

Kingdom Report

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Is There No Cause?

There is a singular great opportunity next year for the Church in South Africa to turn our nation around, to "turn from our wicked ways" as condition of 2 Chron. 7:14 for the Lord to heal our land. I challenge you as the young David challenged the inactive army of Israel facing Goliath...."Is there no cause?".

I want to do a strategic analysis next week for 2021. Very important, world shaking developments in 2020 need analysis from the viewpoint of God's declaration "I will shake the nations". What, how and to what purpose? I believe the prophetic voices from America had it wrong.....I will give you my analysis.

However this week, much closer to home I present you the immediate challenge we face next year here in South Africa and the great opportunity that 2021 will present to all of us as citizens for turning this nation around.

In my book "Southern Africa's Prophetic Destiny" I make the point about the much quoted 2 Chron. 7:14 "if my people....." as follows: If we are asking God to heal our land there are specific requirements. Yes we must humble ourselves and pray, we need a national movement of personal repentance and turning back to the Lord as individuals. But then I made this point....God also required that Israel "turn from their wicked ways". That is that although the greatest revival in the history of Israel occurred under king Josiah, just a few short years later the Lord sent Israel into Babylonian captivity. Why? Revival is not enough. God dispossessed them of the land, took away their economic assets because for generations they would not apply His economic laws in the running of the nation.

In short the way the nation was being run the Lord says were "wicked ways". The earth is God's property. He is owner, He only gives us temporary leasehold rights. God required Adam to take proper care of Eden. The Lord divides the world into various nations and establishes their times and boundaries. He requires that His people who are assigned to a particular nation to take proper care of the running of that nation. That is why we are to pray for those in authority.

Now here is the important thing I want you to understand about rulership and authority. In a democratic republic as we are constituted here in South Africa the vested authority of who rules and by what rules are vested in the people who are citizens of the nation. We are the voters. Therefore the Lord holds we, the citizens responsible if there is bad administration of the nation. If there are "wicked ways" in the land, the Lord holds we the citizens responsible.

Which brings me to my opening remarks about the young David and the Goliath challenge. The people of Israel rejected their responsibility for running the nation and

told Samuel, "We wish to have a king rule over us so that he can fight our battles for us". Samuel warned them they are making a big mistake....this king will end up corrupt, take your wealth and assets for himself. But no, they want a king to fight their battles. At first things seemed to go fine....Saul won many battles. But then came Goliath....and Saul lost his nerve, unable to face this challenge. Then came David.....here is the point I wish to make. David was just a young man, not part of the professional army. But an ordinary shepherd boy with the anointing of the Holy Spirit met the challenge.

David's cry to the army of Israel sitting there on a mountainside waiting for Saul to do something stirred them with "But is there no cause?". This is not Saul's fight, this is our fight as a people!

My application to you and my challenge to you. This next year 2021 we have our national municipal elections. Our cities and municipalities are in a desperate fallen state of non-functioning disrepair. They are that way because of the "wicked ways" in which our cities and municipalities are being run. Politics should have no place on the municipal level. What is at stake there are not political philosophies but the competency and integrity of those in charge. The trash needs to be taken out, clean water must come out of the taps, the electricity must flow, the infrastructure needs to be maintained and replaced, the books must be clean and audited, the civic responsibilities of property and law and order need to be upheld etc.

God holds the church in South Africa responsible for the mess on the ground. We are the vast majority of the population in each municipality. We are the people who decide who governs us. In all of our great cities in the land we have an abundance of large mega-churches of thousands of God's people gathering. We unlike the politicians have no problem in gathering a crowd to come and listen to a message, or to get people to volunteer for God's work or to get people to donate to God's work.

Our problem is that we have not told our people that running a city or a municipality is God's work He has assigned to His people. And it must be done "His way" and not by "wicked ways" through wicked people. But like the Israelites told Samuel we don't like doing things God's way...we want to be like all the other nations with a king who will fight our battles for us. In our case, we will let the wicked rule over us while we concentrate on revival and winning souls.

Socialism is that political philosophy that says we want a government to fight our battles for us. Government must supply us with food, shelter, education, health, protection, settle our disputes and tell us how we must live. Until of course the whole thing starts to unravel and fall apart. Which is what is happening now.

If we the church of South Africa do not utilize the opportunity of the municipal elections of 2021 to get righteous government in our cities, if our local church leaders do not stir themselves and their people to be the "city changers" in bringing about righteous rule in our towns, then I have little hope going forward. Another 5 years of municipal misrule? What do you think there will be left to resurrect? If you want to see the future....look north to Zimbabwe....an economic wasteland of empty factory buildings now filled to overflowing with people praying for miracle money promised by prosperity preachers.

I leave you this challenge contained in probably the best essay I have read in a long time by Gareth van Onselen writing for the Financial Mail earlier this month. It is an essay filled with despair at the state of our cities.....and after reading it I ask you, child of God, is there no cause in 2021?

GARETH VAN ONSELEN:

The decline and fall of Johannesburg

The city is a decaying, desperate, urban relic, one fast-realising its full potential as a slum

16 December 2020 - 08:00

Make your way through Johannesburg these days and it's the rot that gets you. Five years ago it would have been the decay. But we are well past that now. Once things have broken, they rot. It's the next stage in the devolution of a city.

On one level Johannesburg has it pretty good. It's not yet a hell-hole, like so many smaller towns in the great SA expanse. But the powers that be are working on the problem every day.

There are all the typical indicators of disrepair. Traversing Johannesburg roads is like rally driving. Potholes were once a novelty, then common, now there are gaping chunks of road missing everywhere. It is a network held together more by what is missing than what is actually there.

