

Thoughts about the book of Esther related to recent History and our time

It is a real question for the Jewish people and also for Christians, how it was possible for the Holocaust to take place in civilized countries like Germany and Austria. Germany and Austria were so-called Christian countries, as at least 90% of the population was baptized and many musicians, poets and philosophers came forth from there. Still the worst murders that one has ever heard of, were initiated and carried out through these nations. These are difficult questions, but we have to ask them, because if we do not seek answers, the danger of repeating the same tragedy is unavoidable.

I believe that the book of Esther partly gives us an answer. Before we look into the book of Esther let me to quote a word that Jesus spoke in ***Luke 11, 23- 24, "He who is not with Me, is against me, and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he says I will return to my house, from which I came. And when he comes and find it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse, than the first."*** Being passive is a very dangerous way to live. If we know the word of God but we do not live according to His word, we open the doors for every evil spirit. This applies not only to a person but also to a whole nation. It is not enough for a nation to know about the word of God. Jesus is warning us that if we don't really fill our house with the Holy Spirit other evil Spirits will take advantage and it will be worse with that person or nation than ever before.

The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the **2 Thessalonians 2: 10- 12, "and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."**

I do ask myself the question how to bring real fruits of repentance and this is one of the reasons why I'd like to share about the book of Esther. It gives us more insight into what happened in the time of the second world war and today.

The name Esther comes from the word, "nistar" and means hidden. God is hidden in the book of Esther and we don't even find the word God or prayer in the book of Esther. There is a hidden history of God with His people and I believe that the book of Esther has a special prophetic meaning for our time.

We read in Esther: 3: 1, ***"After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him."*** Just before this took place, Mordecai a Jew, saved the life of the king

by telling him about a plot made against him. The king placed exactly the wrong person in the most prominent position.

Haman was a descendent from the house of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. The Lord told King Saul to destroy the people of Amalek totally, but he kept their king Agag alive. ***1 Sam 15: 2, "That says the Lord of Hosts: I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox an sheep, camel and donkey."*** This disobedience cost him the kingdom and the throne of Israel and prophet Samuel had to tell him. "Obedience is better than sacrifice." The Lord chose then another king David. After this prophet Samuel went and anointed David.

Haman was a descendent of king Agag, who would not even have been born, if king Saul had been obedient to the word of God.

As Joshua was battling against the people of Amalek centuries before, Moses grew tired during his intercession for Israel. Hur and Aaron needed to hold up his hands to support him in prayer. Through this Israel won the battle. It seems that it was the prayer battle which brought the victory over the people of Amalek. God was determined to fight against the spirit, which is behind the people of Amalek and there are no other people in the Bible, whom God was willing to destroy completely. ***Exodus 17: 14- 16, " Then the Lord said to Moses, write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner, for he said: Because the Lord has sworn, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."***

In the year 2000 we were a small group praying and fasting at the memorial place at the former death camp in Treblinka. The Lord spoke to us, that as we deal with the Nazi Movement and the spirit behind it, we are dealing with the same spirit of Amalek. A few days later we had the privilege to be part of the „March of the Living“ which takes place every year from Auschwitz I to Auschwitz II Birkenau. The main Rabbi at that time was Rabbi Lau from Jerusalem and he finished his speech at Auschwitz II Birkenau with exactly this word from ***Exodus 17: 16, „Because the Lord has sworn, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*** We understood that this impression was right and looked up all the scriptures about the people of Amalek.

Why was the Lord so angry with the people of Amalek? We find the answer in ***Deuteronomy 25: 17, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary, and he did not fear God. "Therefore it shall be, when the Lord***

your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.”

The people of Amalek did not fight like soldiers would fight in a normal war. Normally the strong young men went in front of their people and they fought against the army of the enemy, which was also set up with their strong young men. But the Amalekites attacked the rear guard of the Israelites which meant, the mothers and children and elderly or the weak ones from behind.

Today you would say the civilian people. God said that this strategy and actions are without any fear of God. In this same spirit the concentration camps were built and especially the weak ones, the mothers and children, the elderly were right away tricked and what was looking like showers, was in reality the gas chambers. To give an example, I will try to describe the worst death camp of all the camps which was in Treblinka. First of all there was no camp to live at all and the Jewish people needed to wait in the trains until their turn came to be gassed. Probably more than one Million Jews were killed here in only 13 months. Everything on the railway station was a trap. Many of the people were no longer alive when they arrived in this death camp, Treblinka, after a long and cold journey without water and food. From the little village of Treblinka a train track was leading into the woods. A mock-railway station was set up there with signs to Berlin and Warsaw. A clock was painted on the wall always showing 12 o'clock. Next to the ramp was a house decorated with a "Red Cross". The older people or those who could not walk anymore were brought here and right away murdered by shooting them in the neck. All those who could still walk needed to go to a pathway called the "Schlauch" which means the "pipeline". Shortly after they had to undress, and go on to the gas chambers. The 13 gas chambers were decorated with a "Star of David" to make them believe that it was a synagogue. Even a curtain from a torah shrine in a synagogue was put in front of the gas chambers with a word in Hebrew from ***Psalm 128: 20, "This is the gate of righteousness the righteous will enter."*** I often think about how we mocked God Himself in a terrible way and what will happen to our nations, who did this, if there is no real repentance, followed by the fruits of repentance. Paul wrote in his letter to the ***Galatians 6: 6, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."*** This truth relates not only to one person, but also to a whole Nation. Sin is not going away if we just wait and let time pass by. We are called to confess our sins and the sins of our people before God and the victims of our transgressions.

Today, the same spirit of Amalek is operating in and against America, Israel, Iraq through the terror attacks. We saw how a passenger plane crashed into the "Twin Trade Towers" in New York City, or young suicide bombers go into discotheques, restaurants or buses full of civilian. This is the same spirit that stood behind the

Nazi Movement, the spirit of Amalek, without any fear of God.

Haman is accusing the Jews before the King, with the same accusation, which continues over thousands of years.

Esther 3: 8- 9, "Then Haman said to the King Ahasuerus, "there is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other peoples, and they do not keep the kings laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the kings treasuries."

There was always the problem in the nations, where Jews lived, That the Jews were different and lived according to their own laws, which were connected with their faith in the God of Israel. Just to be different was already a reason for persecution.

