving up.

ii Two main things will keep us focused and will sustain us in this desire for faithfulness. First, the beauty of the Lord and his desire towards us, and second a biblical understanding of incessant ministry to him.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

d. There is a never-ending treasury of delight to be found every time we encounter Jesus. His beauty is revealed in wisdom, humility, faithfulness, perseverance and supremacy, our Bridegroom with a burning heart of love. Son of Man, Second Adam, King of kings, Alpha and Omega, Lion of Judah, Passover Lamb. He is worthy of our incessant devotion; he is our magnificent obsession.

   i We behold the beauty of the Lord through the revelation of his word, by faith through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

   ii As we gaze upon his beauty we become fascinated and exhilarated – our hearts come alive. Our eyes are opened to the things that please him, and we begin to learn of his desires and longings for the world around us. This leads to partnership in intercession.

   iii We see things from a heavenly perspective, changing the way we pray. The worship in our prayer watches is a time to engage with the heart of God, to gain his perspective and be caught up in heaven's incessant adoration of Jesus. When we come into God's presence we need to have our hearts tenderised by the Spirit of God.

e. Combining worship and prayer stems from the Tabernacle of David. When the Ark of the Covenant was re-captured from the Philistines, King David brought it to Jerusalem and placed it in a tent. What David did here shows the remarkable understanding he had of God and why he was called a man after God's own heart.

   i He understood that in heaven God is surrounded by worship, and his unlimited glory revealed. He knew the Ark was the place where God manifested his presence on the earth, so when he brought the Ark back to Jerusalem he placed it in a tent and placed around it singers and musicians who ministered in worship and prayer, day and night before the presence of the Lord, just like in heaven (1 Chronicles 23-25).

   ii In our prayer room we worship and pray with the same spirit that David had – continuous worship as the platform for prayer, which connects us to the heart of God. Worship focuses us on God's heart and helps us to engage in prayer, and the prayer energises the worship as God reveals his heart and emotions through prayer.

f. The second resource we have in our desire for faithfulness is an understanding of the biblical principles of night and day worship and prayer. There are many instances in scripture where either God commands unceasing worship, or there are accounts of it actually taking place.

Psalm 19:1-2 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. [2] Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*

1 Chronicles 16:1, 4, 37 *And they brought in the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God… [4] Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel… [37] So David left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required…*

Revelation 4:8 *And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

g. This second level takes us beyond the first and helps us to understand the ***why*** behind the ***what***. Seeing the biblical precedent for night and day worship and necessitates us to understand why the Lord has commanded it, and how we should apply these scriptures in our generation.

h. A house has to have foundations or it will fall down. These indispensable foundations are mostly hidden, but they hold everything up. We must not be tempted to build any kind of structure until the foundations are in place, but at the same time, the foundation is not the house. Don't overlook the importance of foundations. There may be times as we go through this series it may not be immediately apparent how the subject we are looking at is directly connected to night and day worship and prayer. Remembering this illustration this will help us to keep on digging into the bedrock of understanding.

3. A global perspective

a. We need to gain a global perspective. The Bible tells us that the world is in a season of acceleration towards two momentous events:

   i The greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit

   ii The greatest time of pressure and trouble in all of history

Isaiah 60:2 *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.*

Haggai 2:6-7 *For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. [7] And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.*

b. Isaiah says a time of deep darkness is coming, its extent and influence will be worldwide, covering the whole earth, but the glory of God will be seen in his people in an unprecedented way. Haggai prophesies the same thing, a great shaking is coming upon heaven and earth, but multitudes will come to Jesus. Two trends will increase: sin will find its greatest expression as Satan releases his rage. At the same time this will be the church's finest hour

c. So we see these two trends increasing in the earth. Sin will find its greatest expression as Satan unleashes his strategy to deceive the nations, turning them against God and the Holy Spirit will be poured out in an unprecedented way (Joel 2).

d. God is orchestrating history to come to a conclusion, which he outlines in Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:9-10 *…making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

   i God's plan is that everything in both heaven and earth will come together and they will become one. He will achieve this through the unifying leadership of Jesus as the perfect God and the perfect man, bringing the physical and spiritual together in one place and time.

   ii All of this is the context into which God is raising up Houses of Prayer, which in recent years have become established on a global scale. We are part of the process that God is using to prepare the earth for what is to come at the end of the age.

