

This contains the six talks by Brother Christian Chen on the End Times.

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All Bible references in this transcript are attributed to the NIV translation.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Portsmouth – 1pm**

Matthew 24:32-35.

*<sup>32</sup>Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the doors. <sup>34</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

Luke 21:29-31.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*

These are the verses for the moment. Let us look to the Lord in prayer.

*Dear Lord, we thank you so much, for by your mercy and grace we may be here this morning. We would like to be as Mary sitting at your feet. We pray that you will really speak to our hearts. We pray that somehow, some word of yours will sink deeply into our hearts, to transform us, to quicken us, that we may rise up and follow you. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.*

As you know, we have just read a portion of the word of our Lord from Matthew. If we want to know the word of Christ and the teaching of Christ, we go to the Gospel of Matthew. If you want to know what our Lord has done on this earth, we study the Gospel of Mark. If you want to have the spiritual interpretation of the life of the Lord, we should read the Gospel according to John. So, if we want to know the Word of Christ we should study Matthew.

About 60% of the Gospel of Matthew is the direct word of Christ. In other words, if you print the direct word of Christ in red, you will find that 3 out of 5 words in the Gospel of Matthew will be in red.

You remember how our Lord said in the Gospel of Matthew: *'Behold, here is someone who is greater than Solomon'*. Then he said: *'Behold, here is someone greater than Jonah'*. These two phrases are the two keys to the Gospel of Matthew.

Chapters 1-25: *'Behold here is someone who is greater than Solomon'*. Now why Solomon? We know that it is because Solomon had the Word of Wisdom. Even the Queen of the South came all the way from the end of the South desiring to hear the Word of Wisdom. We are all Gentiles who come from afar, and our Lord is the one who is greater than Solomon. Each time when we study Chapters 1 to 25, we are in the presence of our great King Solomon – our Lord Jesus. In these chapters, we have the word of wisdom of our Lord.

Remember, in this part of Matthew, there are five sentences to express something very important. For example, there is such a phrase: *'When Jesus had finished these words'*. Now, in the whole Gospel of Matthew, you will find this phrase five times. The last one is recorded in Chapter 26 of Matthew: *'When Jesus had finished all these words'*. Five such phrases divide the first 25 chapters into 5 parts – 5 portions of the word of Christ. And these 5 portions of the word of Christ actually correspond to the first 5 books of the Old Testament.

Chapters 1 to 25 speak of the word of Christ - Behold, someone who is greater than Solomon. But then when we come to the last 3 chapters: *'Behold here is someone who is greater than Jonah'*. For three days and nights, Jonah was in the belly of a fish. And similarly, for three days and nights our Lord was in the very centre of the earth. Jonah's life speaks of death and resurrection. So now, when we come to the last 3 chapters, we find the death and resurrection of our Lord.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we are pretty sure that we encounter here the direct word of Christ. If we study this word, for example Matthew Chapters 5 - 7, this is definitely the word of life to us. These three chapters tell us something about the Christian life, spiritual life. So, these words are the words of life.

However, in Chapters 23-25, we have the prophetic word of Christ. We should study well the nature of the word of Christ according to Matthew, because it will give us the revelation of Christ. Jesus reveals God's heart to us. When He speaks, you know that Christ is opening the heart of God to us. So normally, we enjoy the word of life.

According to the Sermon on the Mount we know how to live on this earth. But, remember Christ has given us the word from Chapters 1-25. Sometimes we tend to dwell on the living word of Christ, or the word of life. We tend to neglect the prophetic word of Christ. Somehow we think that Chapters 5-7 are more important than Chapters 23-25. These two aspects are of equal importance. We not only need the word of life from our Lord, we also need the prophetic word of our Lord.

Why do we need the prophetic word? Because through His prophetic word we are able to know how much God has already accomplished His work. God has a wonderful work. God works according to His will. Before time began, in the eternal past, God already had a purpose. He wanted to carry out His purpose, so He began to work. When He started to work the universe began. You will find the universe is in motion. From motion, we have the concept of time. Without motion, there is no time. We have time because God started His work according to His purpose.

But then, if God carries out His work in time, one day when He has accomplished His work, it means we come to the end of time. So, my brothers and sisters, how do we know we are at the end time? We have to ask one question - whether God has almost finished His work.

So firstly, we have to know the program of God's work. Secondly, we should know the timetable of God's work. So that is why we have the whole Bible. The Bible is the revelation of the programme and timetable of God's work. Because Christ is the Son of God, He is the one who is very near to the heart of God. Only Christ is able to disclose that secret.

On one hand, our Lord tried to tell us the word of life. Then, from that word we know God's purpose and God's heart. '*God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son*'. Finally, our Lord died for us on the cross. From this word we know God's heart. But brothers, our Lord also wants to tell us that if we know something about God's work, we will ask how much of His work has God accomplished?

So for this reason, when Christ was on earth, not only did He speak the word in Matthew 5-7, but also the word in chapters 23-25. Strictly speaking, when you go through the whole gospel according to Matthew, you find two aspects: The word of life and the prophetic word. When we come to the prophetic word of Christ, it is clear we encounter the prophecies in the Bible.

If you study the whole Bible, you will find there are about 1800 prophecies. Among these 1800 prophecies there are some repetitions. If you make some rearrangement, you will get 737 independent events in the Bible. Out of these 737 independent events predicted, you will find 590 major events. We want to ask one question. What is the rate of fulfilment of these prophecies? You will find out of these 590 major events, 570 events have already been fulfilled.

So, the rate of fulfilment is more than 97%. This also proves that the Bible is indeed the word of God. We still have twenty prophecies yet to be revealed. Actually, some of them are being revealed. We are so fortunate we can witness some of the prophecies being fulfilled. On one hand, 90% of fulfilment tells us the Bible is the word of God. However, on the other hand, what does this mean? This means God has almost finished His work. When God finishes His work, it will be the end of time.

We know the meaning of time means the universe is in motion. When the universe is in motion it means God is still working. It is very interesting - these prophecies in the Bible actually is a list of God's working in our history. So, God gave us a list of His working in the Bible. God even arranged them in chronological order so you can see the timetable of God's work. That is why we have the Bible. If you want to know the work of God, you have to go through the whole Bible and you will have the answer.

Let me give you one illustration. We have only one daughter in our family. When she was to be married, she had to plan the wedding in advance. A year before her wedding, I gave her a gift – some computer software. With this software she was able to plan her wedding well. Every time when she turned on the software, she would find a number, for example 123, meaning 123 days to go. So after 123 days now she will go to the other end of the carpet. This way, she can really prepare for her wedding.

Of course, there were many things to do, like sending out the invitations and planning many things, and she probably will forget. However, this software is very good, it lists all the possible things to do, so she can be well organised. She would take a year to finish, for example, 200 items, and she planned within 2 months that she should do certain things. Then the software has a function when she does a review, she is able to check whether these things has been done. So now, brothers, very interesting, if you went to her computer, if you went to the list of 200 items, and if you only see 10 checks out of these 200 items, you know it is still early. But if out of the 200 items, you have 190 checks, now you know the wedding is very, very near.

So, brothers and sisters, when you study your Bible and discover out of 900 major events, only 20 events are left, you can be very sure we have almost come to the last page in our history. So brothers, our concern is this - if we really love God and want to live for Christ, we will want to know how much has God accomplished His work. What is the final phase of God's work?

Today, if we are really living in the end days, how can we contribute to the final phase of God's work? We need to know the will of God, the eternal purpose of God. We know God is working in every one of us. We know we will be transformed into the image of Christ. We know before His return He will gain a glorious Church. But look at us, look around; do you think God has almost finished His work? If God has almost finished His work, it means we are almost there. Then today, somehow, the world will see the beauty and glory in our lives. So, before the Lord's return if He is going to gain a glorious Church, we should no longer be divided and we should love one another.

Two thousand years ago, God accomplished His work on the cross. That is the finished work of redemption. Because of this finished work, we are justified. Now, we are no longer under condemnation. We have been delivered from the judgment of God. We know that one day we will never go through the judgment of the Great White Throne. Christ has taken away our sins, and He has gone through that judgment. He has gone through it all; there is now no more condemnation. So brothers, thank the Lord that work has been done.

But today, after we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we know that the Holy Spirit is in us. The Holy Spirit is in our spirit, and is operating in our spirit. Through His working, we are to know His will and to do His will. Today, if we do according to the movement of the Holy Spirit, we know the Holy Spirit is still working in us.

What is the purpose of the working of the Holy Spirit? He wants to produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us. In this way, we are being transformed into His image. Not only does He work in individuals, He also works in the Church. You will then discover the bride is ready, we have all grown up, and finally we have grown into the stature of Christ. We are being built up in the Lord.

This is all part of God's working. Not only did Christ die for us on the cross, but the Holy Spirit also works in us today. So brothers and sisters, only when God has reached His purpose, only when we are transformed into His image, only when the Church is mature enough, when the gospel of the

kingdom is preached to every corner of the earth, only then we know that God has accomplished His work.

So now brothers, according to the Biblical prophesy, to our surprise, there are only twenty events left. Actually we are in the middle of these twenty events. So we are almost in the last page in the history of the earth. So for this reason, we want to know, what is the last page in God's work? Why are we here? Our time is running out. If we really know the prophetic word of God, we not only know the end time is here and that we are very near the end, but we also know it is the last phase of His work.

More than that, in what way can we co-work with Christ? In what way are we able to participate in the work of Christ? This is why we need to have the knowledge of the prophetic words. Today many people are interested in prophecies, just because they are curious. When they know the prophecy, somehow their curiosity is satisfied. Today if you go to many bookstores, you find that all the books about biblical prophecies are among the bestsellers.

However, brothers and sisters, because of that, some people think that this won't mean much if you are only curious about the future. But if we really love the Lord, we will definitely want to know how much has God accomplished of His work and what is the last phase of His work? This is very important to us. Now, if we want to know the last phase of God's work, especially the last twenty events, then you will discover the prophetic word of Christ is most important. Even the Book of Revelation, don't forget, that this book should be traced back to the prophetic word of Christ. So in other words, we should go back to the gospel according to Matthew, where our Lord has declared something very important. Matthew 24:32.

*<sup>32</sup>Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the doors.*

This is one of the most wonderful prophecies of our Lord. This is the source of our knowledge at the end of the times. If you understand this prophecy, you will most likely understand the last twenty events. This prophecy is well known to everyone of us. The fig tree here definitely represents the nation of Israel. Before our Lord mentioned this prophecy, one morning when He went out from Bethany and saw from afar a fig tree, full of leaves. He tried to seek some fruit from

that tree. He was so disappointed that he couldn't find any fruit. The whole tree was full of leaves. So then our Lord cursed that tree.

Now think about it. Our Lord Jesus just came out of Bethany - can you imagine that Martha would have let our Lord leave her house without any breakfast? It is impossible. But according to the Bible our Lord was hungry. You know this cannot be biological; it must be spiritual. In other words, this fig tree is not just a fig tree, because in the Bible it refers to the nation of Israel.

Fruit means satisfaction to God and to man. God's will for a fig tree is the fruit, not the leaves. Even though the fig tree has large leaves, however, the main purpose of a fig tree is to have fruit. Just like God's will for a vine is the wine, not just the fruit. So, each tree has its own special function. The fig tree is mainly the fruit. This was why Israel was on this earth - it was supposed to be the testimony on earth. Even by that time, they had had a wonderful and glorious history.

However, our Lord could not find any fruit. If there is no fruit, there is no reality. They have the appearance but not the reality: this is misleading; this is not honesty. Do you see that? For this reason, our Lord wants this tree to be consistent. If you cannot find any fruit, why do you need this tree? So our Lord cursed that tree, and we know then the whole tree was withered from the root.

Now remember that was the prophecy. Our Lord uttered the prophecy by action, not by word. You know finally that prophecy was fulfilled because around 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed and many years later the whole nation disappeared from the face of this planet. So now you can see the fulfilment of the prophecy of our Lord. He cursed that tree, that tree withered, and the nation of Israel disappeared from this earth.

With that background, our Lord told his disciples: *'Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.'* Now this was a miracle. The fig tree was already withered from the root, but according to the Lord's prophecy, one day that nation will be reborn. So *as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.* According to this prophecy, the nation of Israel will be reborn, and we know that this prophecy has been fulfilled.

Now look at Matthew 24:33: *'Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the doors'*. Now the door here is in plural: at the doors. In the east, especially in the Middle East, the houses there are like the houses in China. You have to go through many doors before you reach

the living room. So when our Lord said He is right at the doors, that is what He meant. After 1948, where is our Lord? He is at the doors. But now we do not know whether He is at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>. At least the 1<sup>st</sup> door, probably the 3<sup>rd</sup> door, or the one next to the living room.

So brothers, the prophetic word of Christ is important. It is like an alarm clock. After 1948, we ought to wake up because according to the prophetic word of our Lord, He is already at the door - very near, much quicker than you think. You think the Lord is still very far, and people try to figure out when our Lord would be in the living room.

Some people make some suggestions here because our Lord said: *'I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened'*. Some suggest that a generation in the Bible is 40 years. If you add 40 to 1948, it means 1988. That means in 1988 the Lord should have arrived for His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Before 1988, there was a very interesting book: 88 reasons why our Lord should come back in 1988. That book was the best seller before 1988.

But brothers, today, our Lord is still not here. So some say we need to revise the theory. The generation in the Bible must be 70 years. So some clever person tried to set another date. But I think the Lord's word is so crystal clear. In 1948, by that time, the Lord is already at the doors. So brothers, the Lord must be very near. I think this is very important. Why? Now, for example, let us read Matthew 24:15-18, 20, 25:

*<sup>15</sup>“So when you see in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – <sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let no-one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. <sup>18</sup>Let no-one in the field go back to get his cloak.’*

*<sup>20</sup>Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath'*

*<sup>25</sup>See, I have told you ahead of time.'*

Now let us remember these words, *'Behold I have told you in advance.'* Why did our Lord say you should flee? *'Let no-one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.'* The Lord said you should run for your life. And the Lord said: *'Behold I have told you in advance.'* Our Lord gave His prophetic word and this is very useful to every one of us. Now this portion of the word is very important.

In 70 AD, the Roman soldiers surrounded the city of Jerusalem. It was approaching the Passover and the Roman soldiers discovered something that they could not understand. They found many Jewish people were still marching towards the city and not from the city. They thought: 'the city is the eternal city; God definitely will be with us and city will never fall'. They said, "We want to celebrate our Passover." So they marched toward the city.

Now the city of Jerusalem by that time was a war zone. Any average person would shy away from a war zone. But these people violated commonsense. Finally the general gave the command, opened all the gates of Jerusalem, and many people flooded in. Then the gates were closed and they discovered this was the last Passover in their life. Many people died under the knife, and about 100,000 young people were captured to Rome.

Today if you visit Rome, the landmark of Rome is the Roman Amphitheatre. The 100,000 slaves who were captured from that event built that landmark, that building. Historians reported in that event none of the Christians perished. What happened to the Christians? It was because those Christians remembered the prophetic word of Christ: Run for your life, don't go back to your house. Pray it is not during the winter. Hopefully, that day is not the Sabbath.

Now brothers, the prophetic word of Christ is very practical. So when Christians remember the word of Christ, when that gate was opened all the Jews squeezed in, all the Christians squeezed out. The Apostle John took the mother of Jesus, Mary, and he was among those who fled from the city. They went to Petra, and then eventually Ephesus. So today, according to tradition, you can find there the tombs of Mary and John.

So brothers, who wrote Revelation? Who told us something about the Great Tribulation? John wrote it not only according to his revelation, he wrote it also according to his experience. Brothers, that is why the prophetic word of Christ is so practical.

It is the same today. We know, especially after September 11<sup>th</sup>, many Christians woke up. We cannot imagine how the tribulation will come sooner than we think. It is almost as if we were in the same period of John in the first century. If John and Mary, and other disciples escaped that great tribulation, we need the prophetic word of God to know how to escape that great tribulation. So you see how important the prophetic word of Christ is? Since 1948, we know our Lord is already at

the doors. More than that, if you study carefully the word of our Lord, you will find it is so amazing, and so accurate.

Now we have to turn to Luke 21:29-30.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the leaves. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.’*

Now some of you may think that this is just a repetition of what our Lord had said in Matthew. No, it is not a repetition. There is a slight variation here. Matthew 24 only has a fig tree, but Luke 21: ‘Behold the fig tree, and all the trees’. So brothers, here we not only have the fig tree, but all the trees. Then the Lord said: *<sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near’.*

What then is the difference between the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke? The Gospel of Matthew mainly addresses the Jews. And Luke was the only Gentile writer among all the writers of the New Testament. And for that reason, the Gospel of Luke is mainly an address to the Gentiles. So here, our Lord did not use the word Son of Man. Luke used the words – The Kingdom of God. So remember that is the difference between these two gospels.

In the Gospel of Matthew, twelve disciples were sent out, but in the Gospel of Luke seventy disciples were sent out. Why? Because when we study the Gospel of Luke you know that when Jesus was born, the good news was for the nations. The gospel according to Luke addresses the Gentiles - the whole world. But Matthew only addresses the Jews – the elect. That is why it talks about the fig tree.