The accusation was that the Jewish people do not keep the kings law. This was only true, if the king or anybody else was demanding godly honor and worship for himself. Then, of course, the Jewish people could not be part of it, because they knew the first commandment not to worship other Gods. Exodus 20: 1- 3, „***I am the Lord your God,... You shall have no other Gods before me.***“

This commandment is also for us as Christians and that is the reason why so many believers in Jesus as the Messiah lost their lives in the first centuries during the time of the great persecution under the Roman Caesars.

Money always played a big role in the Middle Ages and in the time of the Nazi regime. If someone borrowed money from a Jewish person in the Middle Ages, and he was not willing to pay it back, he had the Jewish person falsely accused and killed, which freed him from paying the debts. The Nazis took all the possessions of the Jewish people and even cut their hair off and used it before they went to the gas chambers, and used it. They also took the gold teeth out of the mouths of dead Jewish bodies. In our time the oil coming mostly from Arab states and the economy play a bigger role in the negative attitude of western world towards Israel as many would like to admit.

Haman planned to kill all Jewish people in the whole kingdom of Ahasveros. (His kingdom reached from Kush to Hodu, which means from Ethiopia to India with their main center in today's Iraq.) Haman's reason for wanting to kill all the Jews, was related to their faith in the of God of Israel. Hitler did not only demand to be greeted as a head of state, but also as a god he demanded to be greeted with "Heil Hitler" which means salvation is coming from him. The people needed to fall down before Haman and worship him like a god. Haman already wanted to have a "Final Solution". It was hindered at that time through the prayer and fasting of Esther and Mordecai, with their friends, but sadly later agreed on under Hitler at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin February 1942.

Because the King gave Haman such great authority he

wrote a letter: **Esther 3: 13**, *“And the letters were sent by couriers into all the kings provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day”*. The spirit which stands behind the Nazi movement is also now behind the fundamentalist Moslems. Their declared goal is the total annihilation of the Jewish state and their people.

I do not believe that the Holocaust was God’s intention and if something like this would happen again it would be related to the tragic state of the church, which is sleeping for the biggest part again. Since there are many and clear approvals for a newly growing Anti-Semitism and Racism we need to wake up. We are called as Christians to stand with the covenant people of God. Many Christians have a strange attitude when it comes to fighting against something. We are taught to love our enemies and to love all people, but not the powers that are behind these people. The question is, how to fight these spirits standing behind these people and their ideology. Often the military can not get a hold of these terrorists, because they work together with spiritual powers. This explains also why some leaders of the main terrorist organizations are able to hide for so many years. It doesn’t seem to be possible to find some of the famous ones. It is a spiritual prayer battle in intercession and it is a vital and a real call from God to the Body of Christ. **Esther 4: 3**, *“As Mordecai and the other Jews heard about this new law that Haman made in the name of the King, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”* The Jewish people responded like the people in Nineveh. As Esther tells Mordecai how little she can do, he gives her an answer which is very important for us as the Body of Christ in the Nations.

Esther 4: 13- 14, *“And Mordecai said them as an answer to Esther: Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

This word from Mordecai is a very prophetic word from God for the whole church today. If we keep silent completely, God will send help for Israel from another place but the church will perish. In other words the Church will lose her call to be salt of the the world. If the church is only proclaiming what all the world considers right, then we miss the call from the Lord and also our destiny in this world. Jesus explained in Matthew 5: 13, *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”* For years now, we have been meeting for weeks of prayer and fasting. I believe the Lord is preparing us for a time like this.

We have to call for prayer and fasting meetings, even if we are small groups, all over the world. After Esther says she is ready to pay the price, we read this in ***Esther 4: 16, "Go gather together all the Jews which are in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day."***

Esther's maidservants in the castle surely were not Jews. We know this because it's written that she did not reveal her identity until that day. Here we have an example of Gentiles, who are willing to stand in fasting and prayer, with the Jewish people and help them out of destruction and danger of life.

As Esther and Mordecai started to fast, they didn't have any clue how God would answer but they had faith that he would answer. They knew this could cost their lives. After Esther received grace to come before the king and he granted her request to come to her banquet, she felt she needed to wait another day to make her real request. She felt the idea was right but the timing wasn't. When the king asked her why he was invited to dinner, she answered: ***Esther 5: 8, "If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."***

Exactly on the night when the stage was prepared for the destruction of the Jewish people, things changed for the good. The king could not sleep and asked someone to read for him from the chronicles of the kings. There they found, the story how Mordecai had saved the king's life. It came to his attention that Mordecai was never honored or rewarded for this life saving act. On the same night, the wickedness of Haman was fully exposed. Haman could not handle the fact that Mordecai was not afraid of him and did not bow down before him. Mordecai's fear of God was much stronger than any fear of man. Haman felt secure, because Esther had again invited him for dinner and he went ahead and at the advice of his wife had already prepared the gallows for Mordecai. The evil intents of his heart came into the light. Even in the house of the King they knew, that Haman had prepared a gallows for Mordecai ***Esther 7: 9, "Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"*** The wickedness of Haman was exposed right away and the King immediately gave order to hang him. Then the king took the ring of authority from Haman and gave the ring to Mordecai and to Esther. Through prayer and fasting the whole situation was changed and turned around as it happened, also through the prayers of Daniel. His prayers and fasting released a fight in the heavenly places and ushered in a new time of restoration and the return of the Jewish people. During the time of fasting by Esther, Mordechai and their friends, God revealed His plan how this evil power could be broken and overthrown, which wanted to destroy and annihilate the entire Jewish people. As they

were completely dependent on God, He turned the fate for the good for the Jewish people. Esther asked for the revoking of Haman's law. ***Esther 8: 5, "If it pleases the king, she said, and if he regards me with favour and thinks it is the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the kings provinces."*** This legitimate request was never fully answered by the king. The reason for it is in ***Esther 8: 8, "Now write another decree in the king's name, in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring-for no document written in the king's name can be revoked."***

This law was never revoked, the king only gave Esther the right to declare a new law, in his name, which gave the Jews the right of self-defense towards their enemies. Even this right of Israel's self-defense is today strongly opposed by many nations. When Israel is targeting known terrorists before they are able to carry out their acts of terror, criticism is coming from many nations. We know and can come in our prayers in the name of a greater king, JESUS, who has been given power over heaven and earth. He sealed His authority with His own suffering and death.

This turning point brought the fear of the Lord to many people also from the nations. ***Esther 8: 17, "And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them."*** This means that people of the nations turned to the true God of Israel, because there were no other people at that time who had a revelation of the true God.