Isaiah 56:6-7 *And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant – [7] these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

Matthew 21:12-13 *And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. [13] He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."*

e. In the bible find that the only description God gives of his house is that it is a house of prayer. Thus God is describing the function and culture that his people are to be known by, the hallmark by which we are identified. This is the purpose God has called us to, he chooses to call us to function as a House of Prayer because all the activity of his Kingdom is initiated, maintained and accomplished through prayer. Mike Bickle has summed it up this way: "*The Spirit is changing the environment and culture of the church so that it functions by prayer*."

   i The church today is transitioning to become a global house of prayer. That was the original meaning of the church, the ***ekklesia*** that Jesus said he was establishing in Matthew 16.

4. God's strategy – the house of prayer

a. The house of prayer is a community of believers who are responding to God's call to stand together in worship and prayer before him. Community is important, God is calling his body to be in relationship with one another where his love can be visibly seen by the world.

John 13:35 *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

   i Our time in the prayer room works better because we also share community life outside of the walls of the prayer room. Sharing life together is a part of growing together to be a community where God will manifest his power and his presence.

b. Our focus is on corporate prayer – doing this together brings a new dynamic to the place of prayer. We go further together – when we come into agreement with God's heart and will, we come into a place where God commands his blessing:

   i **Psalm 27** – gazing on the beauty of the Lord

   ii **Psalm 46** – God releases his river from the throne that makes us glad

   iii **Psalm 2** – we come into agreement with God's decree concerning Jesus' leadership

   iv **Psalm 45** – Jesus declares his purpose to ride out for truth and righteousness

   v **Psalm 133** – we corporately agree with Jesus' purposes and se we come into agreement with one another so God commands the blessing

c. Giving time to be in the presence of God will change us. Encounter with God draws us in to want to know Him more, and our hunger for Him is increased. As we worship and pray our hearts encounter God in some important ways:

   i **Ministry to God** – As we worship and pray we are declaring the worth of Jesus unceasingly, reflecting the way He receives worship continually in heaven. "***Your kingdom***

come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It's not about us, it's about Jesus. We turn our focus from what God has done ***for*** us to worship Him for ***who He is***. "***For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.***" (Romans 11:36).

ii **Labouring in intercession** to release God's power to win the lost, revive the Church, and impact society as we engage in prayer for justice and compassion. Many think intercession as trying to persuade God to do things he doesn't want to do. Intercession is partnership with God by standing in the gap and coming into agreement with him for the things he has declared in his word that he will do.

iii **Growing in intimacy with God** by personally encountering Him through the Holy Spirit, receiving grace to love, obey, and partner with Him, as we are fascinated by who He is. We receive greater understanding and connection with God's emotions and his desires as we linger in his presence. In the prayer room we don't always have to be praying ***for*** things – it is equally valid to offer prayers of thanksgiving and adoration reflecting how God has impacted our hearts.

iv **Growing in the understanding of God's Word**, gaining insight into His will, His thoughts, His ways, and learning about the unique dynamics of His end-time plan to transition the earth to the age to come. In the House of Prayer, we serve others in an important way by taking the time and effort to grow deeper in understanding the Word, so that we can help others understand God's heart and will for this hour of history.

5. Conclusion

a. Worship and prayer have been central to God's purposes throughout history; and even more so in God's strategy for the end of the age. The global prayer movement is being established in the context of Psalm 110:

Psalm 110:1-3 *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." [2] The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty sceptre. Rule in the midst of your enemies! [3] Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.*

b. God has already determined the outcome at the end of the age – and he is partnering with the prayer movement as we engage in spiritual warfare. He has a plan for planet earth that spans from Genesis to Revelation. He has already told us what is going to happen.

c. The key issue as God unfolds his end-times agenda is that Jesus will establish His kingdom in fullness on the earth at the end of the age. It is the reason that Jesus instructed us to pray for his kingdom to come on earth as in heaven. It is why we must be persuaded that unceasing devotion to Jesus is essential if we are to understand his heart and his desire for partnership with us as his Bride as we prepare for his return at the end of the age.