But why were seventy disciples sent out? Because according to chapter 10 of Genesis, when the Bible describes the world we are reminded of seventy nations there. These seventy nations represent the whole world, just like the twelve tribes representing the whole nation of Israel. That is why the Lord sent out twelve disciples. In the gospel according to Luke, He sent out 70 disciples, as if to the 70 nations of this world. So now you understand the difference between these two gospels?

So now, about the prophecy of our Lord - not only the fig tree here, but also all the trees. And they put forth leaves. Let us remember, not just the fig tree, but all the trees. What does that mean? If

the putting forth of leaves from the fig tree means the rebirth of the nation of Israel, then all the trees means the other ancient nations mentioned in the Bible will revive. According to the Lord's prophecy, the nation of Israel will be reborn, but there is no guarantee it will have a very peaceful time. According to Luke chapter 21, there will be a conflict, a confrontation. Not only will the nation of Israel be reborn, but also other ancient nations. Then you discover that history will repeat itself. If you study the Bible, you will see how these nations confronted each other. Then, before the Lord returns the same thing will happen again.

So brothers and sisters, for that reason we have not only the fig tree, but also the other trees. And now, we would like to know if it is possible to find out about one or two of these other trees from the Bible. Then we will know if this prophecy is really being fulfilled.

It is true that the Bible uses the fig tree to describe Israel. Now we ask, can we find any other tree mentioned in the Bible also representing a nation? If you can find it, then at least that nation should be reborn. Do you see that? This is very important key. Can we find such a tree? The fig tree – yes. Now all the trees; all the ancient nations mentioned in the Bible. But we want to be specific and try to find at least one or two. Then, we will see whether the Lord's prophecy is really being revealed, otherwise, the whole thing becomes general. But no, when our Lord spoke His prophetic word it was very, very specific. If you were to go through the whole Bible, you will find at least one other case.

Let us turn to Daniel 4:10-11, 13-14.

*<sup>13</sup>In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. <sup>14</sup>He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.'*

At first from its branches, but then look at verses 15 and 16.

*<sup>15</sup>But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. <sup>16</sup>Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.'*

I think we won't go into details here. It is very clear that a huge tree had been chopped down, and there was left only a stump. But the Bible says, let seven periods of time pass. That means after seven periods of time, that tree will be restored. Do you see that? That is the picture here.

Let me try to give you the conclusion without going into the details. That tree definitely represents Nebuchadnezzar. But it also represents the empire of Babylon. In Chapter 2 of Daniel, there was a great statue: golden head, silver shoulders and breast, bronze belly and iron feet. Of course, according to prophecies, that represents the four great empires in history. When Daniel explained the golden head, he said 'You are the golden head'. That refers to Nebuchadnezzar.

But that golden head also refers to the Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar is only a representation of that empire. Now, the tree in chapter 4, on one hand represents Nebuchadnezzar, and one day he will become mad and will be out of his mind. But after seven periods of time, he will come back to his senses. So that prophecy applied to Nebuchadnezzar. But in the book of Daniel, there are always double references. The golden head refers to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. Similarly, the tree is referring to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. When applied to Nebuchadnezzar, it means that one day his mind will be restored. But when you apply it to the empire of Babylon, what does that mean?

First, that tree ought to be chopped down, and that happened 539 BC. God used Cyrus, the Persian king to chop down that tree. For many years the stump was there. That is why we have the Babylon of history. Babylon had gone into history. Do you see that? But according to the Bible, after seven periods of time that tree will be restored. What does that mean? It means that it will put forth its leaves, as our Lord had predicted. Do you see that? A tree that had already been chopped down to its stump, after so many years, will put forth its leaves again. Then you know that the Kingdom of God is near.

So brothers, what is meant by seven periods of time? You probably don't understand that. But if you go to Revelation, you will get the answer. This is because Revelation also talks about periods of time. A period of time equals 360 days. So, seven periods of time, means 2520 days. What does this mean? After 2520 days, the mind of Nebuchadnezzar will be restored, and that was fulfilled in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. But if this were to apply to the empire of Babylon, remember, that the tree was chopped down only after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. It cannot be 2520 days because that only applied to Nebuchadnezzar. Another possibility is 2520 years. If this is true, it is very

interesting. The tree was chopped down 539 years before Christ. A simple calculation,  $2520+539$ , what do we have? 1981 AD.

In 1981, there was a war between Iraq and Iran. We know it very well. According to the Bible, today's Iraq was ancient Babylon. Today's Iran was ancient Persia. Now, in 1981 you have a war between Iraq and Iran. Then we will ask, how long ago? Let me put it this way, strictly speaking this was the second encounter between Iraq and Iran. In 539 years BC, there was a war between Persia and Babylon. So strictly speaking, in 1981 was the second encounter between these two nations. The first encounter was in 539 BC, and then the second encounter in 1981. How many years do we have between the first and second confrontation? 2520 years.

When was Saddam Hussein in power? 1979. Around 1981, he dared to start a war between Iraq and Iran. Western Nations like the United States or the European countries were choosing between two evils. Finally, they chose to support Iraq, and because of this, Iraq became greater and greater, and it became one of the important powers in the world. In the first Persian Gulf War, Iraq dared to challenge the whole world. That war was against 35 nations. Even though Iraq suffered a defeat, old President Bush lost his election.

Now you have the second Persian Gulf War, and because of Saddam Hussein the whole world was split. It was the first time in history 600 cities had anti-war demonstrations. In London there were 750,000 people on the streets. In Rome there was a million people on the streets. Even the Vatican spoke out.

Now who is Saddam Hussein? If you look back you will put a question mark over whether the Babylonian power was revived in 1979 or 1981. Now remember, not only the fig tree, but also other trees will put forth leaves, then you know the kingdom of God is near. Now you understand why in the Garden of Eden there were two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the Bible, you always have a tale of two cities: Jerusalem and Babylon. At the end of Revelation there is: '*Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen*'. And finally, Jerusalem comes down from heaven. In 1948, the nation of Israel was reborn. But according to the Gospel of Luke, there will be confrontation, and for that reason we now see with our very own eyes, that the tree which had been chopped down, puts forth leaves after 2520 years.

It was the same with the fig tree. The first time the people of Israel came back to Jerusalem was about 600 BC, after seventy years of captivity they returned to Jerusalem. But in 1948, they came back again, just like the tree of Babylon. How many years have gone by? 2520 years.

But the difference is this. With Babylon it is 2520 solar years. But with Israel it is 2520 prophetic years. But no matter what, when Israel was reborn, another power also rose up in the Middle East. Now you understand why in the conflict between Israel and Palestinians, so many Palestinians died because of it. Saddam Hussein used to send a person to greet that person and give him at least \$10,000. Remember how Saddam Hussein called for volunteers to liberate Palestine. Within a month Saddam Hussein called six million volunteers, including two million women.

Let us remember, that was what happened. In the first Persian Gulf War, it was supposed to be the war between Iraq and Kuwait. It was nothing to do with Israel. Yet, Israel suffered thirty-nine SCUD missiles. If we know the word of God, we know what is happening today. Let us go back to Matthew 24:25: *'Behold, I have told you in advance.'* So brothers, that is why we need the prophetic word. The Lord has already told us in advance. What does this mean? God has almost finished His work. If God's work is to obtain a change in us, transforming us into the image of Christ, our time is running out. We ought to wake up, because the Lord has said: *'Behold, I have told you in advance'*.

I think this is the word for now. Tonight we will continue. We pray that the Lord will speak to our hearts. That He will work His wonderful works. There are only twenty events yet to be fulfilled, and some of them are being fulfilled. We have experienced two Persian Gulf wars, and all these events simply remind us, not only the fig tree is putting forth its leaves, but also all other trees. At least, the tree in Daniel 4. May the Lord really speak to our hearts. Let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we really commit this word into your hands. We pray you will use these words to wake us up. Let us rise up and follow you. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Portsmouth – 6.15pm**

Revelation 18:2, 11-13.

*‘<sup>2</sup>With a mighty voice he shouted:*

*“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”*

*‘<sup>11</sup>The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more – <sup>12</sup>cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; <sup>13</sup>cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies of souls of men.’*

These are the verses for the moment. Let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we thank you so much that you spoke to us today, now we pray you will continue to speak to us. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

We have just read Chapter 18 of Revelation. We know when we reach Chapter 17 or 18, Revelation has almost come to the end. Now, if you check with the time when these events happened, you remember in Revelation you have seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials. These actually are the serious events described by God; from the time of the ascension of our Lord, all the way to the coming back of our Lord. So you find the timetable here. A series of events will happen from the ascension of our Lord, all the way to the coming back of our Lord.

So you see that all the events will happen in that order. Following the first seal, you have the second, third and so on. When you come to the seventh seal, then you discover there are more events in that seal. So we are told there will be seven trumpets. This is the beginning of tribulation.

Now the first four trumpets speak of tribulation. Then the last three trumpets speak of Great Tribulation. Now roughly, the first four trumpets last three and a half years. Then the last three trumpets last another three and a half years. Because in the last three trumpets John used the

description: ‘*Woe, woe, woe*’, each woe corresponds to the event that is connected to the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. So now we have not just tribulation, but also woe. This is great tribulation.

Of course the Great Tribulation will reach the peak while you are at the seventh trumpet. Then to our surprise in that last trumpet again you find seven events. You have the first, second and third vials, to the seventh vial. So when we come to the seventh vial, now there will be a global earthquake. Not a local one, but all the great metropolitan cities in this planet will be shaken. The City of Jerusalem will be broken into three pieces. Then you remember the hill of Judea, now because of the earthquake, will become a valley.

Now you know Jerusalem is surrounded by many hills. And some of the hills will be translated just into the sea; that is the Great Sea or Mediterranean Sea. Today if you visit Mount Moriah, you know that Mount Moriah is the temple mount today. Today, there are two mosques there. But before the Lord’s return, the third temple will be built. So when that happens then you won’t find mosques on that temple mount any more. And because that temple is very important because the Messiah will enter into that temple. So we believe the temple of God will be reconstructed, will be rebuilt.

But then because of this last global earthquake, somehow the temple mount will be pushed up. So then it will become the highest mountain in that area. Now today if you visit Israel or Jerusalem, you will find the temple mount is not the highest mountain. So you see because of this last global earthquake, and you see there will be a great change on this planet.

One of the reasons why we have a global earthquake is because the feet of our Lord Jesus will be upon the Mount of Olives. Because his feet are stepping on the Mount of Olives, the Mount of Olives cannot stand or contain that power, and because of that it splits into two halves - one moving north, the other part moving south. Then a valley will be created in the direction of the east and the west.

At that time the whole world will be against Israel. We will be in the midst of the last world war – Armageddon. So when you discover the multi-nation army invading Jerusalem, it will be a hopeless case for the people of Jerusalem to escape – impossible. So then they never expect the deliverance will come from some other direction, which they never think or dream of.

Jewish people are always occupied with this earth. Their blessing is always an earthly blessing, so now you discover that Jewish people really build an empire. Now, in that empire you find Coca Cola, Hollywood and many other things. But anyway, you know that that is already an empire, but that empire means the earth blessings belong to them. So you have to be very careful in your business with Jewish friends. God blesses him so the money in your pocket will go to his pocket, because the Lord promised him the earthly blessing. But the Lord promised you and me the heavenly blessing.

You see when idols vanish, then we come to the presence of the Lord. Sometimes God has used SARS, war, and many other things. The people who used in Hong Kong were always self-sufficient. They never dreamed that one-day Hong Kong would be like today. But remember sometimes God really shakes our environment when our idols vanish. You know anything can become our idol – especially when we are most successful. Remember the world wants to offer you everything if you yield to this world. So anyway, you see that only sometimes, when the idols vanish, then we come back to the Lord.

So remember, it is true, that is why they never expect a deliverance from another dimension. One day the Jews will discover something, yet they can never buy that thing. They may be buying some portion of this world, but sometimes the most important things they just cannot buy with their money.

So when they reach to the very end of our natural resources, the feet of our Lord Jesus was on the Mount of Olives. And because the valley that will be created, then you discover the people in Jerusalem run for their lives through that valley, all the way in the direction of Jordan, today's Petra, a very important city in Jordan.

So brothers and sisters, remember the last global earthquake. Now one of the reasons you have that is because the feet of our Lord Jesus is upon the Mount of Olives. And the second coming of our Lord will cause the shaking of the earth, especially in the city of Jerusalem. So now we remember that when you come to that point, it means the seventh vial or bowl. Now you not only have a global war, but also have the global earthquake.

Remember, in the ancient time if you have a famine or pestilence, it is always local. In 1918 there was a new virus discovered at that time. That was a completely new virus. It meant that no one in this world had the resistance. Unfortunately that virus was transmitted through air. So, remember,

in 1918 mankind was facing the verge of being completely wiped out, annihilated from this planet, because no one had the resistance. Finally, between 20 million and 100 million of the population died because of that. Now that happened on this planet, that pestilence is global. It is called Spanish Virus, however, everywhere in this world they died. At that time remember I think the communication is not as advanced as today.

Now today the whole planet is being reduced to a village called Global Village. So some people they travel from Hong Kong to London, then Germany, and finally back to Hong Kong. You see then you will discover the virus can transmit very quickly.

Now this time we have SARS, again a new virus. Now normally this kind of virus happens to human beings, it is only a flu, that is all, and we used to having that. But unfortunately, we got something from the animals. Now, chromos virus dwells on human beings and also on animals. Now when these two viruses come together, because of some kind of mutation you produce a new virus. Again today you don't find any resistance. No resistance at all.

But fortunately, now today's virus is not transmitted through air. It is only transmitted through close contact through liquid drops. So today if you take airplane, you dare not to sneeze or cough because immediately people are very suspicious. So now you see fortunately it is not transmitted by air. So if it was transmitted by air, brothers, we would really be facing tribulation.

Remember, brothers and sisters, we are between the fourth seal and the fifth seal. Now when we come to the fourth seal, you remember that fourth horse: the name of that horse was death. So then we were told that a fourth of the world population would be gone, because of war, because of pestilence, because of famine, because of all these things. Now you put these things together, today we are almost at the fourth seal. Because today you have a war: terrorism. And now you see on September 11<sup>th</sup>, three thousand people were gone just like that.

Today you have Aids. Now what do we know about Aids is only the tip of the iceberg. So the only thing you don't know is how terrible is such a disease being transmitted now. And also cancers. Now according to medical research, every one out of four will get cancer. Actually the most recent research has upgraded that number to every one out of three ought to catch cancer. So if you put all these things together, including SARS, if today we have a new virus, how do you know 5 years it will not be something from mainland China, 10 years later from another corner of this world.

So brothers and sisters remember great tribulation is yet to come. However, even today between the fourth and fifth seal we were told one fourth of people will be just gone like that. The Bible doesn't call that tribulation. The first four trumpets tribulation, then the last 3 trumpets that is great tribulation. So you see it is different here.

But today, even before tribulation has arrived, brothers and sisters we already feel something. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, you discover the whole world has been shaken because of new terrorism. So you find United Airline claimed bankruptcy, then you discover even American Airlines will follow, and Air Canada is doing the same thing. Now because of SARS, Cathay Pacific is following. So brothers and sisters now we come to the time where everything is global. Then when we read the second seal you know it is a global war. Then when you come to the third horse it is actually a global famine. So there will be a global economic crisis. Not only just happening to Japan or South Korea, but one day it will visit every corner of this planet.

So brothers and sisters we know we are going in that direction. Today we haven't reached the seventh seal. But when we reach the seventh seal, then in the seventh seal we will find seven trumpets. Then when we come to the peak of Great Tribulation, that means that last trumpet, then we discover from heaven there will be the wrath of God poured out on this planet. So finally when we come to the seventh vial, there is a global earthquake. Then at the sixth vial, it will be the global war.

Do you see that brothers and sisters. Let me borrow a Chinese phrase that I don't know how to translate. Now the global war is \_\_. Then you discover the global earthquake is \_\_. So when we talk about \_\_, it is when it will come to the peak. When we come to the seventh vial, then you will hear a voice crying out: *'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great'*.

So by that time Babylon will be fallen. It is not London Bridge is falling down, but it is Babylon. brothers and sisters, what is Babylon here? Why does the Bible talk of it? We know Babylon has gone into history. Now we knew there was a Babylonian Empire 600 years before Christ. We know that. You know the people of Israel were captured into Babylon. So now you see the confrontation between Israel and Babylon even 600 years before Christ. Then 539BC you know that the empire of Babylon was destroyed by the Persian Empire. So then from that time on, this Babylonian Empire went into history. So either you read it from the Bible or the history books, that's it – Babylon is gone.

But then you discover we were told '*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great*'. Now from Chapters 17 and 18 you find the influence of Babylon is a global one. Chapter 17 is the religious Babylon. Chapter 18 is the political Babylon. Now you see that one-day the whole world, the religion, will become one, because Babylon is the mother of all religions. Now all the religions we know came from Babylon. One day they will go back to Babylon.

Now brothers and sisters, today we already see that happening. We were told that a cloned baby was born in the States and one was born in Japan, one was from the Netherlands. Now even today we don't know if this is true. But who was involved in this cloning business? One sect that was involved is the New Age movement. What is the New Age movement? This is part of religious Babylon – predicted in the Bible. You know Babylon in the Bible always is the imitation of Jerusalem. So you see that is why you have a tale of two cities in the Bible: Jerusalem versus Babylon.