It is interesting that Mordecai and Esther are from the tribe of Benjamin and from the house of Kish. This was the family of king Saul, the house of Kish. Esther got an opportunity from God at a later point in time to put things right in bringing the judgment of God over the people of Amalek. Today our fight is not against flesh and blood or any nation, but against evil powers which try to rule over whole nations. By the grace of the Lord, God is giving us an opportunity today to stand with His chosen people, knowing that we and our forefathers missed it before and brought bloodguilt over our nations. Esther understood that the judgment of God over the house of Haman needed to be completed. ***Esther 9: 13-14, "Then Esther said, If it pleases the King, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows. So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons."***

Saul had sinned in not putting a ban on the people of Amalek and not killing Agag, king of the Amalekites. If we as believers from the Nations again leave Israel all alone in the hour of great need, and we say we did not know, we have no excuse, because we do know from history and have to learn from it. We are called by God, to be a blessing, a helper and a comfort to God's chosen people. Isaiah 40: 1, ***"Comfort, comfort My people! Says your***

God.”

Repentance in the life of the prophet Daniel and the Apostle Paul

Many Christians do not like to hear about repentance, partly because they do not really know how to relate to it if it is preached about and feel uneasy not knowing how to react. Seldom we hear such a powerful message like Peter gave in Acts 2, 37: ***“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*** The result at that time was that the word reached their hearts and they asked what can we do?

When we deal with guilt beyond own personal sin, we are often confronted with a lot of confusion. Some people see only a long dark tunnel before their eyes and therefore prefer not to enter in at all. But how can we describe the light at the end of this tunnel? There’s often the question of whether we can be believer and fail to identify with the sins of our Nation. I think we can be believers, but how can we get to know the heart of Jesus if things which move His heart are not moving ours and are not important to us. Like Paul wrote to the Philippians 3, 10 ***“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings.”*** Jesus is the real High Priest who is still praying for all of us. Hebrews 7, 25: ***“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”***

As Germans and Austrians we often hear the question of when our repentance about the Holocaust will be enough? This was a national sin which means that more than 90% of the population greeted Hitler with the greeting “Heil Hitler” translated as salvation is coming from him. For national sins there has to be national repentance. I don’t think that it would be realistic to expect that all people will repent, but at least that all the believers from the different denominations, which means the whole church has to respond to God’s call for repentance.

We also have to pray for God’s mercy and that He would give us a sign, that the powers of anti-Semitism and racism is broken in our society, because God is also looking for the fruits of repentance.

We see a wonderful example in the life of the prophet Daniel.

Daniel was young as he was brought into the Babylonian captivity and he was not responsible for the sins of his forefathers. He also did not follow just his tradition, because he was not from the tribe of the priests, but from the family of the king. He did understand that the identification in prayer with the sins of the forefathers was not only reserved for the tribe of the priests but also that God was looking for volunteers. Daniel paid attention to what is written in the book of Jeremiah, that after 70 years God would release Israel from her captivity. He did not take this promise as an oracle and just waited until 70 years were fulfilled, counting on it that time would

heal the wounds or take away the sin of the nation. No, he knew that there needed to be someone or even a group of believers to stand in the gap for the sins of the nation and repent on behalf of their people. Daniel was young, but he did not think that his generation was any better than his fathers. Jesus also warned us not to think ourselves better than our forefathers. Jesus said in Matthew 23, 31 "You say: ***"If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers guilt."*** How do we react in a time of dictatorship and under the threat of losing our life? We still have to find out.

We see in the book of Daniel how much God was waiting for this person who would intercede and how much the Lord appreciated Daniels prayers of repentance. God sent to him the arch angel Gabriel, He said to him: "You are greatly beloved" and that there was a response in heaven to his prayers right away. Daniel 9, 23: ***"At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision."***

Heaven was waiting for someone who would identify with the guilt of his nation. His prayer released a battle in the heavenly places. Only three times in the bible the angel Gabriel was sent to the people of Israel. To Daniel, Zechariah and Mary. He only brought very wonderful word to Daniel and Mary. Luke 1, 28: ***"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"*** He said to Daniel "you are most beloved" but to Zechariah: "Why did you not believe?" Luke 1, 19: ***"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."***

God is calling Daniel, "you are most beloved". Why was Daniel addressed like this? He needed to hear, that God loves him. If God is saying to someone: "Do not be afraid!" He is saying it because this person is afraid. If God is saying "you are most beloved", then He has to communicate this message, because this person does not feel the love of God. As Daniel looked at the sin of his people, he identified so much with the sin, that it was not easy for him to see the love of God towards him. The same happened to Jesus on the cross. He took on Himself the sin of the whole world and He prayed: Matthew 27, 46 ***"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"*** Daniel needed the affirmation, that God still loved him. We can ask why did Daniel, "the most beloved" and also the apostle John see so many terrible visions about the future? John too got the title: John 21,6 ***"The disciple whom Jesus loved."*** To his beloved servants, the Lord showed then such difficult things. One of the answers we find in the book of Daniel itself:

Daniel 12:3 ***“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.”*** At the end time many things will happen which, we will not understand anymore and it will be an attack against our faith in the Lord. The first goal of the enemy is to destroy our faith. Therefore Jesus is praying for Peter: Luke 22: 31 and 32b ***“And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.”***

Apostle Paul wrote this to Timothy towards the end of his life: 2. Timothy 4: 7 ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”***

It was not the many good deeds Paul did, which brought him the crown of righteousness, but the keeping of faith and the love Jesus and His appearance. At the end time, many people will be losing hope and will wait fearfully for the things which will still happen. But this is not what the Lord expects from His children. He told us in: Luke 21:28 ***“Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”***

Daniel and John are counted as friends of the Lord and So are Abraham and Moses. The Information God gave to Abraham and Moses brought them into deeper prayer and intercession. Genesis 18: 17 ***“And the Lord said: Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”***

In the book of Revelation we see how God will involve those who are overcomers to influence the nations and rule over them. Revelation 2: 26 ***“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.”*** The situation in our countries can change through our prayer and intercession.

Daniel prayed thoroughly for the sins of the nation. Therefore God had nothing to add. He was also Willing to pay a high price.

He prayed and fasted sometimes without food and sometimes eating only vegetables. Before he started with his intercession for the people of Israel he humbles himself before the Lord for his own sins and shortcomings. Whenever we repent on behalf of our nation we have to repent first for our own sin.