Water and electricity are regularly cut, and electricity cuts often have little to do with load-shedding. A generator or distributor has fused or caught on fire or both. As for water, it's amazing there is enough to reach domestic taps, given the amount that spews forth onto the streets from pipes or valves long since rusted through.

There is litter everywhere. Some suburbs have outsourced cleanliness to local residents associations, which battle manfully to hold back the tide. Most have given up, and sidewalks are inevitably infused with rubbish.

Parks are overrun and disheveled. Almost any place designed to make public life more beautiful — a square or garden or point of historical interest — is dilapidated, ugly and forgotten.

Poverty is everywhere. And it's cruel desperation has been formalised. Put out the garbage and, if it is collected on time, it is preceded by some destitute and broken individual rummaging through it first, for plastic and cardboard. They are generally respectful and tidy, these representatives of desperation, but that particularly gruesome business is on the rise, not in decline.

The informal rules of Johannesburg's decay now govern so much behaviour: don't look at your cellphone at a sidewalk café, it might be snatched. Keep your windows up at a four-way crossing. Don't walk alone if you are a woman. Or a man. In fact, don't walk.

These require vision to address and turnaround. There is none. Johannesburg is a visionless city. It has no identity, no brand, no promise, apart from brokenness

There is no police presence. You don't see the proverbial "Bobby on the beat". Police or metro police daren't leave their cars. For the most part they seem to skulk around a corner, to issue a traffic fine. And everyone will tell you those are negotiable if you have R200 in cash on you.

Men urinate or even defecate on sidewalks, against walls and trees. We don't do public toilets in Johannesburg and, even where they are to be found, they are prisons of filth and human poison: modern day monuments to structural and human regression.

There many other such monuments. Liquor stores are often surrounded by hopelessness. Car parks too. Any public rubbish bin is inspected and cleared of anything vaguely edible or useful by the desperate, before a public servant gets to it. That is, if they ever get to it, and it doesn't overflow, like a fountain of solid trash.

Many businesses, shops and restaurants stand empty. Destroyed by Covid-19 regulations or simply unable to pay their way in an economy that devours jobs more than it creates them. Today they fight vagrancy more than they do for customers.

The mechanics of the city are decimated. Robots don't work as a matter of course. If it rains, they will be out for weeks. Electric signs are always half broken. They are crippled, just like the urban transport system.

Trains are unsafe, or burnt to a cinder. Buses are late or on strike. Taxis pick up the pieces but treat the rules of the road like suggestions, ones they have little real interest in even acknowledging, much like the safety of their passengers. Others bring their own recklessness to the roads. As a results, accidents and ambulances populate any adventure from A to B.

There is crime, petty and serious. Barbed wire circles much, a last attempt to protect property. Malls are ostensibly safe havens, but increasingly feel like islands of sterility in a sea of entropy. Built efficient and ugly, they stand out on the horizon like the chunks of concrete they are.

Often there is a stench in the air of some strange and unworldly origin, wafting through city. When the rain comes, it picks up all the debris, junk and organic mess and rivers of filth quickly clog up the water highways and byways.

Protesters, of which there are so many they now form part of any daily traffic report, blocking a road or suburb, leave in their wake a trail of destruction. They are never prosecuted and the damage they inflict never repaired. They are like garden pests, which eat their way through the greenery.

And so much is stolen. Manhole covers, copper wire, signs, art, postboxes, house numbers, metal of any sort. Outside the boundary of your property, it is a free-for-all. Nothing is sacred.

Take a broader view, and look at Johannesburg from a 50-year perspective and it is perfectly clear there is no urban planning. It's a sprawl, with no discernible CBD. There is no theatre district, there are almost no theatres. No districts of any readily identifiable form that embody some cultural good.

All those things that breathe life into a city — museums and galleries, markets and exhibitions, libraries and book stores — are on their last legs, underfunded and rarely visited in any meaningful way. There is no real hunger for culture in Johannesburg. If there was, these things would be thriving, not vanishing. Johannesburg is where culture goes to die.

It is an insular city, where people retreat. You hide from Johannesburg more than explore it. Where there is a small bubble of life, it has to fight often to justify its very existence rather than fight to accommodate those who seek out the joy and insight it might provide.

And there are huge structural problems, the results of decades of neglect, beginning to manifest in real terms. Water is one of them. There is a crisis coming on that front that will make load-shedding look mild. Acid water, too. Congestion. Bridges. Administrative incompetence. The ubiquitous violation of city regulations.

These require a long-term vision to address and turnaround. There is none. Johannesburg is a visionless city. It has no identity, no brand, no promise, apart from brokenness. All those in power do is try to redirect what little money they have, and that has not yet been stolen, to ameliorate some contemporary crisis.

There is no public spirit. No sense of pride. No powerful common force that can act as a counter-measure. When a city loses the will to live or to grow, the knock-on effect is exponential. Ignore litter first, and soon enough you will be muttering over dinner at how the local park has become a cesspit. If you had to associate a feeling with Johannesburg it would be fear, or maybe despair.

There are good councillors out there. Mostly from the DA. People who care deeply for Johannesburg. Some citizens, too. They are consumed by crises, unable to do anything proactive because the city demands of them only reactive repair and response.

It's hard to say Johannesburg is a slum. It is too big, too diffuse for all the decay and degradation to feel overwhelming. But it is getting there. It is what you might call a potential slum, and everyone in it is working hard, every day, to realise that full potential.

In time, historians will write about the fall of Johannesburg. When exactly it fell will be hard to say. Most people won't believe it, though, because, to Johannesburgers' credit, the one thing most have managed to do, in power or not, is play an active part

in the decline. And, through a relentless low-grade destruction, relinquish the ability to tell today apart from yesterday.

At the end of the day, the state of Johannesburg is a testament to those who live in it, and those they elect to run it. So at least, when the day of reckoning comes, we can all collectively celebrate our achievement.