Now what is Jerusalem? Jerusalem is built with stones, and God created these stones. But if you visit Babylon, now in that area you don't find any mountains. So you don't get any stones there. So how are you going to build Babylon? You have to make bricks. What are bricks? They are just imitations of stone. So do you see that? When God is doing something, the world religion tries to imitate what God is doing. Now you discover it looks like stone, but it is only brick. It is just an imitation. So remember this is a very important principle. You find the confrontation between the city of Jerusalem and the city of Babylon.

Now in the Gospel we have the offer of eternal life. And after we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour we will have eternal life. But now today, the New Age movement want to do exactly the same. They also try to offer people the eternal life. Their idea is to try and clone people. They expect one day the technique will be so advanced, then by that time before man has died, you try to clone him, and at the same time you try and download his memory into the new being. So by this way, you will receive eternal life. You will never die. So that is why you don't need the Gospel. That is Babylon. Do you see that? This is always the confrontation between Israel and Jerusalem. So remember, in Chapter 17 you have the religious Babylon, and its influence will be a global one.

But in Chapter 18 you have the political Babylon. Where is political Babylon? And more than that, we were told Babylon the great is fallen. So if you read on you discover, here you find one of the great, metropolitan cities of the world. And the city of Babylon will become a very important economic centre like London or Washington. According to the Bible here, it is in the territory of

Iraq today, and you discover there will be city called Babylon. That city is not Baghdad, it is Babylon. By that time you discover that this is great economic city.

So if you read verses 11, 12 and 13, now here you were told about the different things in Babylon. It is as if you receive a fax from Babylon, and in that fax Babylon tries to tell you what it can offer. So when you study verses 12 and 13, you can do it like reading a fax. Now this will tell you what the city of Babylon will offer you by that time. So we were told:

*‘<sup>12</sup> cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; <sup>13</sup>cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies of souls of men.’*

Now most importantly, and souls of men. So that is something to do with cloning. So if you study this list, now you can be sure one day in the territory of Iraq today, there will be a great city. This city will become a financial city, the financial capital of the world. It will be New York of the Middle East.

Now when will this happen? When will this city be fallen? According to Revelation, it will happen roughly on the last vial, when God pours out the last wrath. So now you can understand, not only you will find religious Babylon by that time, but also political Babylon and the city of Babylon. If you put this together we will call it Babylon at the end time. Now Babylon at the end time is a complicated place. You have economic and political compartments, and you also have a civil compartment.

So brothers and sisters, if this prophesy is going to be fulfilled, that means at the very end, according to the Bible, I am certain there will be a Babylon. But you can be sure this can will not be the Babylon of history. That has already gone. That tree has been chopped off in 538 years BC. But now, brothers and sisters, according to Revelation, at the end time before the Lord's return you will see the influence of Babylon is still there. If it is only religious Babylon we say it is all right. But why is the civil Babylon still there? Do you see that? So when you study Revelation you know there will be Babylon at the end time.

So now we have one question. If Babylon has already gone into history, how come you have Babylon at the end time? Now you understand when our Lord said not only the fig tree will put forth its leaves, but also all other trees. So it means that all other trees will also put forth leaves. Some of the trees have been chopped down some time ago, but now when the nation of Israel was reborn, there you discover these ancient nations will also be revived.

So brothers, by Revelation, you know the word of our Lord was true and accurate. So not only Babylonian power that went into history, but also the city of Babylon lay in ruin for many years. If you visited Iraq 100 years ago, just as Mark Twain visited Palestine 100 years ago, if you did that, you would find that the city of Babylon was lying in ruins. You would find the name of Nebuchadnezzar everywhere. But it is all in ruins.

So brothers and sisters according to history the city of Babylon was in ruins. But according to Revelation there will be a great Babylon – there will be a financial centre in the Middle East. So all right, if this is true what happens then? Very simple, this means that somehow the Babylonian power will be revived. More than that, the city of Babylon should be rebuilt.

Now in reality, the city of Babylon is already being built. Remember in the ancient Babylon it took about 60 million bricks to build the wall, and don't forget brothers and sisters, today if you visit Iraq, you take a bus from Baghdad, probably around 50 minutes, you will reach a city called Babylon. Then you will find again the city wall was made of 60 million bricks.

But the difference today is this, you don't find the name Nebuchadnezzar, every six feet you will find the name Saddam Hussein. We don't know where Saddam Hussein is today, but if you visit Babylon, no matter what will be the future of Saddam Hussein, his name is already there. So that is why this city has been called the city of Nimrod in the Bible. Once upon a time it was called the city of Nebuchadnezzar. Now today, it is the city of Saddam Hussein. So remember one thing, according to the Bible the city of Babylon ought to be rebuilt.

Around 1990 that city was rebuilt. And not only Iraqis were building, but also many foreign labourers. There are many contributions from Chinese. So remember, that city is already there. So after this war, many Christians they have a dream that probably next year we can visit Babylon. Not only Babylon, but also the Garden of Eden. Not only that, but also Nineveh. So remember brothers and sisters, now we know that in that territory of Iraq today, there are many things that remind us of events in the Bible. You see that?

And for example, let us try to do a quick review. Remember, all the stories start from Abraham. Now where was the hometown of Abraham? Uru of Chaldea. Where is Uru of Chaldea? Remember during this war an American female soldier was rescued in a city called Nassyria. Not far from Nassyria you have Uru of Chaldea. So all the stories are from there.

Now Abraham has two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. Now Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael. Jewish people – the people of Israel, they were the descendants of Isaac. Now if you want to know what Abraham looks like, just look at the Arabs. If they have big noses then Abraham must have had a big nose. But if you want to know what Sarah looked like, just look at any Jews.

So now you see brothers and sisters, today the conflict between Arabs and Israel, that is all because of Abraham. Now the problem with this is that one-day Abraham got Ishmael through Haggai. He tried to help God to fulfil His will. Now to give birth to Ishmael means you use carnal means to fulfil God's means. He thought he was helping God, but from that time on the hatred between the two descendants was so deep, it even lasts till today. Do you see that?

So everything begins with Abraham. Actually Abraham is a real troublemaker. So you see if he did not give birth to Ishmael, then there would be no problem. So brothers we have to confront that. In Chinese there is a famous poem called \_\_\_. In this there is a phrase \_\_\_. Now actually I think that Abraham was the author of that poem. So even today you see the conflict in the Middle East.

So if today's story began with the story of Abraham, then Abraham began his journey from Uru of Chaldea. Now that was one of the great Babylonian cities. In the time of Abraham it was just like London, Paris or New York. The mathematics and science in the time of Abraham was so advanced, so let us remember that is how Abraham began his journey.

The God of glory appeared to Abraham. Now Abraham turned his back on the most advanced, most colourful world, at that time. He was the first one who crossed the Euphrates River. That is why he became the first Hebrew in the history of Mankind, because he was the first one to cross the Euphrates. From that time on, Babylon was behind him. Babylon is full of idols, but now Abraham believes there is only one God who creates Heaven and Earth. So because of that then you know that Abraham begins a New Life. Then later you see the people of Israel they live in Canaan. So that is the story. Do you see that?

So we know that Uruk of Chaldea was the hometown of Abraham. It was part of Babylon. Now today if you divide Iraq into the Northern and Southern parts, now the Northern part is Assyria in the Bible. So that is Biblical Assyria. Southern Iraq is Biblical Babylon. So remember this it is very important for your Bible Study.

So the people of Israel came from that side of the river. By the grace of God they were no longer in the world of idols. They came with Abraham to this side of the river. So brothers and sisters, that is why they became the chosen people of God. No wonder they are supposed to be the testimony of God himself. If you study the history of the Old Testament these are the most exciting parts. Because they are the testimony and because of the Bible, today we only know the true God and we only worship the true God. So thank God we become the heavenly descendants of Abraham.

So this story starts from Babylon. No wonder Babylon represents this world. And after we are saved and baptised, now there is a body of water between the world and us. So the world is far, far behind us. Isn't that wonderful? So this wonderful picture is to tell us how we are saved.

But there is still the Old Testament. There you find some tragedies happened among the people of Israel. So brothers what is the tragedy? They belong to the Lord, they believe there is only one god, but secretly they worship idols. That also happens to some of us. We are serving the true and living God. But unconsciously sometimes our work, our job, our study, our family can become idols.

What is the principle in an idol? Any thing, or person, that takes the place of God. So the history of earthly people actually reflects the history of the heavenly people. These people are supposed to worship the true God. Do you see that? That is why they are supposed to do. But unfortunately, secretly, they move their hearts towards the world, towards the idols. So they were not faithful to God. Now God loved them so much, he wanted to restore their situation. Do you see that? Now because they secretly worshiped the idols, so how can you heal such a disease? And for that reason, God had to use a drastic way to deal with it.

So for that reason, now you know finally, the people of Israel were captured into Babylon. Now why Babylon? Babylon is the land of idols. Now you want to worship idols, OK, how can that disease be cured? God let them be captured to the land of idols. Then you have enough idols in that land. Either you are awakened, or you are sleeping to all idols. Until you are sick of idols, then that disease will be cured.

Let me give you one illustration. When my youngest son was still young, he liked ice cream. So we have many ice creams in the freezer. But we told him: 'If you want it you have to let us know. You cannot just open it and take what you want. If you do that we consider it stealing'. One day we discovered that he really had done it by himself. We thought that was very serious. Now we know that we have to educate him and hopefully he will never do something like that again.

How are you going to punish him? How are you going to deal with him? Spanking is only one-way. But spanking is not the only way? So, one method is this. Now you like ice cream right. I want you to have enough of ice cream. Not only one, how about a second one? And then a third one. After he had the sixth or seventh he was trembling. Then from that time on he would never dare to touch ice cream again.

Remember that is exactly what happened in the history of Israel. So history will bear the witness. Now after the people of Israel came back from Babylon, their idol worshipping disease had been cured completely. That was a miracle brothers and sisters. Being captured to Babylon was actually the way of love. It was a great suffering for the people of Israel. They were far, far from their home. So my brothers and sisters, God knows how to educate his people.

You know the story. This story is the people of Israel captured to Babylon. This is only part of the story. If you study your history, the people of Israel have twelve tribes. Remember, the ten belong to the northern kingdom and two to the southern kingdom. Now two tribes were captured to Babylon 100 years later. You discover the ten tribes were captured first, they were captured to Assyria. Then 100 years later the two tribes were captured into Babylon.

After the ten tribes were captured to Assyria, they were lost. Now those two tribes they were captured to Babylon, but 70 years later they came back because of the two tribes, one was the tribe of Judah. So that is why they were called Jews. Now why they were called Jews is because they belong to these two tribes. So remember Israelites refers to all twelve tribes. So among the Israelites you have the Jews which are part of those that have come back from Babylon.

So now if you put these two events together, around 722BC then we know that 10 tribes were captured into Assyria which is today's Northern Iraq. Then 100 years later the 2 tribes were captured into Babylon which is today's Southern Iraq. So now it is very clear, despite the northern

10 tribes or the southern 2 tribes, historically they were all captured into Iraq today. That was the early history between Iraq and Israel. So we know that this is the Babylon of history.

Geographically speaking, southern Iraq is Babylon, but politically speaking, the Babylonian Empire not only covers southern Iraq, but also northern Iraq and also some other territories. But anyway, the original territories of Babylon is actually the area where Abraham came from. So my brothers and sisters, you know this belongs to the Babylon of history.

But then when we come to Revelation Chapter 17 and 18, what do we find? Here we find the Babylon of the End Times. So we are very clear of the 'Babylon of history' and the 'Babylon of the End Times'. It is all in the Bible. And we know in the history how the people of Israel were captured into Babylon.

Now the same thing will happen to the end time. After Babylon is fallen, then the New Jerusalem descends from heaven. So now you see today the spiritual principle is being reflected in the world today.

So we have two ends: one end in history, another at the End Times. It is clear from the Bible. For example if you study Jeremiah, there you have the prophecy about Babylon. How it will be fallen, how it will be destroyed. That part of the prophecy was fulfilled 539BC. But now brothers, when we come to Revelation we know that this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. So this prophecy is one of the 20 prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

So now we ask one question. How about today's Babylon? Maybe Babylon does not exist today. If it exists today, it is no longer the Babylon of history, it definitely is Babylon at the end times. If Babylon is already here, it means we are at the end times.

So brothers and sisters, since 1948 you see how the fig tree is putting forth leaves. Around 1981 you discover another tree, the tree of Babylon is putting forth leaves. So what will happen today, it simply tells us we are very near to the end times. Now before we conclude the meeting tonight, let me borrow a few minutes to read very quickly. I have to do it very quickly. If we come back to Isaiah for example. Isaiah 13:1:

*'An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:'*

Remember this Babylon is not the Babylon of history. It is Babylon which is very close to the End Times. Now the End Times are yet to come, so this is something about Babylon, before the Lord's return. Somehow this Babylon reminds us of something happening today. Do you see that? Now the records in chapter 13 of Isaiah are between the Babylon of history and the Babylon of the End Times. So if you read this you will find that Babylon will play an important role. Then you read verse 6.

*<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the Lord is near.'*

Now the day of the Lord's refers to great tribulation. Now that day is near, means that it is yet to come. So now if Babylon is already there, this is not Babylon at the End Times, it is Babylon before the end times, which is not the Babylon of history. So now if you read from verse 1 to verse 5, we say the day of the Lord is near, but is yet to come. So now somehow we discover some events that have happened in the territory of Iraq today being predicted here. Then we find something very interesting. Now you go home and read from verse 2 to verse 5. Now verse 4:

*<sup>4</sup>Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The Lord Almighty is mustering an army for war.'*

According to the Bible there will be a battle in the territory of today's Iraq. Now that battle was between Babylon and the many nations. Now verse 5 is most amazing:

*<sup>5</sup>They come from faraway lands, from the ends of heavens.'*

As far as Iraq is concerned, the army from United States, the army from Canada, actually these are the people coming from the far countries, from the horizons. So what does this mean? This means there will be war in the territory of Iraq which will become a global one. Now brothers and sisters this definitely reminds you of the first Persian Gulf War. This means that the first Persian Gulf War is the initial and partial fulfilment of the prophecy here. Yet this prophecy is not completely fulfilled. How do we know? If you read the second half of verse 5:

*<sup>5</sup>The Lord and the weapons of His wrath to destroy the whole country.'*

This part was not fulfilled in the first Persian Gulf War. So what does that mean? It means the battle in that part of the world will continue to the very end of the days. So what does that mean? It means that there will also be Gulf War 2. Today we have Gulf War 2, but again the end day has not come yet. You must have a Gulf War 3 or 4. Now we don't know which one. Now finally, Fallen is Babylon the Great.

So brothers and sisters do you see that. This is the initial and partial fulfilment of the prophecy. Let me give you another portion. Let us go to Jeremiah 50:21. Now again, another battle in the territory of today's Iraq is predicted. But remember, again this prophecy was not fulfilled in history. Let us read verse 21, 22, 23.

*<sup>21</sup>Attack the land of Merathaim and those who live in Pekod.'*

*<sup>22</sup>The noise of battle is in the land, the noise of great destruction! <sup>23</sup>How broken and shattered is the hammer of the whole earth! How desolate is Babylon among the nations!'*

Now something very interesting here. If you study the Bible, Babylon is always called the land of Shinah. Now that is where Abraham came from. Do you see that? And you know the only city that can represent Babylon is Babylon. Now here we find another city called Pekod. Do you see that? Now there is also the land of Merathaim: go up against it. So now, it is very interesting. Somehow this means that it belongs to a different time period. Again you have a battle here because you go against it. What is the land of Merathaim? What is this place? According to Bible scholars, it refers to the area of the Persian Gulf. So this war is actually the Persian Gulf War in the Bible. Now remember, this Merathaim actually refers to a bitter river near the Persian Gulf. Now coalition forces have definitely gone through it.

So brothers and sisters, something very interesting, the land of Merathaim refers to southern Babylon. Now southern Iraq, or southern Babylon, is called Shinah. So the land of Merathaim is limited to southern Babylon. It refers to the Southern Gulf area. What is Pekod? This refers to the area east of the Tigris River.

Now remember, that the history of Babylon is always along the Euphrates River. So now you know that the river of Euphrates flows through Babylon. For the Babylon of history you know that it was the city of Babylon, not Pekod. Here we discover that somehow the city of Babylon has vanished in

some sense. So now you see the political centre shifts from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Then you must find a city. Pekod can be applied to either a city or a region.

But anyway, this is something to do with the Tigris River. Now we know that today's Baghdad is on the Tigris. This city was built 1300 years ago. Babylon was a famous square city. And then we know that Baghdad is a round city. So brothers and sisters, this is the initial and partial fulfilment today, because we know either Persian Gulf War 1 or Persian Gulf War 2 happened in that area.

First Gulf War you have Kuwait. But now this time we have the present war. The important thing is this: what does God say? You go up against it. If you go up against it that means this attack is from the South. But if you know history very well, you know the Babylonian Empire was destroyed by the enemy from the North. Isn't that wonderful brothers and sisters. Now the present war we know that all the army, all the airplanes, come from the South. The United States tried to gain way from Turkey, but was not successful. Finally, he even wanted the Fourth Infantry, originally to take the route from the North.