Daniel 9: 20 ***“Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel.”*** As we had our first prayer and fasting week in Auschwitz in 1995 we did not really know how it would work out for everyone only to drink for a week without eating. But surprisingly it was very easy for most of them except for one sister. She almost had to go to hospital. Later we found out that she was living in relationships, which were not right in the sight of God. We did not know everyone in our group, but the Lord knew everyone very well. The Holy Spirit helped us to repent

with a broken heart. We cannot repent in our own power, but we can hinder the Holy Spirit, if we don't give Him enough room in our lives or gatherings. The Lord did not speak with Daniel anymore about the past, but only about the future, because He had nothing to add. The prophecies Daniel received were very deep and we read in the book of Revelation that apostle John received almost the same visions. Daniel saw the Son of Man but he did not know his name. To John the name was revealed, the Lion and the Lamb, the son of God: "Yeshua"

The experience of Daniel is a key for us. Because he confessed the past sins of his people, the Lord could speak to him about the prophecies for the future. I don't think that we get important prophecies for the future if we do not take the sins of the past seriously. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that his prayers were already answered as he started to humble himself before the Lord, but his prayers released a great spiritual battle in the heavenly places. Daniel 10: 12- 13 ***"Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and beloved, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."***

Through the help and support of the arch angel Michael, who is the angel for Israel it was possible for Gabriel to leave the battle in heavens and come for a short time to Daniel to inform him about the future of his people. The battle against the prince of Persia was fierce. When we think where Persia was at that time so we know it is the country of Iran today. Today, we get the impression that this battle is not only going on only in the heavenly places, but also on earth. In the letter of Peter we read that we all are called to be priests and Kings before the Lord. 1 Peter 2, 9 ***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God."*** But we can not separate the priestly ministry, which is related to suffering, from the ministry of a king to rule. In his prayers of repentance Daniel laid the foundation for what we see in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was not important to Daniel that his contribution was not made public in the newspapers, but the fruit was only seen many years later. Heaven had noticed his prayers and repentance. The Lord used it to bring Israel back into his God given destiny.

Paul and his understanding from repentance

Paul was a murderer, because he was responsible for the death of the first martyr Steven. As he came to know the Lord, his life was totally changed through the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. (Acts 9) Without any fear of men he was preaching the gospel immediately in Damascus and in Jerusalem. The testimony of his life is the foundation of his understanding and his revelation of the gospel of grace. (Acts 20) He never forgot

where he came from and this he wrote much later in his life. 1 Corinthians 15: 9 ***“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”***

He does not stop there. Immediately there is coming a “but”. 10a ***“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.”***

Jesus called for a repentance followed by fruits of repentance. Luke 3, 8 ***“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”***

As Paul is questioned and attacked in his ministry as an apostle, he defends himself and does not give in. He does not apologize for being alive and is crawling 5 cm under the carpet. He understood the grace of God in the right way, he became very active in the Kingdom of God as he changed direction. Therefore he could say: 1 Corinthians 15:10b ***“but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”***

After Paul’s conversion he was hiding himself for some years and was a time of quietness. He said that he was in Arabia and mount Sinai, which is in Arabia (Galatians 1,17) and it (Gal 4: 25). could be that he received revelation of the gospel of grace at Mount Sinai, the mountain where God gave the law. However there is no one who understood the grace of God in depth like Paul did. Some people are afraid that if they start to deal with repentance they will fall into a pit and never get out of it again. But if we look at the life of Paul we see how fulfilled his life was. It was not easy but very fruitful.

If we identify ourselves in repentance with the sins of our people we enter into a process. Sins committed by the whole nations need to be brought before the Lord in prayer by many people, who have endurance and patience. Sometimes it takes years before a whole group is willing to respond to a national sin. Sometimes a little group can open the doors for further steps, or we find out later more information about national sin in our history and we can go on. Because, in a human way, we can not do something about the sins of our nation, we need to be totally dependent on the Lords leading. There are wonderful testimonies how the Lord answered those prayers, but it is not always good to make it public in newsletters. Everything is open before the Lord and He takes note of every hidden prayer. Let us pray that more people will respond to this priestly call of the Lord and that we get more insight and understanding from the Lord. Christa Behr

Paul and his relationship to Jerusalem

These thoughts about Paul and his relationship to Jerusalem came to me over the last years, all not in one moment. Since I live in Jerusalem now for many years it is a question for me why is it so difficult to live in a deep unity in the spirit and truth with Jewish believers and believers from the nations. This bible study about Paul and his relationship to Jerusalem cannot give a full answer to the question of the Jewish and Gentile identity, but it point out that Paul was able, by the grace of God, to embrace both parts of the Body of Christ, Jew and Gentile.

Some believers relate to the person of Peter more than being just one of the apostles, because he got the keys of the Kingdom, and the Roman Catholic Church made a whole teaching out of it. He opens the door for the gospel in Jerusalem and to the nations. He is also called "the apostle to the circumcised." (Galatians 2: 7) Paul is known as "the apostle to the nations" but we read in Acts 9:15, "***This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.***" Paul had also a call to the children of Israel, except that Ananias said to him: The Lord has called you first to the Gentiles and kings, and then to the children of Israel. Not that God puts the nations before Israel, but at the beginning of Paul's ministry, he is first sent to the nations and then to the people of Israel. Paul says in Romans 15: 23- 25, that he doesn't have any more place for ministry in those regions and therefore he wants to travel to Rome after his visit to Jerusalem. Right after his conversion Paul went to Jerusalem and preached the gospel, but the Lord and the local church sent him far away to the Gentiles. Acts 22: 21, „***Then the Lord said to me, go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles.***“ His testimony is directed to all men. Acts 22: 15, „***You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.***“ Before his conversion Paul especially persecuted the church in Jerusalem Acts 9: 13, "***Then Ananias answered, Lord I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem..***" Paul also reports about it in Acts 26: 10. I believe that Paul prayed a lot for the believers in Jerusalem and that by the grace of God, which can turn everything around, he would one day become a great blessing to the body of Christ in Jerusalem. He gathered money from the churches among the Gentiles to bring it personally to Jerusalem and he asked the church in Rome for prayer support, Romans 15: 25, "***But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.***" Verses 30 -31 "***Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me ... and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.***"

Paul wanted to bring a financial gift to the poor among of the saints in Jerusalem. Galatians 2: 10, **„All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.“** It seems to be such a simple task but Paul knew that he could not just deliver the money through someone but that he was called by God to deliver this love gift himself. Even though he was eager to be a real blessing to the body of Christ in Jerusalem, we know that the outcome was not a pleasant one and he was put in to chains and never got out of them again. I believe that one day his prayers will be answered as the church gets more revelation over Pauls relationship to Jerusalem and his prophetic visit.

Pauls life and calling was deeply related to the mystery of Christ and His bride, and the gospel of grace. He loved his Jewish people very much and therefore he said: Romans 9: 2- 4, **“that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”**

Paul was willing to give up his relationship with the Lord, which was the most precious relationship he had, for his brethren in the flesh, if that were possible.

Although the redemptive suffering was accomplished by Jesus on the cross, Paul says in Colossians 1: 24, **“I ... fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.”**

The Lord is calling Paul to take part in the priestly suffering for the preparation of the bridal end time church.

Paul says to those who boast in their Jewishness, Philippians 3: 5, **“[I was] circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.”** His identity was totally rooted in the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. Even Jesus Himself declares as the risen Lord from Heaven, that His identity is still related to the people of Israel and the land. The Lord spoke from heaven to Paul on his way to Damascus as Paul was asking. Acts 22: 8, **„Who are you Lord? I asked. I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting, he replied.“** Why did Jesus not say? I am Jesus from Heaven? His identity still related to the city of Nazareth in which he was raised. At His very last introduction in the book of Revelation, Jesus relates to His Jewish people. Rev. 22: 16, **„I am the root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.“**

Right after his conversion and flight from Damascus Paul came to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples, but they were afraid of him. Acts 9: 26 -27, **“but they were all afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.”**

After the introduction of Barnabas he was accepted. Verse 28: **“So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.”** The Jews who came against Paul were from Asia, and very often people who live outside their own countries in Diaspora, are more

zealous than the locals. They also started an uproar on the Temple Mount at Paul's last visit in Jerusalem (Acts 24: 19)

Because of his religious background Paul was able to confront and argue with the religious people in Jerusalem. He knew their way of thinking and was not afraid to confront them with the gospel of Jesus. From these religious leaders came also the rejection of Jesus the Messiah. We see in John 5 that the Lord Jesus strongly confronted the Pharisees and the scribes without compromise. The problem in Jerusalem at that time was the readiness to receive the gospel, to repent and to change the personal lives. Right away they wanted to get rid of this uncomfortable testimony and challenge. Peter was, because of his background as a fisherman able to be a challenge in a different way to the people in Jerusalem. The Lord and the church in Jerusalem sent Paul away.

Acts 9: 30- 31, ***“When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”*** A lot of good things

happened to the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria after Paul's departure. Persecution for the whole church in Israel was prevented and also Paul's life was spared. We could ask the question, why has Paul the potential to cause persecution for the whole church in Israel? Is there something related to his person? Did he do something wrong as a young believer and disciple?

Many years later, Paul himself speaks about his first visit to Jerusalem right after his conversion. Acts 22: 17 -21, ***“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and I saw Him saying to me. Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me. So I said, Lord they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe in You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him. Then He said to me, Depart for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.”*** According to these words of Jesus, Paul did not do anything wrong. The Lord only informed him about the fact that the people in Jerusalem were not ready at this time to receive his testimony. The problem was outside of Paul's person. He was dealing with the same religious powers, which had come also against Jesus in Jerusalem. Jerusalem could not face the challenge of his testimony. Jesus makes us aware that there is a tremendous resistance against the prophetic testimony in Jerusalem. Luke 13: 33, ***“for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”*** Jesus also talks about the blindness of Jerusalem towards Him. Luke 19: 41- 42, ***„As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden***

from your eyes.“ The question is what would have brought and will bring real salvation and redemption to the people of Israel and peace to the city of Jerusalem? Jesus was weeping because He knew that the knowledge of Himself as the Messiah of Israel was the key. The title Messiah is related to salvation, redemption and a God-given solution. Too often dictators have taken this title in unrighteousness at the time of the Romans and in Germany and Austria over 60 years ago. Authority released from God brings life and peace. Jesus knows that He is the rightful King over Jerusalem and therefore He said in Matthew 5: 34- 35, **„But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is Gods throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.“**

The acceptance of the Messiah YESHUA in Israel and all the Nations is the key for the peace of Jerusalem. There is an hour for every Nation when the knowledge of God is available, afterwards it can be hidden for a time. We hear in the Gospel of John what the religious Leaders feared, if Jesus would be accepted as the Messiah by the people of Israel. John 11: 48, **„If we let Him (Jesus) go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our Nation.“** What they were afraid of was fulfilled in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Paul was accused with almost the same words. Acts 21: 28, **„This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place.“** The acceptance of the Messiah is still the key for the Land and nation of Israel in her God- given identity.

A prophetic testimony was related to Paul’s life and his visit to Jerusalem. He was ready also at this time to die for the name of Jesus, but the Lord makes him aware that He still has a task for him to fulfill, to bring the gospel to the nations. I do believe that Paul’s desire and call to be a testimony for Jesus in Jerusalem was only postponed and he continued to have a prophetic vision for the city of Jerusalem in which he was raised. Paul was the only Apostle who had a relationship to Jerusalem before he was a believer. Acts 26: 4 and Acts 22: 3, **“My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.“**

Suddenly after a tremendous spiritual breakthrough in Ephesus many years later Paul felt led by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem and after that to Rome.

Acts 19: 20-21, **“So the word of the Lord grew mightily and Prevailed. When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem saying: “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”** Please pay attention to the order; first he has to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. A prophetic word came twice to Paul that he would suffer and be bound with chains in Jerusalem. Therefore he was asked not to go there. Acts 21: 4 and 10- 12, **„After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming**

over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, „The Holy Spirit says, in this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.“ When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.” What does Paul himself say about this journey? We read in Acts 20: 22, *“And see now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

Some believers are convinced that after so many warnings Paul should not have gone to Jerusalem. But I like to ask, what if Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem was a very prophetic act and call from the Lord, which was not understood in his time and also not today? I am convinced that Paul was in the perfect will of God and was supposed to go to Jerusalem. Why?