Now the idea of the United States is to try to rebuild Iraq, not to destroy it. So remember that is why they bombed some buildings in a surgical way. So the idea is to change the regime not the country. So you see they don't aim at the oil. They want one day that Iraq will become very prosperous. Think about it, with the superpower today, to annihilate Iraq is very simple. If that happens, then you see we are in trouble. But very interesting, this war only changes the regime. Everything else will be untouched. What does that mean? It means Iraq is going to continue.

After Japan and German were conquered, they no longer spent their money on the military. Instead, they concentrate their efforts on their economy. Now we know that both Japan and Germany become economic powers in the world. Don't forget, they don't have the condition of Iraq. Now the resource of oil of Iraq is well known. So with that condition you can image, suppose they concentrate in developing their economy. No more money with weapons of mass destruction, money on war.

Now brothers and sisters, you can see, just give Iraq 10 years. With your common sense you know from the condition of Iraq, that Japan and Germany did not have, then you find that most likely Iraq will become a very important economic power in the Middle East. Then who knows, one day according to the Bible, the city of Babylon will become a very important economic city. Then you

will have, fallen is Babylon the great. Then you find the prophecy of the Revelation will be wonderfully fulfilled.

I'm going to conclude here. But lastly let me give you one important note. If you study Isaiah 13, then you see God will use the Meads to finally destroy Babylon. So when you discover Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen, who was doing it. We know that according to Isaiah 13, the Meads will do it. Now who are the Meads? They are the Kurds today. So now you know those Kurds live in Northern Iraq. These are the people who are still homeless today. According to the Bible when all the trees will put forth their leaves, not only Babylon, but also the other trees will be restored.

For that reason we have to watch very carefully. So now you have to pay attention to the development of the Kurds, because sooner or later then will have their own nation. There will be the rebirth of the power of the Meads. Finally, they will become a vast nation. Then you will find that God will use them and Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen.

So brothers and sisters our time is gone, but no matter what, now you should have a very clear picture here. Our Lord said when the fig tree and all the other trees put forth their leaves, then you know that summer is very near. Not only the fig tree, but also the Babylonian power, also the Meads, also the Roman Empire, also the Ottoman Empire. Now brothers and sisters, if you study the Bible carefully, they will all rise up and confront with Israel. So this is the Biblical prophecy and this is the prophetic word of Christ. Behold I have told you in advance.

Now my brothers and sisters, John remembered that word: Behold I have told you in advance. When John saw how the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Roman soldiers, then he obeyed the word of Christ. He ran for his life, he escaped the tribulation.

The same thing with you and me today. Now brothers and sisters we know that Great Tribulation is approaching. We are almost at the end time. We have witnessed 2 Gulf Wars. We don't know when will be the third. We have witnessed the storm of SARS. Now there is a brand new virus. We don't know what will happen in two years, three years, or ten years time. Remember, brothers and sisters that this world will pass away.

If you know a bank will bankrupt soon, do you still put your money in that bank? If you know that this world will finish very soon, do you still invest you whole life in this world? If our Lord is really coming back soon, remember, what our Lord said: Behold I have told you in advance. So

brothers and sisters when we see all these things happen. We are waiting for the time of Rapture. When the Saints are raptured before tribulation, what does that mean? It means we are going to escape the tribulation. So my brothers we are not waiting for death we are waiting to be raptured.

There is a car sticker: 'In case of rapture, this car will be unmanned'. It means don't get too close, don't hit me. So brothers and sisters are you ready? When you drive a car are you ready? When you are in your business are you ready? When you are a housewife are you ready?

Now this problem is no longer an academic one, this is very practical. Remember, this is something to do with our generation and the generation of our children. So brothers and sisters, that day is very, very near. So now you see many of the prophecies being fulfilled before our eyes. So may the Lord really speak to our hearts. We pray that today's message will carry some weight in our lives. Let us rise up and follow our Lord. Let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we commit this word into your hands. Make it clear to everyone of us. You translate all these words into the level that we can understand. Make us ready Lord; we are ready for your return. We are ready to be raptured by you, to be taken away by you. We are not waiting for death, we are waiting for your coming. Dear Lord, we pray that you make your church ready, make your bride ready, that we may be mature enough to meet our heavenly bridegroom. Speak to our hearts Lord. In the name of Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.*

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Southampton – 10am**

Matthew 24:32-34.

*<sup>32</sup>Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the doors. <sup>34</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*

Luke 21:29-32.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*

These are the verses for the moment; let us look to the Lord.

Dear Lord, we thank you that once again you give us this golden opportunity to be at your feet. We want to be like Mary listening to your word. We pray that Lord you speak to our hearts. Not only the word of life, also your prophetic word. We thank you Lord for these words. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.

Now as you know yesterday we tried to share on the prophetic word of Christ. Now in the beginning of the gospel according to Matthew we have Chapters 5-7, that is the Sermon on the Mount. This is the word of life to teach us how to live a Christian life, how to turn another cheek, how to give another garment, and how to walk the second mile. So in those three chapters we also are told how to pray the Lord’s Prayer. We will pray: may your kingdom come, and also give us our daily bread, and so on and so forth. So these words are for us so we know how to live a Christian life.

Then when we come to the last part of Matthew: 23-25, we discover here in these chapters we have the prophetic words of Christ. Now we already mentioned that there about 1800 prophecies in the Bible. Then out of these 1800 prophecies you are able to have 737 independent events predicted. So I would like you young people especially to remember that more than 27% of the Bible belongs

to prophetic words. Among these 737 independent events predicted, we will find 590 major events. Then we ask how many of these events were fulfilled? So yesterday we mentioned actually 570 out of 590 had been fulfilled. So, the rate of fulfilment is very high, almost 97%.

But actually, it is more than that because the last 20 events are being fulfilled. For example, according to this prophecies there will be Babylon at the end time. Now in the Persian Gulf War 1 and Persian Gulf War 2 we have already seen the initial and partial fulfilment of God's prophecy. So this means that we indeed are at the End Times. God has almost finished his work. When God stops his work, then the time will come to the very end. So we are indeed in the last page of human history.

So actually this period is most challenging and also the most exciting period. For that reason I think that we should know more about the prophetic word of Christ because the Lord said: '*Behold I have told you in advance*'. The prophecy is not just something academic, because that is really something to do with our experience. Our time is almost running out. We have short, limited time; God is about to conclude his work. So now we want to know what is the last phase of God's work.

Now among these 1800 prophecies, how do we explain them? Because there are 1800 prophecies, how do you summarise these 1800 prophecies? I think you know about the movement of the heavenly bodies. If you know a bit about Physics, all the heavenly bodies move in an elliptical orbit. How do you get an elliptical orbit? It means that you have two centres of focus. Now if you have a circular motion, then you have only 1 centre. But if you have an ellipse, that means you have a dual centre. When you see something moving in elliptical orbit there are many points there. How do we explain all these points? If you know about Physics, actually the two focal points will explain everything.

So the same thing with these 1800 prophecies. Now this simply tells us the movement of God in history – that movement is the heavenly movement. So again now you are able to explain these 1800 prophecies by two focal points. What are the two focal points? It depends on what are the centres of God's work in history. Not just one centre, it is dual centred. What are the dual centres? It means that all these 1800 prophecies are surrounding these 2 focal points.

Now if you know the word of Salvation, you know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of mankind. Something interesting, if you study the history of redemption, 2000 years ago the word became flesh. That was definitely a very important focal point in the history of mankind. You see that was

the first coming of our Lord. When he first came he came as the Lamb of God. He died for us on the cross. He wants to be the Saviour of Mankind. But that is not all, because the salvation we have is a complete salvation.

Now the first time when our Lord Jesus came down to this earth, in his timetable, remember, He first tried to solve the problem of our spirit and soul. So He tried to solve all kinds of spiritual problems. For example, we are sinners. Now how will our sins be dealt with? So now you see Christ will offer us the solution. So thank God, after you believe in the Lord Jesus, there is no more condemnation. Thank the Lord, now we are being delivered from the judgment of sin. That is why we have peace of life, why we have a joyful life.

So now while we live on this earth we will have a wonderful testimony to this world. Then you discover even we have been delivered from the judgment of sin. But we know the presence of sin is still here. The flesh is still with us. So what you are going to do then? Thank God, Christ lives in us. Because of that life, that life that wins, that victorious life will lead us to overcome the sin. So the presence of sin is still there, but we are no longer under its power. We don't have to sin.

Any medical doctor will tell you that inside your mouth are lots of germs. That doesn't mean you have to be sick. Only when your mouth is bleeding then you become sick. Now because the power of life is such that you know even though the germs are in my mouth, but I am still very healthy. Now you say this person is healthy, doesn't mean he has no germs or no virus. But because his life is so rich, so high, then he overcomes the germs. We say he is very healthy.

It is the same thing after we are saved. Now that doesn't mean that the presence of sin is already away from us, but we don't have to sin. You see that? Now what do we say because this man has been delivered from the power of sin. How are we going to describe that person? We say he is holy. Do you see that? Holiness is equivalent to the health; the health to the body is just like the holiness to our spirit.

So now you understand our salvation in the past, present and future. While we talk about the salvation in the past, thank God, once we receive Jesus Christ as saviour, there is no more condemnation. We have been delivered from the judgment of sin. Now what happens today after we are saved? Now even though the germs are with us, some virus, or even some cancer cells. But it is all right. You see this life still goes on. Why? Because here you find the power of life overcomes the germs. So by the light within us, that light is the life of Christ; that victorious life,

risen life, powerful life. Now, because of that life we are able to overcome, be delivered, from the power of sin.

So you see? In the beginning there was the judgment of sin, now the power of sin. No matter what, we are more than conquerors. But now another thing: when will we be delivered from our present sin? We have to wait for our Lord's return. Then when he comes back again our mortal body will be transformed. We will be clothed with a spiritual body. Then by that time the present sin will leave us forever, and we will be like our Lord.

So now you understand the full salvation not only covers the past, but also the present and the future. Two thousand years ago Christ died for us on the cross. That is historical, but today Christ is in us, and leads us into a victorious life. Now that is what happened, that is present – Christ of history and Christ in us. So now you remember this is all part of the work of Christ. That is all part of our salvation.

But how about our body? You still discover our outward body is decaying day by day. So we are still getting old and gradually when you look at your mirror you know you are getting old. Even if you have received Christ as your Saviour, even today with Christ as your life living in you, but somehow you have deep feeling – outward man is decaying. So what is our salvation, what is our redemption? That is why Bible says we are waiting for the redemption of our body. Now that redemption only is when the feet of Jesus is upon the Mount of Olives. So this means that only when the Lord returns and we know that our body will be transfigured.

So brothers and sisters, now for that reason when we talk about salvation we cannot just talk about how Jesus Christ died for us on the cross. Definitely that was a focal point in history. But brothers if there was only one focal point our salvation, it is still not complete. Do you see that? A complete salvation means this, not only will we be delivered from the judgment of sin, but also from the power of sin, and also the present sin. So for that reason, we not only look backward to see the cross, 2000 years ago (that was a focal point of history), but more than that, we are looking forward for our Lord's return.

Why we are waiting for His coming back? Because only when He is coming back we will be delivered from the presence of sin. Then we will be glorified; then we will be just like who He is. So my brothers this is wonderful hope. That is why the bible says this is the hope of glory. So for

that reason after we receive Jesus Christ we are with a wonderful hope. Our golden days are still yet to come.

Thank the Lord, our golden day has already begun the moment we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Now that our glorious day has already begun, and now we have heaven on earth. This is only the beginning. According to the Bible our golden day is yet to come. Our golden day is today, but yet it is in the future. So it means we are waiting. One day our Lord will come back and receive us.

So now you discover there are two focal points in the history of redemption. Not only the Lord's first coming, but also the Lord's second coming. Now remember, even we have 1800 prophecies; actually they are surrounding on these 2 focal points. So of them surrounding the first focal point: for example in the Old Testament you do find 333 prophecies about the Lord's first coming. You see how our Lord will be born from virgin birth. Then how He died for us on the cross, and how He was buried with a wealthy person. So all this before our Lord was born in Bethlehem.

In Old Testament you already have 333 prophecies to tell us about the first coming of our Lord. Now for every normal person on this earth, we always have our life first, then we will have our biography. Life stories are always written after the life is almost complete. So the life and then the biography. Now only our Lord Jesus was different, and you discover He had a biography first; then His life was according to that biography.

Let me use another illustration. Now we have our life first then you have a videotape of our life. But with our Lord Jesus, He had a videotape first, then the life. Now the most important thing is this videotape was especially in the hand of the Jews, those who said 'Crucify him crucify him'. Even today they still reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Every Saturday they read the Old Testament, when they read Isaiah, for example. Suppose this week they read Chapter 52, then the next Saturday they are supposed to read Isaiah 53, but very interesting, they just skip Isaiah 53. You ask all those Rabbis, your Jewish friends – from Chapter 53 immediately they jump to chapter 54. Why they don't want to read Isaiah 53, because Isaiah 53 is about how our Lord died for us on the cross. So you see brothers and sisters, remember this videotape, or this biography, is in the hands of those who said 'Crucify him, crucify him'. So this is indeed a powerful testimony.

So now you understand, of about 1800 prophecies, you find at least 333 prophecies about the Lord's first coming. It is very easy for you to remember. Now the Anti-Christ number is 666, so if you

divide by 2, 333. This is the number of the prophecies about the Lord's first coming. So now you can see some of the prophecies surrounding the first coming. And you also find some other class of prophecies surrounding the second focal point – that is about the Lord's second coming.

There are two books in the Bible, one is Daniel, and another is Revelation. Now according to what we have shared, now you will put Daniel on one of the focal points, and then Revelation on another focal point. So in another word, in the book of Daniel it will give you mainly the prophecy about the Lord's first coming. Then when you come to Revelation, you remember most of the events there are about the Lord's second coming.

So brothers and sisters you can divide your prophecies into two classes, because there are two focal points in the history of salvation. So I think this is very important, and then when you come to Revelation, where is the source of this revelation? You can derive them from the prophetic word of Christ. Now, especially Matthew 24:32: *'<sup>32</sup>Now learn this lesson from the fig tree.'*

Now yesterday I already explained to you, the fig tree represents the nation of Israel. *'<sup>32</sup>As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.'* Now I already explained yesterday, you remember before our Lord spoke this prophecy, one early morning he went out towards Jerusalem. And he saw a fig tree from a distance, full of leaves, so he was expecting some fruit there. To his surprise he couldn't find any fruit, because we were told that our Lord Jesus was hungry. You can't imagine how Martha would let the Lord Jesus go out without breakfast, so that hunger was not a biological one. That hunger was a spiritual one.

Why? Because that fig tree is not just a fig tree, that fig tree represents the nation of Israel, so remember our Lord was very disappointed with that nation. It has only appearance but no reality. This is pretension, this is misleading, now my brothers if God really loves the Israelites, so then our Lord will make Israel one, inside or outside. Since there is no reality there, so our Lord cursed that tree and then you remember how that tree was withered from the root. So that was the prophecy by action, not by root, and that prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled in 70AD. You remember the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Then the nation of Israel disappeared from this planet. So for more than 1800 years, the people of Israel wondered in this world without a home.

According to political science, any nation if it has lost its identity for more than 500 years it can never be restored, impossible. But something really happened, a miracle ought to happen because what the Lord said: *'<sup>32</sup>As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that*

*summer is near.*' Think about it, that fig tree has already been cursed, so it is impossible for you to revive again. It only takes a miracle that one-day it will put forth leaves.

So this must be the work of God. When God twists his finger in history then something will happen that violates the law of political science. So after 1800 years, in 1948, the world witnessed the rebirth of the nation of Israel. So this is a wonderful fulfilment of the prophetic word of Christ. So if this is true that means our Lord is already at the doors. He is very, very close. How do you know we are at the end times? According to the prophetic words of Christ, He said: '*Behold, I have told you in advance*'.

Now after 1948, after the rebirth of the nation of Israel, now we ought to know that we are at the end time. The only thing we don't know is whether our Lord is at the first, second or third door. Now the third door means the entrance to the whole building, at least he is already there. Probably even much closer than that, probably already at the door next to your living room. Are you ready? So brothers and sisters, this is very important. Of course when we have earthquake, when we have a famine, when we have pestilence like SARS in Hong Kong, when all this happens we know that the Lord is coming soon. But this happens almost every century in history.

What was the most decisive factor for us to be sure that this is the end time? Very simple, that is when you see the putting forth of the leaves of the fig tree. So when that happens you are pretty sure. So brothers and sisters, all the prophecies about the second coming of our Lord, if you want to trace their source, you will come back to this prophecy. Then you ought to come back to Chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew. So I think this has already been established for more than half a century now.

Now brothers and sisters, if you look back and then you know that indeed the nation of Israel was reborn for more than 50 years. Now Arab nations around Israel, they always want to send people of Israel to the Mediterranean Sea. But no matter what, today we all witness the nation of Israel is already there. After more than 50 years it is now well established. No one has any doubt, even in the Arab world; they know that this is reality. Now it is very difficult for you to change that reality. But they also want the nation for the Palestinians.

So we never put any doubt about the existence of the nation of Israel. But now they believe that the Palestinians should co-exist with the nation of Israel. This is happening today, but no one challenges the fact that of the existence of the nation of Israel today. So we know that this

wonderful prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled. But that is not all, because yesterday we did go one step further. Now actually this morning and this evening we will go for another step.

So now we have to turn to Luke 21 again. Luke 21:29.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*

Now last night we mentioned, if you compare the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew. Here we all talk about the parable of the fig tree, but the difference is this. When we come to the Gospel according to Luke, our Lord said: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees’. In Matthew the Lord only mentions the fig tree because the Gospel of Matthew is mainly addressing the Jews. But the Gospel of Luke is different; this Gospel mainly addresses the world, the Gentiles.

So now the Lord not only talks about the nation of Israel – he not only talks about the fig tree, but also the other trees. So not only the fig tree will put forth leaves, but also all the other trees will put forth leaves. If the fig tree is putting forth its leaves, it means the rebirth of the nation of Israel, then all the trees putting forth their leaves simply means the restoration or revival of the ancient nations mentioned in the Bible.

So yesterday we tried to get an answer. Aside from the fig tree, we find any other trees in the Bible speaking of ancient nations. And that nation has been destroyed or that tree has been chopped off. So only a stump is left. Now if only a stump is left, again it takes the miracle one day that tree will be restored.

Yesterday we looked into the prophecy of Daniel, so we come to the conclusion. Now yes, in the Bible you do find another tree being chopped off, then after 7 periods of time, that tree will be revived again. Our answer was clear – that nation is the Babylonian Empire mentioned in the Bible. Where was the Babylonian Empire? It is the territory of Iraq today. So in other words, in that territory, in the ancient times, there was a power called the Babylonian Empire: one of the four great empires in the area of the Mediterranean Sea. Remember, that is ancient Babylon in the Bible. Do you see that? But then according to the Bible that tree has been chopped off.

Now according to history you know how the Babylonian Empire fell into the hands of the Persian Empire. So 539BC that tree has been chopped off. Now read your history you will get exactly the same answer, but then only the stump left. So that means Babylon went into history. So you can only find this empire in your history book. But don't forget, in Daniel Chapter 4, here we find a very important prophecy that the Babylonian empire will be restored after 7 periods of time.

So brothers and sisters we already mentioned, if you calculate from 539BC and you add 2520 years, you have 1981. And you know that Saddam Hussein was in power in 1979. So then you have a war between Iraq and Iran. Now Iraq was ancient Babylon, and Iran was ancient Persia. You have ancient war between Iraq and Iran in 539BC, and that time you know how the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire. Now 2520 years later, you have a second war between Iraq and Iran, or you have a second war between the Babylonian Empire and the Persian Empire.

So brothers and sisters, now we understand, these are the other trees aside from the fig tree. The Bible tells us it represents a nation, not only representing a nation, but the situation is the same. With the fig tree being cursed and withered from the root. Now the same thing with the tree of Babylon, being chopped off and only the stump left. But after 7 periods of time that tree will revive. So brothers, since the first Persian Gulf War, the world really witnessed the rise of ancient Babylon, so brothers and sisters, I think it is very clear why there is a conflict in the Middle East.

Now in Chinese there is a saying that 'One hand cannot clap'. So you need two hands to make the noise. So in 1948, it was true that the Nation of Israel was reborn, but this is just one hand. So now you need to wait until around 1980, then you find another power rising. So now you have a conflict in the Middle East. Of course you have the conflict also in the ancient time, and the people of Israel were captured into Babylon. Remember the story?

So that was the ancient conflict, and before that the people of Israel used to be the best farmers in the world. After they were captured into Babylon, now they learnt how to become merchants from Babylon. So they became the best businessmen in the world. Now today if you divide the wealth of the world into 3 parts, most likely Jewish people will get one. So where did they learn that technique? They learnt it from Babylon because there was such a conflict in Babylon.

Finally, we learn from history and also from Babylon you find how the people of Israel were captured into Babylon. But that happened many years ago – 2520 years ago. But 2520 years later, do you see that the fig tree begins to blossom? Now the other tree also puts forth its leaves. So

now you see that both of them exist. So now you understand why there are two trees in the Garden of Eden: Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life. Do you see that? More than that, there are also two cities in the Bible, Babylon versus Jerusalem. Do you see that?

Now after Babylon is fallen, fallen, then New Jerusalem will come down from heaven. So this is the old story, but don't forget, our Lord tried to tell us, before His return, that will happen again. Think about it. Suppose you don't find a nation of Israel, if the nation of Israel were still wondering in the world, now you see they will never be noticed, they will have no strength. But remember, according to our Lord's prophecy, since 1948, we all witnessed how the fig tree blossomed – the rebirth of nation of Israel.

Then around 1981 we witnessed the rise of the Babylonian Empire. This is only the initial fulfilment; this is only a partial fulfilment. So in front of our eyes, we have witnessed two wars already. This war will continue. You have the Gulf War 1; you also have Gulf War 2. And now Gulf War 2 has almost come to an end. But according to the Bible there will be Gulf War 3, or even 4, we don't know.

But anyway, from the Bible, we mentioned yesterday, now we know that we already have the beginning for the initial fulfilment and the partial fulfilment of the prophecy. So again, now we have established not only the nation of Israel, but also the Babylonian power. Do you see that? We all see their revival. We all see their rebirth: one roughly 1948, another one 1981. So that is the reason why today we see the turmoil and the conflict in the Middle East. But this morning, we want to go one step further.

Let us go to the Bible, let us try to find out whether we are able to get a list of all the trees. Now just the Babylonian power, not just Iraq. Now we want to find even more, whether it is possible that from the word of God we are able to obtain the conclusion. We not only see Iraq, Babylonian power is one of them. How about other powers, how about other ancient nations mentioned in the Bible? Whether they are going to revive? In what way they will revive?

So the answer definitely is from the word of God. We need the word of God to explain or interpret the word of God. So now we have to be very careful, not just by our wild guess. Now that is very dangerous. Now we need to have a very solid foundation. Now thank God, at least we have found Babylonian power is one of them. We not only have the Babylonian of history, we also have the Babylonian of the End Times. We already are at the End Times. So now we see the initial and

partial fulfilment of the prophecy. Now since the Lord said all the trees, there must be other powers apart from the Babylonian power. So we try to find out the answer.

First, we have to establish what are the ancient nations mentioned in the Bible that used to have a conflict with Israel. That is very important. For example, the Bible mentioned China, ancient China. But remember, ancient China never had a conflict with Israel. So this is not the answer we are looking for. Do you see that? We want to find out before the Lord's return, what are the other candidates? Who are the ancient nations in the Bible, and whether they have had a conflict with Israel. So we have to go the Bible and get an answer.

Now I think the best answer probably is from Isaiah. Now if you read the book of Isaiah, you know how many chapters? 66 Chapters. Now how many books in the Bible? 66 books. So many Bible scholars suggest that Isaiah is maybe a miniature of the whole Bible. Now how many books in the Old Testament?

I see many young people here; I should be able to ask them, but I don't want to embarrass them. Now you know there are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 New Testament books. So  $66 = 39 + 27$ . Now very interesting, this book of Isaiah is also divided into 2 parts: 39 chapters plus 27 chapters. These two parts are completely different, but the Holy Spirit joined them into one book. This time we have no time to get into that, we need a conference for that. But that conference will last for 1 month because we have 66 books there.

Now let me try to give you a glimpse of what happened in the first 39 books. Then, from Chapter 1 to chapter 35, that part is the prophetic word. That is the prophecies. When you come to 36-39, that part becomes the history part. You see there are two parts here. But put together you have 39 chapters.

Now very interesting, about prophecies, the first 12 chapters is about the fig tree – about Israel. Now read your Bible from chapter 1 to 12 – the fig tree, then from chapter 13-35 – all the trees. It means all those ancient nations mentioned in the Bible that were always having conflict with Israel. So now not only prophecies about Israel, but also prophecies about nations – ancient nations. Do you see that?

Now this is very interesting. First 12 chapters, fig tree, then all the trees. From the list of the names then you ought to be able to figure out what are the ancient nations of all the trees. Then you will be

able to see in what way this power will be revived. So you see brothers and sisters if you study Isaiah, in the first 39 chapters the structure there already gives you some answers, fig tree and all the trees. Then you have the four chapters about history.

Let us turn to chapter 13. After the fig tree, then we have chapter 13. We only read the subtitles now. 'Prophecies about Babylon'. Now think about it, this is one of the trees. That tree we are pretty sure of. We have already proved that yesterday. Babylon is already one of the trees. So the whole list begins with Babylon.

Alright, now if you turn to 14:29. Now this is about Philistines. Now actually Philistine is today Palestine. The people of Philistines are today's Palestinians. So here you have a prophecy about Palestinians. Now remember, at that time it was an ancient power.

Then chapter 15: people of Moab. Then Chapter 16, again Moab. Then Chapter 17 is about Damascus. Now Damascus is today's Syria. Now very interesting, if you study Daniel, some Bible scholars believe that the Anti-Christ will come out of Syria.

Now after the present war, now when Saddam Hussein fell, people begin to ask what is next. Then people begin to worry about Syria. So what will be the future of Syria? Remember, Syria used to be an important ancient nation. If you study Daniel, it is called the King of the North, it means Syria. The King of South, it means Egypt.

If you study the Bible, when you study Bible prophecies, here we find a list of names, of the ancient nations. Chapter 18: Manasseh to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is today's Egypt, especially Africa. Then Chapter 19, Egypt. Do you see that? And so on and so forth. Then when we come to chapter 23, the Fall of Tyre. That is today's Lebanon. See that? Syria and today's Lebanon. And then if you read between here and between 35, we don't have time to go through it, then you will find Edom. Now Edom, or Moab, is today's Jordan. Now don't forget these are all ancient nations. So in other words these are the candidates of all the trees.

So now brothers and sisters, if you want to know about not only the fig tree, but also all the other trees that will put forth its leaves, it means Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Babylon – which is today's Iraq. So this means someday their power will be revived. You see?

Now especially, if you read this portion all the way to 35, when you come to 32-35 then you already come to the very end time. So then you discover some scenarios about the Great Tribulation. We have already mentioned chapter 13 tells us about Babylon at the end times. Now the list here will tell us either Jordan, Egypt or Syria will play a very important role at the end times. So these are the nations at the End Times. But the Bible mentions their names because they were ancient.

But now Daniel tries to predict their future. So you see brothers, you have fig tree and all the trees. When you come to 36, all the way to 39, now Isaiah told us some history. That is very important, that part of the story is very important. You remember there was a king called Hezekiah. He was a very good king. One day he got a terminal disease. So he cried before the Lord. So he asked the Lord to give him extra time so the Lord did give him extra time – another 15 years. So we know that somehow his disease was wonderfully cured.

Now sometimes we ask 1 question: whether that prayer was correct or not. Now because he wants to lengthen his life, unfortunately, tragedy will happen some day. Yes it is wonderful, another 15 years for Hezekiah, but you know because of that the people of Israel one day were captured to Babylon. You know why? Because after the Babylonian people heard that he was wonderfully cured so they sent their messenger to Jerusalem. Hezekiah was so excited; he opened all his treasures to the messenger. Think about it, now Babylon has all the information about Israel. They don't need to send spies, Hezekiah just opened all the treasures.

Now you remember Isaiah came to visit Hezekiah. He asked him what he was doing. He said I showed him all my treasures. He was very proud; he was very happy. Now then the word of Isaiah came to him: Now just because you have opened your treasures to Babylon, your descendants will be captured into Babylon. That happened, that really happened, and the people of Israel were captured into Babylon.

Now something interesting, when Isaiah prophesied all those prophecies, at that time it was Assyria who was in power. Now, Assyria is today's northern Iraq. Babylon is today's southern Iraq. Anyway, it is all Iraq. But now, you see, when Isaiah wrote his book, that time Assyria was in power and actually at that time Babylon was very, very weak. Do you see that?

But now very interesting – Isaiah dared to predict. By that time, I think Babylon was just a small potato. Now it is very reasonable if people of Israel were being captured to Assyria. There is no reason why they ought to be captured to Babylon. So this is a wonderful prophecy. So from

chapter 13-35, in that list of all the trees, Babylon is number one. So you see brothers, now yesterday we have identified Babylon with Iraq today. Something already happened; we discovered the initial and partial fulfilment of this prophecy.

But now if you want to know what are all the trees, the name list is given there. I think it is very clear now. But that still is not enough. We need some confirmation. So aside from the book of Isaiah, you have the book of Jeremiah. Now how many chapters for the book of Jeremiah? Not 66, but also a very long one. So you have 52 chapters.

But very interesting brothers, Jeremiah was different from Isaiah. When Isaiah wrote his book, it was roughly 800 years before Christ. And Jeremiah is almost 600 years before Christ. You see there was 200 years in between. So when Jeremiah was writing the prophecy of Jeremiah, remember at that time people of Israel were about to be captured to Babylon. And you remember how the Babylonian army besieged the city of Jerusalem. Then Jeremiah began to prophecy.

Now his first address is addressed to the people of Israel. So he was confronting with the fig tree. Now when the city of Jerusalem is already being besieged, now then he prophecies. But the truth from the prophet will not be popular because there are other false prophets saying that the city of Jerusalem will never fall. And it was Jeremiah who said no. Not only the city of Jerusalem will fall, but the people of Israel definitely will be captured to Babylon. However, they will come back 70 years afterwards. So this is always Jeremiah's prophecy. But that prophecy definitely is not popular at all. But brothers and sisters, he always addressed the fig tree. From chapter 1 all the way to chapter 45, it is the fig tree here. Do you see that? Now you see there is a prophecy about the fig tree.

Let us turn to Chapter 46. Jeremiah 46:1.

*<sup>1</sup>This is the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations:*

Now after the fig tree, now you have all the trees. These again are the ancient nations. Alright, now the first nation mentioned is Egypt. Then Chapter 47, Palestine. 48 – you have Moab – today's Jordan. And then chapter 49: Ammon, again today's Jordan. Then you have the same chapter: Damascus, today's Syria. Then you have prophecy against Kedar: now today's Saudi Arabia. Do you see that? Now, these are all the trees. You have Jordan, Syria, you have Saudi Arabia. These were all ancient nations. Now there are prophecies about them.

Then you have Chapter 49:34, and you have Elam. Now most likely this is Persia, this is today's Iran. So if you read this list, you will find this list is very similar to the list of Isaiah. Chapter 50 and 51, Babylon. Now you see in this list, Babylon is last. In Isaiah's list Babylon is the first. But anyway, here we find the list of ancient nations mentioned in the Bible. So brothers, again we see the fig tree versus all the trees: Israel versus the nations. So now we have the big question mark. Is it possible that all these ancient nations will be revived?

Then we ask another question, in what way. Thank God, you discover the word of God gave us a very clear answer. However, before we conclude, Jeremiah's list and Isaiah's list are different. Now when Isaiah listed those names, those are the nations at the end times. Like Babylon at the end time, Jordan at the end time, and Saudi Arabia at the End Time. If you read Isaiah, when Isaiah predicts all these events, he tried to tell us how these ancient nations will play important roles at the end times. But then if you study Jeremiah, remember when Jeremiah predicted the future of all those nations, to Jeremiah it is in the future. But for us it is already in the history. Like Babylon of history. This you have to make it clear, this is our history.

So that is why in Isaiah's list, when you come to chapter 35 or 34, you have the Great Tribulation. So you know that these are the nations near the end Time. But when you come to the last chapter of Jeremiah, it ends up with some period in history. So chapter 52 will just tell us of the destruction of Jerusalem. That happened in history.

So you see brothers, now we conclude that, the nations in Jeremiah, these are the nations of history. But when Jeremiah wrote it, it was still in the future. These were prophecies at that time. Now because these prophecies were wonderfully fulfilled, for us this becomes history. But it was Isaiah, who told us at the End Times, these ancient nations will play a very important role.

So what does that mean, if the fig tree will revive, if the nation of Israel will be reborn? Then we will all witness those ancient nations listed in Isaiah, will play a very important role. Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, they will all play a very important role.

But now, how? In what way they will play an important role. Our time is gone for this morning. So this evening we will come back and we will find an answer from another portion of the word. And in that portion of the word, then the word will correlate all these nations together, to tell us in what

way they are confronting with Israel, and that process is wonderfully being fulfilled in front of our eyes.

We are so fortunate to understand this prophecy today. And then you discover how accurate is the prophetic word of Christ. Not only we are witnessing the rebirth of the nation of Israel, and you find these ancient nations they will revive, they will play a very important role before the Lord's return. So I can only stop here and tonight we are going to continue.

Now remember, this morning is very important, we have laid some very important foundations. So if possible you try to do some review, especially some young people, I may ask you. Just prepare, don't worry if I ask you something simple. I don't want to embarrass you. I wish that this won't be the last time I visit you. Now prophecies in the Bible are most fascinating. These prophecies are not for our curiosity, we need the prophetic word of Christ, then we will want to know the last phase of God's work. Now in what way we can contribute towards this. Our time is running out.

Now if this world really comes to the very end, just like a bank claiming bankruptcy. Are you still depositing something in that bank? Are you still putting your life in this world? If you really know our Lord is coming back very soon. Of course don't misunderstand me. Some young people may say, since our Lord is coming we don't have to study anymore, you will go to your parents and say this 'wonderful thing'. No, that is not true.

Remember, when our Lord returns, the Bible says, two people in a bed, and two people in the field, and two people are grinding the mill. What does that mean? Grinding the mill means in the morning, sleeping means in the night, to be in the field means noontime. Now, in one planet you have three times. What does that mean? It means the earth is round. Not only round, also spinning.