First he goes bound in the Spirit and of course he speaks about the Holy Spirit. He was able to discern spirits. Secondly he was also able to hear the Lord because he counted the cost and was not bound by the fear of death. Paul is answering with much grace. Acts 21: 13, *„Then Paul answered, „Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”* It seems to me that Paul faced a similar

temptation as it happened to Jesus Himself when He spoke about His going up to Jerusalem to suffer there. Even Peter, His close disciple did not understand Jesus and was used for a satanic temptation in the life of Jesus because he related to this decision of Jesus to go to Jerusalem and to suffer in a human way. Acts 21: 14,

“When he would not be persuaded we gave up and said, „The Lord's will be done.” Paul went to Jerusalem as a prophetic sign and for the gospel of grace. Most important is for him to finish his race, which means to fulfill everything the Lord has called him to do. He must have understood this journey to Jerusalem as a part of fulfilling his race. Also the time seems to be important for him. Acts 20: 16, *„Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.”* Could it be that Paul also understood that a breakthrough of his gospel of grace in Jerusalem was related to a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Paul was not called to die in Jerusalem, but it was there that he was put into two chains. Acts 21: 33, *„The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.”* Paul was never released from the chains until his death as a martyr in Rome. Like Jesus he was arrested by the Jews and executed by the Romans and so both Jews and Gentiles were involved in his suffering and death. Acts 28: 17, *“Yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the*

hands of the Romans.” The whole city was in an uproar because Paul came to Jerusalem. Acts 21: 30 -31, **„The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut.“** The prophet told him the truth that he would be chained and would suffer in Jerusalem and Paul recognized this word as prophetic from the Holy Spirit. Still he knows that he has to go to Jerusalem, because the Lord showed him also why he was supposed to suffer in Jerusalem. It was because of the gospel of God’s grace. Acts 20: 22, **„to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** He had already suffered for the gospel of grace at other times and in other circumstances. This is why he writes in Galatians 5: 11, **“And I brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offence of the cross has ceased.”** Paul was misunderstood also at this point. He did not say that the Jewish people should not circumcise their children any more. He did not preach circumcision, as something needed for salvation or justification before God. In the letter to Galatians Paul also speaks about false brethren. Galatians 2: 4- 5, **“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”** Also today there is a great battle going on in the church worldwide for the continuation of the truth of the gospel. Another reason why I am convinced that Paul understood the Lord correctly is that Jesus Himself stood by his side on the night after his arrest on the Temple Mount. In Acts 23: 11 the Lord said: **“Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”** This time the Lord Himself is pointing out the order, first he has to be a testimony in Jerusalem and then in Rome. At the Temple Mount Paul only spoke to defend his case and we can ask, what testimony was Jesus talking about? I am convinced that his testimony goes beyond his speech and is related to his person and what he represents. Paul knew that a great battle was related to his journey to Jerusalem and therefore he needed more than just some nice prayers at the end of the service. He was asking the church in Rome to battle for him in prayer even though he only knew a few believers there personally. Romans 15: 30 -32, **“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.”**

This is an urgent call from Paul for personal prayer support and he is even begging for prayer. It reminds us of the request from Jesus to his disciples in Gethsemane to watch and pray with Him for one hour before He suffered in Jerusalem. Paul turns with his request to the

church in Rome and not to the church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem prayed successfully for the deliverance of Peter who is called in the letter of the Galatians the Apostle of the circumcision. Paul knows that he as the apostle to the nations should ask the church of the nations to support him personally in prayer. He also asked the churches in Ephesus, Eph. 6: 18 and Colossians 4: 3 to pray for him. Paul writes in Eph. 3: 1, ***“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles”*** He is saying: My being in prison is related to the redemptive purpose of the Gentiles. There wasn't a real personal relationship between Paul and the church in Jerusalem. Galatians 1: 22- 24, ***“And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God in me.”***

The church in Jerusalem had her own identity and expression of worship, because the members were predominately Jews or converts. The members were zealous for the law even after they had come to the faith in Jesus. Acts 21: 20b, ***“You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.”***

Paul was happy that so many Jews in Jerusalem had come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus. James was also encouraged by Paul's report of what God had done among the nations. Acts 21: 19 -20, ***“When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it they glorified the Lord.”***

But still I believe that Paul must have been saddened by the fact that the church of the nations and the church in Jerusalem were two separate entities. He knew that through the death of Jesus, Jews and Gentiles are made one. Ephesians 2: 14- 15, ***“For He Himself is our peace, who has made one and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.”*** Now there are not anymore two separate entities but the one body of Christ, the bridal Church made up from Jew and Gentile.

But the ministry of Paul to the nations was in reality in a certain way separated from the church in Jerusalem. In Galatians 2: 9 we read: ***“And when James, Kephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”***

There was a measure of unity and fellowship, for instance about who should minister among the Gentiles and who among the Jews. But in Jerusalem there was no expression of this unity of the church made up of Jew and Gentile. A tension existed between the church in Jerusalem and the church of the nations. In this light we understand why Peter did not have a problem to eat with the Gentile believers in Antioch until James

and those from Jerusalem came. Galatians 2: 12-13, **„Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he (Peter) began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all. You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it then that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?“** There follows now an extended explanation of the righteousness by faith for Jew and Gentile. For Paul, it the truth of the Gospel again at stake and that is why he corrected Peter publicly. It is interesting that Peter never complained about the correction, because deep in his heart he knew that Paul was right and that it was fear, which came over him. Peter was the first one who received the vision in the book of Acts that God has now cleansed the unclean animals.

By revelation Paul understood the mystery of the unity of the body of Christ and he united in his person both parts, which belong to the Bride of Jesus. James and the church in Jerusalem could not fully understand Paul at this time because he said in Acts 21: 21, **“but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”**

The church in Jerusalem and in the nations was not only locally separated but also differed in their identity and expression. The revelation of the mystery of the church and the unity in Jesus lived in the heart of Paul but was neither visible nor lived out in the church in Jerusalem. This was and is a special challenge for the church in Jerusalem. Whenever the kingdom of God is manifesting the spirit is in opposition to it, manifests also. When Jesus appeared, Demons could not be quiet. If we have a certain authority in one area of conflict, the powers of darkness are usually revealed. Paul had authority to confront religious spirits that had, and have a special stronghold in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is also, in our days, the center of the three world religions. Paul was in many ways ahead of the church in Jerusalem and the nations as an untimely birth. Paul says about himself, that he is an untimely birth. 1 Corinthians 15: 8, **„And last of all He appeared to me also, as to one born out of due time.”** On one hand, he was late because he was not one of the twelve disciples who walked with Jesus. On the other hand he was early because he got some very deep prophetic revelation from the Lord, which at this time the biggest part of the church could not understand. Already at that time he got the revelation about this Gospel of grace, bringing Jew and Gentile together in the love of the Lord. One day there won't be different churches and denominations, but one united visible body of Christ made up of Jew and Gentile.

The church in the nations also missed the revelation that Paul received. Over the centuries they did not understand God's faithfulness and love to His covenant people Israel. In Christ the Gentiles became co-heirs with Israel but did not replace Israel. Ephesians 3: 6, ***“that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.”***

Gentile believers are not the only heirs or owners, but together with the Jewish people are grafted into the one olive tree, Israel. Paul did warn the believers from the Nations not to be proud. Romans 11: 18, ***„Do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: you do not support the root, but the root supports you.“*** Right after this very thing happened the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the year 70 after Christ. Some Gentile believers saw in this judgment a confirmation, that God has forever rejected the Jewish people and that the Gentile church was growing very fast and as a result, Pride crept in.

The church in the nations did not understand why it was so important for Paul to go first to Jerusalem and to be a testimony for the gospel of grace. He could have sent the financial support for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem with someone else. But Paul knew that he had to go to Jerusalem personally, and that he used the open door to bring financial support. Galatians 2: 10, ***“They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”***

Since Paul was already in Asia it would be much more practical to go first to Rome and then to Jerusalem. And why did he want to go to Jerusalem, if they would persecute him there, put him in chains, and make him suffer. If the church in the nations had understood their tremendous responsibility to fight in their prayers for the deliverance of Paul, I believe the outcome could have been different. I don't know if they arranged for special prayer nights, beside their weekly program, to pray for the deliverance of Paul. Paul believed that they could have saved him from the hands of unbelievers in Judea like the church in Jerusalem prayed successfully for the deliverance of Peter. What we do know is that Paul never got to Rome in joy, but only in chains. He knew that he needed to come to Rome anyhow, because Jesus told him. Coming in freedom or in chains was, according to his conviction, dependant on the prayer battle of the believers in the Nations for him and for the gospel of grace.

As Paul defended himself on the Temple Mount, they listened to him, until he said one particular sentence. Acts 22: 21-23, ***“Then he (Jesus) said to me, depart for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles. And they listened to him until this word and then they raised their voices and said, away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!”*** They listened to his testimony of the heavenly revelation of Jesus, his baptism and how God forgave him his sin. But they could not receive the next word. In the spiritual world there was great

resistance as Paul indicated that he was sent from God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The message that the Gospel is for Jew and Gentile was rejected. If we look at the word „mystery“, we find that this word is mentioned mostly in Paul’s letters. In the book of Daniel we see the word mystery in connection with the kingdom of God. The word mystery is mentioned in connection with the mystery of God, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the church, the mystery of the gospel and the mystery of the body of Christ. Paul describes the relationship and unity of believers from the Nations with the Jewish believers also as a mystery. The reality of this truth will be an important testimony for the visible and invisible world. Paul uses the word “mystery” very often in his letter to the Ephesians as he speaks about the unity between Jews and Gentiles for which Jesus died. Ephesians 3: 4- 10, ***“You have heard...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.”*** In these verses we see that Paul relates this mystery of the unity between Jew and Gentile to the gospel.

A little later Paul speaks about the mystery of the unity between man and woman in marriage and changes the subject spontaneously. Ephesians 5: 32, ***“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*** He sees marriage as a foreshadowing of the unity which Christ will have with his bridal church. Paul had not only the heart of the bride but also the heart of the bridegroom, Jesus for the whole body of Christ. In the end it will be one visible entity, the one united and prepared bridal church. I don’t think that there was anyone else who understood this mystery deeply as Paul did, and carried it in his heart. Paul is like an incarnation of this mystery of the gospel of grace. He embodies this unity and it is his life, his gospel for which he is ready to live and to die.

He also uses the word mystery in the letter to the Romans. Romans 11: 25, ***“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as***

it is written.” God’s end time plan for Israel is a mystery for him, and we will see it fulfilled as the time of the Gentiles comes to an end.

The center of the ministry is Christ Himself, and this is why he writes in Colossians 2: 2, “***Being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.***” Or in Colossians 1: 27: “***To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***” Only in Christ Jesus is this unity between Jews and Gentiles possible, and only in Him do we come into the unity of which Paul is speaking about in his letters. To describe it in a picture it is like Jesus is waiting for us on a mountaintop and calling the Jewish believers and believers from the nations to Himself. In His presence we enter into real unity, which is only available in Him. He called Jerusalem to himself with the words: Luke 13: 34 „***How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!***” Any other unity we achieve in our own power or in a spirit of humanism between messianic Jews and Christians from different Nations and denominations is like stopping half way before really reaching the top of mountain. We miss the depth and purpose God has given and we all need to be careful not to build outside of the Spirit of Christ. Our own effort is missing out the God-given purpose and call. Today there is recognition by Christians of Jewish Traditions and an acceptance of Judaism, which sometimes stays on a humanistic level.

We read about the word mystery in Revelation 10: 7, “***but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to his servants the prophets.***” My question is, could it be that God is talking about the same mystery in the book of Revelation, which Paul already understood? Does this relate to the mystery of Jesus and the unity of Jew and Gentile in His bridal end time Church?

The book of Revelation gives another picture for the bride, the heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation 21: 2, “***Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.***” ***This unity is completed and fulfilled in the Jerusalem from heaven.***”