So that is why when our Lord returns, you find someone sleeping in bed at night, somebody working in the fields at noon, somebody grinding the mill in the morning. And you know when the Lord is coming back, you do find different times. But don't forget because two people are in the field, one of them will be taken away. What does that mean? When we are raptured when our Lord returns.

Sometimes we think that when our Lord returns I will be praying at that time, or I will be preaching at that time, then I just forget about everything. No, you just live your normal life, you just sleep as

usual, and you just work as usual. You study as usual. Now even you will get straight A's because you know the Lord is coming. So this is a challenge to everyone. So may the Lord really speak to our hearts, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Now hopefully the prophetic word of Christ will challenge us. Make us ready for his return. So may the Lord speak to our hearts. Let us pray.

*Dear Lord, may we commit these words into your hands. We really pray that you will translate these words into the level that each one of us can understand. Remember the young people here who are still in the morning of their life. How blessed are they because they have heard Your word. Now they are receiving their challenge. May they live their lives according to Your word. We not only ask You to bless their study we also pray that they may be a useful vessel in Your hand. Also bless their families. Remember many brothers in our midst, in different walks. We know your presence will be with us. We pray that these words, in these days, will sink very deeply into our hearts. Dear Lord we pray that some of us may be born because of these meetings. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Southampton – 6.45pm**

Let us turn to Luke Chapter 21:29-32.

***<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.***

These are the verses for the moment; let us look to the Lord once again in prayer.

*Dear Lord, we thank You so much because of Your mercy we may gather this way. Again, and again, You attract us with Yourself. Lord, we pray that tonight You will continue to work in our midst. We thank You for Your presence so far, but our desire tonight is that Lord, You will give us an open heaven, that we may see Your glory through these sacred pages. We are here and wait before You Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

Now we would like to continue what we have shared this morning. We now come to a very important point because our Lord has mentioned: ‘Behold the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.’ Now it becomes very clear. When the fig tree puts forth leaves, then we know that summer is near. Our Lord is at the door, and we know that prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled in 1948. But then our Lord reminds us, it is not just the fig tree, but all the trees.

So now we want to know what are these trees. These trees must be the ancient nations mentioned in the Bible. Now according to this prophecy they will also revive at the end times. So before the Lord’s return these ancient nations will again play a very important role. Now yesterday we found that one of the trees referred to Babylon. Now after 2520 years, we know the tree of Babylon has revived again. So now we see the initial and partial fulfilment of this wonderful prophecy. But this is only the beginning. Before the Lord’s return we will all witness Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen.

But now we would like to go one step further. Because the Lord said all the trees, so definitely it is more than just Babylon. So this morning we spent almost one hour together. We tried to find out from the word of God, now what are these trees? So remember, this morning we studied Isaiah and

also Jeremiah. Now we already know that from Chapter 1 to 12 is the fig tree, then chapter 13 to 35 now we talk about all the trees. First 12 chapters, Israel, then chapter 13 to 35 the nations.

Now when Isaiah mentioned about Babylon, it always refers to Babylon at the end times. So those ancient nations actually will play a very important role at the end times. So we remember the name Philistines, means today's Palestinians, and then you have Jordan, and you have also Saudi Arabia, and you also have Syria, so we have got a list of the names there. These nations were not only the ancient nations, because the emphasis of Isaiah is the end times.

So according to Isaiah now we roughly know the names of those nations which will revive again. This also is confirmed by Jeremiah, because in Jeremiah, the first 45 chapters, is again the fig tree, Israel. But then from chapter 45 all the way to chapter 51, again nations. Again, we saw the names of ancient nations. Of course when Jeremiah predicts the future about all these nations, now we know that by that time these were yet to be fulfilled. But remember, if we look back, those prophecies have been fulfilled. So those nations are the nations of history.

In Isaiah, when Isaiah talks about those nations, it ends up with the end days. Now it ends up with the day of the Lord, it ends up with the period of great tribulation. Now that is Isaiah. But if you study Jeremiah, now you find it did not end up with the end time. Now the last chapter of Jeremiah is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in history.

Now as far as we are concerned, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we know this belongs in history. Then if you compare these two lists of the names of nations, they are almost exactly equal. Those ancient nations were in history, but according to Isaiah, now at the end days they will play again an important role. Now I think we are very clear according to Jeremiah and Isaiah, and we have got a list of the names of these nations. Now according to our Lord's prophesy, these ancient nations will be revived again.

But now we will ask one question, in what way will they revive? What kind of role are they going to play? So again we need to word of God, to explain the Word of God. Do you see that? We use Jeremiah and Isaiah to explain the word of our Lord. The fig tree and all the trees – Israel and the nations.

But now if we want to go one step further: in what way these nations will be revived? Now we have to come to a very important chapter in the Bible, because in this chapter the Holy Spirit tried

to put all these things together. The Holy Spirit tried to sort it out for every one of us. Then in that single chapter you will find the name which had already appeared in Isaiah also in Jeremiah. So that chapter is one of the great prophecies in the Bible. Actually this prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes – you are the witness; I’m also the witness. We are so fortunate that we may live in this time. So now we are going to see that how wonderfully this prophecy is being fulfilled in our eyes.

So now let us turn to Psalm 83. Now Psalm 83 is a prophetic psalm. Now the events mentioned in these chapters have never been fulfilled. Let us read from verse 1.

<sup>1</sup>*O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still.*

<sup>2</sup>*See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads.*

<sup>3</sup>*With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish.*

Now, your people, can also be translated as thy treasured ones, or thy hidden ones.

<sup>4</sup>*“Come,” They say, “let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.”*

Do you see that? Now these people are the enemy of Israel. So they said: ‘Come, let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.’

And then verse 5.

<sup>5</sup>*With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you.*

So now you discover these people they make an alliance. Do you see that? They make a covenant. So now they conspire together with one mind. Now we will ask, who are these people? So now starting from verse 6, now you have a list of names.

<sup>6</sup>*The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagarites, <sup>7</sup>Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre.*

<sup>8</sup>*Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot.*

Now remember, if you go through these names, it is so clear these are actually the name list given in Isaiah and given in Jeremiah. Do you see that? In those two books they mention Edom. Now Edom is Jordan today. And the Ishmaelites – this means they are Arabs. Now in Jeremiah it talks about Kedar – that refers to today's Saudi Arabia. Now probably you have forgotten already, so let me try to review it for you. Now let us go back to Isaiah once again, especially Isaiah 21. Now see what the Bible says there. Isaiah 21:11.

<sup>11</sup>*An oracle concerning Dumah.*

Now this name is quite unusual to you: Dumah. And then verse 13.

<sup>13</sup>*An oracle concerning Arabia.*

Now I will explain to you more detail later. Dumah here represents the descendants of Ishmael. So they refer to Arabs today. Abram has two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Now Ishmael is the forefather of Arabs today. Now the descendants of Isaac are the Jewish people today. Do you see that? Now we have a prophesy, oracle means prophecy, concerning Dumah. So if you want to know the future of the Arabs, here you will find a prophecy. But don't forget all the nations here are always connected with the end times. Now we are being told here, before the Lord's return, how Arab people will play a very important role. So you have a prophecy about people of Arabs.

Then verse 13: an oracle concerning Arabia. Now here it talks about the land of Arabs. Now everybody knows the land, or hometown, of Arabs is the Arab peninsular. So verse 11 is a prophesy about a people, now verse 13 is a prophecy about a land. Do you see that? As far as we are concerned, if you want to know the future about people, that is verse 11. Now if you want to know the future about the land, now that is verse 13 all the way to 17.

So now you are very clear according to Isaiah, now you do see the Ishmaelites. You see because you have Dumah, you have the Arab Peninsular here. So my brothers and sisters, now it is very interesting, Arab people will play a very important role. Now actually we already see this prophesy being fulfilled. But now the important thing is this, we already have a name list of all these trees. But in what kind of role are they going to play?

Now we go back to Psalm 83 again. Now when you go back to that chapter, this time again God puts all these names together. So now we want to know in what way they will revive. And now

they will unite together and become a very important power. Now they are going to confront with Israel. So brothers and sisters, now you discover that all these names are here. Let us go back to Psalm83:6 again.

*<sup>6</sup>The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites'*

So you see you have Jordan here, you have the nation of Arabs here, you have Moab, that's Jordan, you have the Hagarites, that's the Egyptians. Remember, in the two books, Isaiah and Jeremiah, you have these names, Egypt. And in verse 7: Gebal. Now in the Bible, Gebal actually refers to today's Lebanon, because we remember that many cedar trees from Lebanon. Then Ammon, that's Jordan again.

Then Amalek. Now Amalek is also the descendants of Ishmael. So they are Arabs. Now remember, if you visit Egypt sometimes we are very ignorant. So someone will say you are Arabs. They will be very angry. They will say no, we are Egyptians. So they are a different people. Do you see? Now Amalek, they belong to the descendants of Ishmael.

Now Philistia, that's today's Palestine. So if you want to know the future of Palestine, study your prophecy. Now whether one day there will be rebirth of the nation of Palestine, we have to come back to the Bible. Now according to the plan of George Bush and Tony Blair, they have already planned for the future of Israel and the Palestinians. So most likely according to that plan, in 2005 there will be a nation of Palestinians. So remember, according to the Bible here, now Palestinians will play a very important role. So now here we have the name of Palestine, with the inhabitants of Tyre. Now Tyre is today's Lebanon again.

Then in verse 8, Assyria also has joined with them. Now you have to be careful. When you study Biblical prophecy, when Bible mentions Assyria, normally it refers to Babylonian Empire or Persian Empire. That is a way of how our Holy Spirit uses that term Assyria. So if that refers to Babylonian empire and Persian Empire, it means today's Iraq and Iran have joined with them. They have become a help to the children of Lot. Now the children of Lot are again, today's Jordan.

Now don't forget, you remember Edom actually means Esau. You remember the story how Isaac has two sons: Esau and Jacob. Right? So now we know Esau. However, we know that Esau took the wife of a daughter of Ishmael. So because of that mixed marriage, now when Bible talks about Edom, it also means Arabs. Do you see that? On one hand Jordan yes, but on the other hand the

people of Arabs. So when you study the Bible you have to be very clear here. Now brothers you discover that these people they unite together. *'They have conspired together with one mind, against thee do they make a covenant'*.

So according to this prophesy, one day there will be an alliance. Somehow they want to unite together, they want to fulfilled one purpose, so they will say, *come let us wipe them out as a nation*. Now that happened after 1948. Do you see that? Because since 1948 the nation of Israel is already reborn, so now it has wiped them out as a nation?

Now recently you have heard the spiritual leader of Iran, he says Israel is a cancer, so somehow we have to wipe out that cancer from that area. You remember, how Arafat spoke to the journalists. He put it in a very polite way: we would like to invite Israelites to drink coffee in the Dead Sea. Now you know what he means. So brothers and sisters you can see that really is what happened there. Now Saddam Hussein did exactly the same thing, and they want to liberate that land. Why? They say come let us wipe them out as a nation.

Now since 1948 Israel already became a nation. But now you have a voice, *let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more*. These nations unite together – do you see that? Those nations mentioned in Isaiah and in Jeremiah. Now how do they play an important role at the end times? They will conspire together with one mind. They will make a covenant. So you know an alliance will be formed before the Lord's return.

Now we want to know what kind of alliance is that. For what purpose now they make that alliance? So remember, we have to find out from the word of God, so let us read Psalm 83:12.

<sup>12</sup>*Who said, "Let us take possession of the pasture-lands of God".*

Now that is very interesting. Think about it. They didn't say: let us possess the dwelling place of their god. Do you see that? Now they said the dwelling place of God. So in another words the God of Israel is also the God of this people. They also believe there is only one God. So in their mind their Allah is the same as the God of Israel. So you see, over God they have no argument – they share the same God. So brothers and sisters now you know what kind of alliance this is. This is a religious alliance.

Now what is the issue here? They said we want to possess for ourselves the dwelling place of God. Do you see brothers and sisters? What does that mean? Because according to the people of Israel, Mount Moriah is the dwelling place of God. So the people said this mountain belongs to us. Now the Arab people say no. So these people joined together and said no. Some are Arabs, some Egyptians, like the people of Iran. The people of Iran, they are not Arabs at all, but they are one, they have the same religion. Now according to this religion, they do not have to say the dwelling place of their God, they know there is only one God. So now you know what kind of religion this is. It is very clear, this is an Islamic alliance, or a Muslim alliance. This is a religious alliance. Do you see that?

Now one day they will come together, they will make a covenant together. They may be divided. You may talk about terrorism – now some of them are mild, some are very extreme. But brothers and sisters when you talk about the issue of Israel, then you discover there is no division any more. They said *come let us wipe them out as a nation*. So brothers and sisters now you understand this is a religious alliance, more than a political one.

And also, we are very clear here, that there is a religious issue there. It's not just something about territory, or petrol. No brothers and sisters, the issue is not this. You see, the issue is a religious one. So if you are not careful to deal with the situation, you may kindle a religious war. Jihad in the Islamic world is Holy War. Now when that happens, there will be a great tribulation. So now you see when things no longer are just political, they become religious, it can become very, very serious.

So what is the issue here? Not just political, or about territory, nor about gasoline or petrol. What was the issue? Because the people of Israel say, this Mount Moriah, is ours. Now this people say no. Why? Because this is ours. Because for 1300 years this two mountains are theirs. So we want these mountains in our possessions. Now here you have a conflict over very important issue. Who is the owner of Mount Moriah?

Now today if you visit Jerusalem, there is a plateau there. Now that plateau is a mountain head. Now that mountain in the Bible is called Mount Moriah, but today we normally call it the Temple Mount. Today, if you ascend to the Temple Mount, you don't see any Temple, you only see two mosques. Especially you have a great mosque in the middle. So it is true for 1300 years, two mosques are there. Now because according to Muslim people this is the dwelling place of God, because of that they put two mosques there.

But then people of Israel will say, according to archaeology, according to the Bible, we have very reason to believe that before the mosques were there, in the time of Jesus, the Temple was there. So remember in the beginning it was the Solomon Temple, and later the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. So the people of Israel were captured to Babylon. After 70 years they came back to rebuild the Temple. That Temple was called the second Temple, or the Temple of Zerrababel. Now later in the time of Jesus, it was King Herod who beautified the whole Temple. So now that plateau becomes very important.

Now you have a Temple complex here. Now it is just like this Bible, from the South to North. Now in the time of our Lord Jesus there are about 6 American football fields. Now from the west to east, is about 5 American footballs. So you can imagine, that was meant to be the largest religious square in the time of our Lord Jesus.

Now when you visit that place you have to ascend to the mountain. Now actually in the time of Jesus this Temple complex is twice as big as in the time of Solomon. So according to the Bible, according to archaeology, we know it was true we have the Temple of God on that mountain. But now, the Arab people say no, this is ours. Now even Indonesians, they were not Arabs, but because they belong to the same religion, they say this is ours. Do you see that? Because of that the issue is this: to Israelites they say this is ours, and for Islamic people they say this is ours. So now you discover this is the main issue between these two parties. And don't forget this is the reason why we have a conflict in the Middle East today.

So how are you going to solve this problem? Remember in July 2000, President Clinton invited Arafat and also invited the Prime Minister of Israel. So now they had a round table discussion. They wanted to find out a solution. Now of course the territory is one of the problems. You know from 1967, you know the territory is Israel became very large. Now don't forget because of war, the game of war is that if you are strong you will have the territory.

1300 years ago, at that time you have Islamic power, Islamic empire. You have Arab empire. They are strong, and because of that they conquered Jerusalem. Now even though that Mount of Moriah belonged to the people of Israel, but because the fist of Arabs was so big, they said this is ours. This is the game of war, if you are strong enough, this is your territory. There is no argument. Now Arab people will not say now because of the Bible we will return the mountain to you. So brothers and sisters this is the rule of this world, whoever is strong enough you will have your territory and

that is yours. So brothers, it is very clear in 1967, the so-called West Bank belonged to Israel. So whether it be Shechem or Hebron, now they all become part of the territory of Israel.

Now more interesting is this, before 1967, Jerusalem was divided. But in that 6 days war, to our surprise, Jerusalem came back to the bosom of Israel. Now for many hundreds of years the prayer of the Jews is next year they will obtain Jerusalem. In a wedding the bridegroom and bride will toast each other, then they always say, next year Jerusalem. So since 1967 that dream of 1800 years finally came true. So Jewish people when they woke up, they discovered Jerusalem came back to their bosom. Now you see brothers, from that time on then because Jerusalem become one, the Temple Mount also came back to the bosom of Israel. So as far as sovereignty is concerned you know that the Temple Mount belongs to Israel.

Now Israel could say this mountain is ours. And when General Dian took over the Temple Mount with the paratroopers, and then you know that even the Temple Mount belongs to Israel. Now there was a suggestion, why not just use dynamite to destroy these two mosques. That was a very dangerous suggestion that really happened, and you can imagine Jihad would have already started. So even a hawk like General Dian told the people that this should not happen.

Then after one month then he returned the key to the authority. In another words, the sovereignty of that mountain belongs to Israel, but not the authority of that Temple Mount, although they have a right to use that mountain. Now normally the people of Israel are not allowed to go there, so this is a very wise decision.

Now one of the reasons why we cannot visit Israel today, it is not because it is very dangerous – sometimes the most dangerous place is the most safe place, but the problem is this, even if you visit today, the Temple Mount is closed. Now it is a pity if you visit Jerusalem without going to visit the Temple Mount. So the government of Israel says we close it so that nobody can go there. So this speaks about the sovereignty of that mountain belongs to Israel. Ok, now the Palestinians had a round table with Israelites, and President Clinton tried very hard, tried to get the two parties closer.

Of course, they have many issues to talk about, but the first issue is about the territory. Now United States really put the pressure on Israel, so finally Israel agreed to give back 92% of territory. Don't forget, because of war they obtained territory. Now if you want to talk about territory, you come to the bargaining on the table. But think about it, you don't have to use any weapons, or you don't

have any use of force. Just through negotiation you want to get some territory back. It depends on the skill of your negotiation.

But now Clinton put hard pressure on Israel, so finally Israel yields. Do you know how many percent he wants to yield? He wants to return 92% of the territory. Now later we were told it was even up to 96%. You will never have such a high percentage on the table unless Israel was ready to surrender. So no such thing happened in history, just through negotiation and conversation they gave 92% of the territory back. That is what happened. You see? So then there should be peace in the Middle East.

But why there was no peace. Then you discover there were two issues there. These two issues are something to do with the people. These are spiritual issues. First Arafat said now we want to make Jerusalem as our capital, because one day we will be independent. So by that time we want to take Jerusalem back, and we want to make Jerusalem as our capital.

If you study the history of Muslims, never in the history of Muslims has Jerusalem become so important. Baghdad was the centre of the Islamic world. Istanbul later became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. So now you see that is the capital. So remember by that time Jerusalem only lies in ruins. Now Islamic people or Muslims never dreamed that one day you will make a capital out of Jerusalem. You study your history, that has never happened before.

But now Arafat said we want to make Jerusalem as our capital. That means Jerusalem will be divided again. But don't forget the day that Jerusalem came back to the bosom of Israel. Now all the Jewish people the people of Israel said that now this capital will become our eternal capital. Once Jerusalem has come back to the bosom of Israel, they will never leave Jerusalem. So this is one issue. You cannot solve it.

Now brothers if you study your Bible you know why Jerusalem is so important. Jerusalem is so important to Israel, just like Baghdad was so important to Muslims. So remember, during this war when Baghdad received so many bombs, over 2000 bombs, and some of the bombs were almost 2000 pounds, now think about it, when those bombs fall into that city, actually those bombs were pounding on every heart of every Muslim. You never separate Baghdad from the Islamic people. You never separate Jerusalem from Israel. So now brothers and sisters do you see what the issue is behind it? Now if you know your Bible you know that is the issue.

But another issue here is even more difficult, and what was that issue? Then Arafat said to Clinton, I'm here representing 1/5 of the population of this world. I want to represent the Islamic world. We want the Temple Mount back. We want to possess for ourselves the dwelling place of God. Now brothers, that is exactly the phrase given in verse 12 here. In the Islamic world they have a cry, let us possess for ourselves the habitation of God. In another words we want the Temple Mount back to our sovereignty. Do you see that? Now actually if you think about it, that actually was the golden opportunity for Palestinians to have a new nation. You can have 92% of your territory, and then the whole world will recognise you as a nation.

Now brothers you know the time of Arafat was running out. He was not a very healthy person. He had a dream that one day you have an independent Palestinian state – that definitely is a golden opportunity. Now of course you can leave other issues later, why don't you get your advantage immediately? But we don't know why, just because of this issue, and they cannot get much closer. So that peace talk failed completely.

So brothers, now you understand the problem is not territory. If it is territory, it must be a political issue. But if it is Temple Mount, that is a religious issue. Now that is the most difficult one. The people of Israel say this is ours. Now if Islamic people say this is ours, they want to possess for ourselves the habitation of God. They all want Mount Moriah. So brothers, then here you have a dilemma. That is why the peace talk failed terribly. That is why since 28 September 2000, then you have this bloody conflict between Israel and Palestinians. You have one suicide bomb after another.

You know the conflict in the Middle East is most bloody one. Why? It is because now you discover there is an alliance, it is a religious alliance. They had the same goal. Not only to wipe them out as a nation, but they have a common cry, let us possess for ourselves the dwelling place of God. Let us possess Mount Moriah. Let us possess the Temple Mount, forever. So brothers, now you know this is the issue.

Now if you really study carefully what happened, you know people of Israel they even suggest somehow they can solve this problem. One proposal was this, the Prime Minister of Israel says, now let us try to compromise. Now if this is the Temple Mount, you find here you have two mosques. Right? Now according to this proposal, how about this? From the platform of the mosque, all the way up to outer space, belongs to Islamic world. Then from the platform all the

way down to the centre of the Earth, this belongs to the people of Israel. How about that? Don't forget this was one of the important proposals.

Now you know why they want that proposal? Because the people of Israel they believe that the missing ark is underground. They believe that when Solomon built the Temple, he already thought about in case of war time, if the ark was in danger. So they already had a secret tunnel in case, then you know how to rescue the ark. According to their tradition, remember the tabernacle of Moses, according to them the tabernacle and all the furniture is underground. So now they say just the platform to the centre of the earth that is ours. But finally, it won't work.

So you see brothers and sisters now you understand why this issue becomes so tough. Because in our eyes you find that those ancient nations mentioned in the Bible, before the Lord's return, they unite together. They make their covenant and they become a religious alliance for one purpose, they want to take back the Mount Moriah. So they want to possess for themselves the dwelling place of God.

So brothers and sisters, they never say their God, because they know that their God is the one who creates Heaven and Earth. According to them, Allah is the one who created Heaven and Earth. So you have no argument about who God is. So they never use their God, or our God. It is the dwelling place of God. So in another words, Islamic beliefs is very close to the Jewish one. They all believe there is only one god. So now you know how these nations unite together as an Islamic alliance. And this alliance is already being formed in front of our eyes.

But in this alliance, not all are Arabs – no. For example people of Iran they are not Arabs. People of Indonesia they are not Arabs. People of Malaysia they are not Arabs. But don't forget they all cry out let us possess for ourselves the habitation of God. So brothers, isn't that wonderful in our eyes now we are witnessing this thing is really happening before our eyes. And this thing is still going on. You see brothers and sisters, after the present war we don't know what is next, but one of the most difficult issues is this, and then you discover actually this is still going on.

So brothers and sisters, how you are going to solve this problem? If you know your Bible very well, this is indeed a great dilemma because if you read Malachi, before the Messiah comes he will suddenly enter into the Temple. So you know that before the Lord's return the Temple should be there, then you will discover the mosque won't be there. That is Biblical prophecy. So how are you going to solve this problem? You see that brothers? So this is going to be a very tough problem.

And more than that, if you study the Thessalonians letters, now anti Christ will enter into the Temple. Remember, he will consider himself as God. You see that brothers and sisters? So now you see he enters the Temple of God. So in other words when anti Christ appears on this planet, the Temple of God will already be built. So brothers and sisters, now if you observe what happens in the Middle East, you discover this is no solution. Clinton is not great enough to solve this problem. And Bush and Blair added together is not great enough to solve this problem.

Now brothers, does that means there is going to be blood shedding? Not necessarily. So you see brothers, when you know the Bible very well, now we have to be careful, sometimes we are too simplified. We think that before the Lord's return the Temple must be there, so there must be war before that, and somehow the Israelites really take it by force. Now brothers, that won't solve the problem.

You remember in the first Persian Gulf War, Saddam Hussein hit Israel with Scud Missiles. But that time many people had the hope that somehow that missile is not very accurate. By accident it just hit that Mount Moriah. So the problem is solved. No brothers, after many days it will be rebuilt. You know someone who is really crazy, really set a fire in that mosque. But now they really rebuilt it, and that won't solve the problem. If you want to use force you never reach your goal. If the people of Israel dare to use their force, then that means Jihad. You see that? It is Jihad, Israel is confronting with a fifth of the human population. Now that would be a tragedy. So remember, even according to the Bible, one day the Temple of God should be rebuilt. By that time you won't find any mosque.

But does that mean there should be blood shedding? Not necessarily so. So there are two possibilities. These are just possibilities. Now one possibility, most likely, is that when anti Christ signed that contract or signed the treaty with Israel, they will offer Israel: we are going to help you to rebuild the Temple. Now don't forget when anti Christ is in charge, the whole world will follow. So that is without blood shedding; that is one possibility.

Now the second possibility. According to the Bible there will be a worldwide economic crisis. And not only Japan has the problem, probably even the United States will have that problem, and even Arab world will have that problem. So when this problem becomes very severe, then probably you expect some people among the Arab world, when they are thinking of that problem, then they discover that their number one holy place is Mecca, number 2 – Medina, number 3 – Jerusalem. So

if that is the case, some people will probably suggest, now today we are in great need of money, so why not we put the Temple Mount on the market. And let us put it on the web site E-bay. Now who will get the highest price, let them have this site. Of course, with one condition. Somehow, the one who get this mountain they should use something high tech to move these two mosques peacefully to Mecca.

Now you can imagine by that time, all the wealth of Jewish people will come together, then they definitely will buy that mountain, then rebuild their Temple. Now of course, they will use high tech they really can move the whole thing to Mecca. If you visit New Zealand, you do see that one building really moves from here to there. That is not a miracle, that is what happens today.

So brothers and sisters we don't know what is going to happen. That doesn't mean that there is blood shedding, but that does mean the conflict. We don't know what conflict that is, but before the Lord's return we know that there is no peace in the Middle East. No matter what kind of joint effort between the United States and the United Kingdom, it won't solve the problem. So brothers and sisters, now you discover, why today we are in such a world. But something even more difficult. The people of Israel and people of Arabs do not just fight over a mountain, now when they come together, they discover their ways are very narrow. So it is almost impossible.

Now according to most recent archaeological study, very interesting. Suppose you visit the mosque, and then you will find a rock in that mosque. Now according to tradition, that is the very place Abraham offered his son Isaac. So according to tradition, this rock is the foundational rock for the Holy of Holies. Now the Holy of Holies, is part of the Temple. Now do you understand? In another words the rock that is in the mosque today, actually is the very foundation rock for building the Temple. And the surprising enough, if you visit that rock today you will find a rectangular depression. So what is the size of that depression? If you measure it, it is exactly the size of the ark. This cannot be an accident.

So brothers, if this it true, now that piece of rock indeed is the foundational rock of the whole Temple. So now brothers, these two peoples not just fight over a mountain, they even are fighting over a stone. Now the world is so big, why one mountain, and why one piece of stone? Do you see that? If the Temple ought to be rebuilt, now what happens? You have to destroy the mosque. If the mosque is there the Temple has to be destroyed.

So brothers, what is the solution? No solution. It takes a miracle for that thing to happen. Brothers, it was a miracle nation of Israel was reborn. It was a miracle that the people of Israel came back from all over the world. And it was a miracle that Jerusalem came back to its own bosom in 1967. Finally, it takes the miracle of God, one day you will discover the Temple of God should be rebuilt on the Temple Mount.

So my brothers and sisters, now you understand, what the issue here is. The issue here is very simple, that is in front of our eyes, an alliance is already being formed. Now of course today's alliance is very loose, it is not a military alliance. But one day it will become a political one, it will become a military one. So a religious one, plus political one, plus a military one. And that will only happen before the Lord's return. So brothers, now what we have seen today is the initial and partial fulfilment of the prophesy of Psalm 83.

There was an interview with Bin Laden. Now Bin Laden said to his interviewer. He said, I had a dream, I was so impressed with Ottoman empire. Remember, before the Ottoman empire you had an Islamic empire. Now that Islamic empire was all Arabs. Do you see that? That empire was created by Arabs, so that is why it is called an Arab empire. But later you have another empire, Ottoman Empire.

Now remember, in the Ottoman Empire, most of them are Turks. Now Turks are not Arabs, however, they believe in Islam. So they have a califer, you see their system is just like religious system. So they really put their state and religion together. So remember, the nature of Ottoman Empire, the components of that empire, are not necessarily Arabs. Now in that empire you may have Iranians. You may have the people of Malaysia, the Philippines, people from Indonesia, you may even have Chinese. You see not matter what, they belong to different people, but they share the same faith, and finally they unite as one. Now in history it was called Ottoman Empire.

Now you know Ottoman Empire collapsed after the First World War. Now you understand why Bin Laden in his documentary, he said: 'For 80 years our nations were in great humiliation. Now the first time in 80 years our knife has reached the soil of the United States'. So he means the collapse of the Twin Towers. You know Japan tried to bring the war into the soil of the United States. Hitler tried to do that. Even Moscow Empire tried to do that. They never were successful. But remember, on September 11, now the whole world witnessed something. It is true their knife really reached the soil of the United States.

So, now, why did he say 80 years? Why did he say our nation? What did he mean? Did he meant Saudi Arabia? Of course not. He meant Afghanistan? Of course not. He meant the Ottoman Empire. So he talked to his interview, he said, look at European Union, these Christian nations. He thought these were all Christian nations because they don't know the situation. They think Germany, France, UK are Christian nations. But they don't know the true story. So according to Bin Laden, what is the European Union? These Christian nations, they are united together as one. So according to Bin Laden, he has a comment, he said, now if this is possible for Christian nations, why it is not possible for Muslim nations. This is the dream of Bin Laden.

Now don't forget, after the Persian Gulf War, even Iraq was defeated. Now all scholars of political science agree there was a legacy of Saddam Hussein. Even though he disappeared into history by that time, Saddam Hussein, already has a great legacy behind him. Now what was that legacy? Now remember, after first Persian Gulf War there was a great awakening among Arab people. They asked one question, we have petrol, we have the Koran, and we are supposed to be very perfect. We ought to be wealthy and strong nations. But why we are no match with the western world? So there was a great awakening. What does that mean? That means somehow we failed our Allah, somehow we are not faithful to Allah. We are far from the teachings of Allah, now we want to go back to the Koran. In other words, let us go back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Remember, that was the revival of fundamentalists.

Now they share the same dream. When they look back they remember the glory of Ottoman Empire. Now they dream one day there will be an Ottoman Empire revived. So brothers and sisters, this dream is in the heart of every Arab today. We have to understand that. Now why this is so? Don't forget, because Psalm 83 tells us that is the meg-trend of this world. So it is very clear, brothers and sisters, now in the beginning it was only a religious one. But sooner or later it will be a political or military one. Now it depends on how you are going to reach it, either by drastic methods, or by violent methods. So now that is the method of extremists.

Now they have their methods, and also their mild ways. But no matter what, whether they are extreme or if they are very mild, but this was the legacy of Saddam Hussein. Now brothers and sisters, remember, I think Saudi Arabia, spends lots of money to establish 10,000 schools of Muslims. So you don't have to pay for the tuition. You don't have to study Physics or Chemistry. Only one book is enough – Koran. Not only you read that book, you should memorise that book. With one condition, you have to memorise using Arabic language. Even you are Chinese, if you attend that school, if you want to graduate, now you have to memorise that in Arabic language.

Now Koran is almost like three quarters of our New Testament. Now if you are Chinese, if you want to memorise the whole Koran it will probably take 3 years, then you will graduate. Now you remember the Taliban in Afghanistan. Those people graduate from this kind of school. Now that school is in Pakistan, and they will graduate from the Harvard of that area. So remember, that is why sometimes you just don't understand. Now this is the trend, this is the tendency here. Why? Very clear.

Now my brothers and sisters, we already see something happening, and somehow we don't understand why we had 9/11, and why such a turmoil in Turkey, but we forget actually the legacy of Saddam Hussein is this. But more than that, Saddam Hussein has another legacy. Those who study international terrorism, they put all the data into computers. Since 1968, now you have enough data to analyse the trend in international terrorism. There is an organisation called RAND, they use most scientific ways to study what happened to international terrorism. And they found something very interesting. After Persian Gulf War now again, this is the legacy of Saddam Hussein. Now what happened? Very interesting, if you draw the curve and try to analyse the behaviour of international terrorism then they discover after 1990, after Persian Gulf War, there is a great change of behaviour of terrorism.

Now the frequency of terrorism did not increase, however, the visibility of terrorism becomes greatly enhanced. In another words now the visibility becomes great. How can you make it visible? In another words, the victims is not just one or 2. That won't make people see that. So now the number of victims is hundreds. So what does this mean? Today's terrorism is new terrorism. Now after the Persian Gulf War, now we witness the birth of new terrorism.

What is new terrorism? Now terrorism was very old. But in ancient terrorism they only kill those government officials, not many others. So their action is surgical, their action is selective. They never aim at children, women. No. So new terrorism all they want is effect. They don't care how many people will die. The more the better. Then the whole world will see it. So that is new terrorism.

That is what has happened in September 11. These people, they were able to transform four civilian airplanes into 4 missiles. Do you see that? They use the resource and the flesh and blood of the enemy. Using their gasoline, using their petrol. They even use their techniques to learn how to fly. Now finally on September 11 the performance is such that even Hollywood had no match.

Now remember, how much they have spent. They spent only less than half a million, and they were able to perform an impressive feat. This is new terrorism. This is a legacy of Saddam Hussein. Among 19 hijackers, only 6 of them knew that they are going to die, another 13 people didn't know, because they thought this is still ancient terrorism. The old terrorism means this, you want as many people as possible to watch, but you want as little as possible to die. But this is not so with new terrorism.