In our time we look often for special revelations and prophecies. How wonderful it would be if the greatest mystery and fulfillment of prophecy were the unity between Jew and Gentile as His prepared bride. I believe because of the terrible Church- history among the Jewish people it will need a creative act of the Lord to bring these two parts together. If someone is very distorted through sickness, then we need to pray for a creative miracle of the Lord as we see it in the healing of the man who was born blind. After he received his healing he could see for the first time. In the New Testament we read only in the letter to the Ephesians,

that the word “create” is related to Jesus. Ephesians 2: 15, **„His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.”** We do have the ability and opportunity as individuals to live in this new creation, even if the whole body of Christ, made up from Jew and Gentile, is not living it out together in our days. However Paul is calling everyone to live already in this spiritual reality. Galatians 6: 15- 16, **„For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”** This mystery and the call related to Paul have been neglected after his death. As believers from the Jews and from the Nations we need to get back and pray for this mystery to be fulfilled today, which is related to the testimony of Paul. My conviction is that with the imprisonment of Paul his gospel was also chained to a certain extent and never fully released. The world has not seen in the last 2000 years this unity between Jew and Gentile in the Church, which was and is God’s intention. Therefore Paul writes in Ephesians 3: 10, **„his intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”** Not that the world did not only see this unity in Christ, but sadly saw also its opposite inside the Churches and in their behavior towards the Jews. Instead of helping the Jewish people to remove their veil Paul was talking about, the church in the Nations put more veils on them and made it even more difficult to recognize the Messiah in Jesus. Paul knows that he is called to be a herald, apostle and teacher of the gospel. 2 Tim. 1: 11, **„And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.”** „He talks about his gospel, which he received by revelation. Galatians 1: 11- 12, **“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”**

What does he mean by his gospel that he received by revelation? We usually connect with the word gospel only the message of an evangelist who is explaining the first steps of faith. But in fact, Paul did not learn about the first steps of faith in supernatural revelation, but from Ananias. Acts 22: 13 and 16: **“Ananias came to me; and he stood and said to me, Brother Saul receive your sight. And at that same hour I looked up at him. Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”**

Which part of the gospel is Paul then talking about? 2 Timothy 2: 8 -9, **“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains.”** or 2 Timothy 1: 8, **„Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.”**

The gospel of grace Paul received and was preaching is so important and central for a believer, that he writes to the Church in Rom: Romans 2: 16, ***“...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”*** I do not think that Paul is going to far, but that he knew and was convinced, that the gospel of grace is the plum line for the final judgment of Jesus Christ. This gospel is dealing with our heart attitude, with the secrets of men and not only with religious laws.

The unity between believers made out of Jews and Gentiles is a very important part to Paul in the gospel. Therefore it is written in the Gospel of John 11: 51, ***„He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.“*** Jesus too died on the cross for this unity between the believers out of Jew and Gentile which is an important part of the salvation. The Salvation of our Lord is not only for our sins, but also for the unity to be lived out in a real way. If the church would understand the importance of these truths and how important it is for our Messiah Jesus and our Father in Heaven, big changes would take place world- wide in the church. Therefore it is also written in John 10: 16, ***„I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.“*** It is the high time for the church to change her priorities and live in the reality of this unity, since the Lord died for it a long time ago.

As Paul was put in chains, his gospel and task were chained to a certain degree. He could not come with joy to Rome but only in chains and as far as we know he was not able to go to Spain as he had planned. My question is, is it possible that since Paul was imprisoned and executed, that with him the call to bring the gospel of grace to Jerusalem has never been totally released again? Has this mystery of the unity between Jew and Gentile ever become important in the church in Jerusalem and the nations? Have there been believers, who have taken this to their hearts like Paul, to bring the gospel of grace to Jerusalem? Did we take up the prayer request of Paul in Romans 15 to pray for a breakthrough in Jerusalem? Which way could the church have gone if the root of all racism and anti-Semitism had been confronted and disarmed right in the beginning of the church history? Maybe the divisions into many denominations could have been avoided, if this part of the gospel had been understood and lived out. Will we really see revival, if we do not live out this unity, especially in Jerusalem? I think all of this is a part of why the battle in Jerusalem is so strong. The house of the Lord in Jerusalem is supposed to be a house of prayer for all Nations. (Mark 11: 17)

Paul was a representative of the gospel of grace and therefore his coming to Jerusalem was prophetic. He is like an incarnation of the bride because in a very deep

way he carries the love for both parts of mankind, Jew and Gentile, in his heart. He knows about the mystery of God in Christ, about the bride of Christ, the one church. The mystery of the end time is not hidden from him. Paul understands that believers among the Jews and from the Nations have access to the same grace and he lived it out, but he was chained.

Ephesians 6: 18- 20, ***“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.”*** The chains were put on Paul in Jerusalem although he had asked the church in Rome to pray for him that this would not happen. Could it be that the church in the nations still has a call to pray for the release of the gospel of grace especially in Jerusalem? Jesus has already died for this unity, and we pray to see the release of this reality, which Paul already understood in his time.

With these thoughts about Paul, I just want to encourage you to pray even more fervently for the peace of Jerusalem which will not come without the Prince of Peace. May He give us more light and revelation that we may know how to stand with Jerusalem and Israel and with our Nations today.

I would like to add some thoughts from Christoph Blumhart, who was a Lutheran pastor in Germany in the last century, about the restoration of love and truth in the church. We read in Mark 1: 16- 18, ***“And as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of man. They immediately left their nets and followed Him.”*** Jesus is making a connection from the former work of Peter a fisherman to his future call to be a fisher of man. It is interesting that in the next verses 19 to 20 is written: ***“When he had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in a boat, mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”***

As Jesus makes a connection with Peter and Andrew to their former occupation, in the same way there is a connection to the former work of John and James. The Lord did not call them in the first place to be evangelists, but to mend the nets. What is the ministry of mending the nets? In the first century's the net of love and truths was torn inside of the church as it is written in Luke 5, 6 ***“And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.”*** It means that people who did belong to Jesus could be outside of the church and people who did not belong to Him could be inside of the church. Love can't be at the expense of truth and truth not at the expense of love. To tell someone the truth without love will lead often to the fact that truth is not received because of the lack of love it came with. But

not to tell the truth out of so-called love, is also not love in the light of the word of God. The net, which consisted of the love and truth coming from God, was torn and now the Lord is calling menders of nets in His service to repair the net and bring it in to his original condition. If the net is full of holes you can't really catch fish because they will get out of the net and are lost very easily. The last great catch of fish too compare with a worldwide evangelization can't take place with a torn net. Before the great catch the net needs to be restored in relation to the Messianic Jewish brethren and to Israel. The last great catch of fish from a prophetic point is still ahead of us and is described in John 21: 11, "***Simon Peter went up aboard and dragged the net to land full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.***"

John is warning the church in his letters about wrong teaching like the gnosis and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. He is reminding the church again and again to stay in the truth and love. I do believe that we will not see revival or world evangelism without working in a thorough way on the root of our sickness in the church. The relationship to the roots of our faith, which are related in Jesus to Israel and Jerusalem like Paul writes in Romans 11 are disconnected. Derek Prince said once that if someone does not get the first baton right he will also not have the other baton in the right place.