It was so horrible, no wonder if you live in New York, now if you take the subway, now in many people's minds you think of dirty bombs. Now dirty bombs are not atomic bombs. It has high radiation, but you can kindle it with normal fire. You just take a suitcase that is enough. And you can even use your telephone to remote control it. Then the effect is tremendous. That is really the tragedy. So brothers and sisters now you understand why all these things happened. Remember there is a reason; somehow there is hatred there.

That is why I say, the troublemaker was Abraham. He was not supposed to give birth to Ishmael. He tried to help God, but it ended up with such a tragedy. No one can solve that problem. So brothers, how accurate it is, our Lord said, behold the fig tree and all the trees. Now when you see them putting forth the leaves you know summer is near. Not only have you witnessed the rebirth of the nation of Israel, but also those ancient nations mentioned in the Bible, in Isaiah, or in Jeremiah. Now remember, finally they will play an important role before the Lord's return.

In what way? Psalm 83 is the way. Not just one by one. Now they will unite together, and probably one day not only the Babylonian empire will revive, now according to the wish of many people, they want to see the Ottoman Empire will revive. They tell you they want to go back to the glory in the past. So brothers, nothing will make them happy until they see the resurrection of the Ottoman Empire. So brothers and sisters what does that mean, it means that Islamic alliance given in Psalm 83. It will become political and also military. When that happens it means the revival of the Ottoman Empire. Is it possible? Yes.

Tomorrow morning I would like to show you from another book of the Bible. This morning we were occupied with Isaiah and Jeremiah. We have four major prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. Tomorrow morning I will show you Daniel. Tomorrow evening I will show you Ezekiel. They are four major prophetic books. Now if you really go to Daniel, then to your

surprise, according to the Bible, one day not only Babylonian Empire will be revived, now even Ottoman Empire also will revive.

So brothers and sisters, now you can see when you study your Bible carefully, all the things will come together. Then tomorrow evening I will show to you from the book of Ezekiel another important thing. So before the Lord's return now you see the word of God is so, so clear. Now when you put together it is the whole picture. Never by accident. And the word of Christ is so clear. Not only fig tree, all the trees. Now when you consider all the trees you have Babylonian empire. And then not only Babylonian empire, you have Islamic alliance. One day you end up with something like Ottoman Empire.

So brothers, before the Lords' return, one fifth of the world population will shake the whole world. You know very well in 1968 in London there was only 1 mosque, but now more than 1000 mosques. From one of the early church they sent the missionary called William Carey. But if you want to visit that church it is no longer there, it has already become a mosque. So brothers and sisters, remember according to the Lord's word, now one day the descendants of Ishmael will play a very important role. You live in UK, or if you visit Paris, it become very visible and some people told us if you go to visit South Paris you will find more mosques than churches.

So remember now, the Muslim faith will now develop very, very fast. We just cannot imagine. So according to the word of God remember the descendants of Ishmael and also this Islamic alliance finally will develop and again develop. It will play very important role before our Lord's return. So with this understanding we are able to understand what is happening today. Many Christians they just don't know what is happening today. You have to understand what is happening today from the perspective of the word of God.

I think tonight our time is gone, so tomorrow morning we will continue. We will go to the book of Daniel, then we will see something even much more clearer. I think tonight we will end here. Let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we commit this word into Your hand. We pray that You do speak this word to us. We need Your mercy Lord. We need You to wake us up. Let us not just fall into sleep. Now we should know what time is it now. We should know how dark is the night. We know You are coming back very soon. When we study Your Word, especially Your prophetic Word, we know we are at the end time. We pray that You will continue to speak to everyone. If it is Your will, bring us back*

*tomorrow. Continue to speak to us. We pray that tomorrow should be the day to speak to us in a very thorough and deep way. Make us ready Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Portsmouth – 11am**

Let us turn to Luke Chapter 21:29-31.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*

These are the verses for the moment; let us have a word of prayer.

*Dear Lord, we thank You so much, because of Your grace and mercy we can continue to be here. We thank You for this gathering. We believe that it is You who gathers us together for the purpose that we may know You even in a better way. Once again, this morning we pray that You will speak to our hearts. Impress us with Your Living Word. Give us the strength that we may rise up and follow You. We thank You so much Lord. In the name of Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

Now we will continue to share on the prophetic word of Christ. Now again we always dwell on a few verses in the Gospel according to Luke. And we talk about the fig tree; we talk about all the trees. Now when they put forth the leaves we know that the summer is now near. In another word the kingdom of God is near. In another word our Lord's return is near.

Now yesterday we try to understand the word of our Lord from Jeremiah and also Isaiah. So when we try to have an outline of the book of Isaiah and the book of Jeremiah, we were able to find out those ancient nations mentioned in the Bible, and also always having conflict with Israel. And last night we even talked about in what way these ancient nations will play a very important role before the Lord's return. So we talked about a religious alliance. Now one day it will become a political one and also a military one.

Now this morning we want to go one step further. So this morning we will dwell on the book of Daniel. Now let us from the prophecies given in the book of Daniel, let us try to find out about the fig tree and all the other trees. You know, chronologically speaking, we know that the book of Isaiah was written about 800BC. Then around 600BC we know especially before the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, we remember how God raised the prophet Jeremiah. And then he has given us a wonderful prophecy. Especially when the city of Jerusalem was besieged, now you remember how Jeremiah really gave the prophecy.

According to that prophecy, now the people of Israel will be captured into Babylon, however, 70 years later they will come back to Jerusalem. So before the destruction of the city of Jerusalem now the prophecy of Jeremiah mainly addresses the people of Israel. That is why from Chapter 1 to 45 you see the fig tree. So according to Jeremiah he saw how Babylon not only conquered the land, but also took his own people away to the land of Babylon. And then when the city of Jerusalem was fallen, now Jeremiah turned to the nations.

Now of course, God used Babylon to judge Israel, because God tried to use that method to restore the people of Israel. And we know the people of Israel had serious terminal disease. Now it is beyond cure. So now God has dealt with these people. So God used Babylon to judge his own people. After God has accomplished that work, now God turned to Babylon.

So that is why Jeremiah tells us how that empire will collapse. That is why you have a prophecy about Babylon and also many other nations. So for sure these ancient nations had always the conflict with Israel. So because of that conflict, now God is going to judge all these nations. Remember, all kinds of conflict mean somehow God is dealing with his own people, trying to purify his own people, trying to educate his own people. So of course there is some important spiritual significance behind all things. So from the prophecy of Jeremiah, again we have the fig tree and all the trees.

If you compare Jeremiah and Isaiah, now you can imagine how those ancient nations eventually will play a very important role before the Lord's return, because Daniel always talks about the end times. Now those nations were ancient nations. They were the nations in the history of history. But one day before the Lord's return for some reason they will revive. But now in what form?

Now last time, we already saw from Psalm 83 before the end time all these nations will form an alliance. Then it will become a very big power on the global platform and now we can understand why many things happen in front of our eyes. So now you are able to explain what is going on around us. Especially since September 11 it is almost like an alarm clock, it actually is a wake up call for all of us. Especially for the people who live in the western world, actually they don't know much about what is going on in the whole world. They don't know anything about the legacy of Saddam Hussein. Now they don't understand the meg-trend of this world is just like the Bible predicted.

Now this morning we would like to take the book of Daniel. Now we want to go one step further, then we try to gain even more knowledge about the fig tree and all the trees. Now first let us turn to Daniel Chapter 11:11. We will only read a bit: <sup>11</sup>*The king of the South*'. And now verse 13: <sup>13</sup>*The king of the North*'.

We don't have to go into detail. In chapter 11 you have the king of the North and you also have the king of the South. Now the prophesy of Chapter 11 has already been fulfilled. Now when Daniel predicted all of these events, these events were yet to come at that time. But, since it has already been fulfilled in history, most of the events in chapter 11 have already passed into history. So if you want to understand chapter 11 you have to know your history very well, especially the history of the western world.

So remember in order to understand chapter 11 you need to have very detailed knowledge of what happened in that part of the world. The king of the South here refers to Egypt. The king of the North refers to Syria, because in the Bible they always use Jerusalem as the centre. So when the Bible mentions north it always refers to Syria. When the Bible talks about the South, it always refers to Egypt. When the Bible talks about the East it always refers to Iraq or Iran. Now when the Bible talks about the West it always refers to Eastern Europe. Now I think this is very important.

Now do you remember our Lord spoke about the Queen of Sheba from the ends of the earth? But the Queen of Sheba is also the Queen of the South. Now this Queen of the South actually is from the end of the earth. Now very interesting. We all know that the Queen of the South means Queen of Ethiopia. Now Queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia.

So now if you open your map, you look for Jerusalem, now you take a pencil, if you just point to the South then you will find Ethiopia just to the South of Jerusalem. So you try to make a measurement, and according to the measurement on your map you should be able to figure out the distance between Ethiopia and Jerusalem. So if I remember correctly it is around 1400 miles. So you see that is the distance from Jerusalem to Ethiopia.

Now when you reach Ethiopia according to the Bible you have already reached the end of the Earth. Now Egypt is the South, and now Ethiopia is far south. So if you study Isaiah, it talk about something happens in Ethiopia. The Bible not only uses the South but also from afar. And not only that, the Bible talks about something happening from the north, but also says from afar.

So when the Bible talks about far north, what you are going to do is instead of travelling south from Jerusalem, you have to travel north. So now think about it, instead of travelling south for 1400 miles, so now you travel north again the same distance. So then where will you reach? You will reach Moscow today. So now you understand that in the Bible when it talks about far South it means Ethiopia, and the far North means Moscow.

Now there was a very important prophecy in Isaiah. After 1948 when the people of Israel came back from all over the world, normally they don't have any problems or difficulty. However, according to a prophecy in Isaiah, now they will have a problem. Only 2 areas in the world, now they somehow have a problem; they cannot go home, they cannot go back. Now one day God had to say to the far North, now give them up. Now he had to say to the South, don't hold them up. So now that is one of the very important prophecies in the Bible, and that prophecy was fulfilled only around 1990. Now before that, you know that prophecy was not fulfilled.

And everybody knows that after 1948 when people of Israel came back from all over the world they don't have a problem, except for 2 areas. Now Isaiah tried to mention these 2 areas. 800 years before Christ, and that prophecy will only be fulfilled around 1990. So Isaiah used the telescope of time. Now he was able to know one day when people of Israel are coming back to their homeland, only in two areas they will have problems. So I think I better show you this prophecy. Isaiah Chapter 43:5.

*<sup>5</sup>Do not be afraid, for I am with you;*

*I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.*

So remember, since 1948 now the people of Israel when they came back from all over the world, they have no problem from the east or from the west, and some people came back from Iraq. And also some people came back from Europe, so either from Iraq or Iran or Europe, they have no problem. And now we find a problem here. Verse 6: *<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, "Give them up!"* .

Now why? Because somehow, in some area, people will not give the people of Israel up. And now God had to say to the South: *<sup>6</sup>Do not hold them back*' . So you see, only two areas. But then we have to be very careful. The north here does not refer to Syria, and the south here does not refer to Egypt. How do you know? You have to judge it by the context. So if you judge the context you will know what it means here.

So it says: *'<sup>6</sup>Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth'*. So now this north is not just the north, it is far north. So this south is not south, it is far south. Now we already mentioned, far south is Ethiopia. Far north is Russia or Moscow.

Now it is very interesting, after 1948, the people of Israel have no problem coming back to their homeland. Some people even came back from China. You know in about the twelfth century, a group of Jews migrated all the way to China. So they reach a city called Kai Fung. But then they took the last name of the emperor as their last name. But at that time the last name is Chow, so their names are all Chow. But they are all Jews. So somehow now they migrate into China. So since 1948, many Chinese came back to Israel from Kai Fung. So these were very famous Kai Fung Jews. And let us remember, and these people now they are already in Israel. So if you try to go to a Chinese restaurant in Tel Aviv now you don't have to ask what the last name of the owner is, I can guarantee you the owner's name is Chow.

So now you see brothers and sisters, even they have no problem coming back from China. But, they have a problem with either Moscow or Ethiopia, because they won't let them go. About 3.5 million Jews were in Russia by that time. And so you see, they want to go back to Israel but they weren't able to go because they won't give them up.

But finally God said to Gorbachev, now give them up. And then you discover the Berlin wall falls. Then you discover the collapse of the empire of Moscow. One CBS journalist, who is a very good Christian, and who was in Moscow at that time, he told us and he still remember how Gorbachev made some statement like this. He said you Jews always like to go home; you always nag and nag and nag. Now I already have had enough of it, so now I just let you go.

So you see brothers, when God said to Gorbachev give them up, Gorbachev had no way, but had to give them up. Now political scientists don't know how to explain why suddenly there was the fall of Moscow. Now we know why, because God said to the North, give them up. So I use this illustration to show you that when the Bible talks about far north it means Moscow, far south means Ethiopia.

So when you reach Ethiopia you have already reached the end of the earth. So remember now in the Bible you have a sphere, or a scope, of revelation. When God tried to reveal something to us, now he only picked up part of this globe. Now, then you find that all the prophecies are all connected with events within that scope. Of course this globe is very big, it covers the whole planet.

But the Bible does not reveal everything within this globe. The Bible does not talk much about Brazil or Chile, nor even the United States.

Now why is this so? You have to remember when God reveals his words, especially about prophecy; he only talks about a smaller world, other than our globe, because within this scope, there you will find that how all these prophecies and events that happen within that scope. So now you are able to know how big is that scope. So you use Jerusalem as the centre, now you use 1400 miles as the radius. So now you can draw a circle. Now brothers when you reach the circumference, and then you know you have reached the end of this world. But actually the real planet is much bigger than that.

We think that if you reach New Zealand that is the end of the earth. We think that when you reach Chile that is the end of the earth. No. According to the Bible if you reach Moscow that is already the end. If you reach Ethiopia, that is already the end. Remember, now this is the revealed world. So this is not the whole world.

So in the Bible now according to God's prophecy, he only reveals this part of the world. Do you see that? Outside, this part of the world, God is silent. So this is very important. Within this circle, you have Moscow, you have Egypt, you have Syria, you have Ethiopia, you have China, and you have England. But you don't have the United States, nor Canada, nor Brazil. So brothers, now you understand.

Some people always ask me, now how about the United States? I know some of the young people asked me that question. Now I would like to try to answer you. I don't know anything about the United States. The Bible does mention a China, and it talks about England. Especially when it talks about England, it always talks about the Islands. And according to the Bible, you do have a naval power. With help of naval power, then the nation of Israel was reborn. With the great help of the British Empire, it was made possible that finally the nation of Israel should be established in the Middle East.

So read your Bible and you do find England, and you do also find a China in the prophecies. But you don't find the United States. It is very simple why. The revealed world in the Bible, it is using Jerusalem as a centre, and then 1400 miles as the radius. So everything happens within that circle, or within that scope. Now it is in the Bible, otherwise God is simply silent. If God is silent, then we don't know anything about it.

But you know American people always like to be the centre of everything. They were so patriotic, they said that we ought to find something in the Bible about the United States. So finally they found one. When you go the Bible you always find the word Jerusalem. When you look at the word Jerusalem, in the middle of the word you have USA. So if you find Jerusalem, you find USA. So but brothers, you don't find that in the Bible.

So now you understand brothers, in order to understand prophecy, you have to understand this part. So the north it always means Syria. South, always means Egypt. So now when you come back to Daniel Chapter 11, the king of the north it refers to Syria. The king of the South, it refers to Egypt. So remember, that portion of the Bible has been wonderfully fulfilled.

Roughly 160 years before Christ, there was a king of Syria who was very well know: Antioch the fourth. And this king really was very famous in history. He was obsessed with the Greek culture. He wanted to Hellenise the whole world; he wanted to make the whole world Greek. Then they found that the Jewish people are the most difficult people to be Hellenised. But remember, according to history, Antioch the fourth, the king of Syria, or the king of the north, he invaded Jerusalem. Not only that, he even took the Temple of God, and he even sacrificed a pig on the altar. So because of that he really pollutes the whole Temple.

Now remember that part of the historical story was prophesied by Daniel. Remember that only happened 150 years before Christ. Now the book of Daniel was written around 600BC. Now you discover that part of the prophecy was wonderfully fulfilled. However, if you read the context then you discover the prophecy about the king of the north were not fulfilled completely there. That means that some passages are yet to be fulfilled.

So what does that mean? That means before the Lord's return, Syria will become a very important power, to such a point it becomes a threat to the people of Israel. How they became a threat to the people of Israel in the second century BC, in the same way now they will become a threat to the people of Israel at the end times before the Lord's return. So it means that when you study Daniel 11, some parts of the prophecy are yet to be fulfilled.

So if this is true, that means, that one-day Syria will become an important power in this world. Certainly, it will become a threat to the nation of Israel. Read Daniel 11 and you will come to that

conclusion. So part of them is already fulfilled. So you have a Syria of history, and you have a Syria at the end times.

Now yesterday when we studied Isaiah, now we also find a prophecy concerning Damascus. So that means definitely before the end times, Syria or Damascus will play a very important role. So definitely Syria is one of the trees in the list. So now brothers, what happens to that area before the Lord's return? Now remember, if you study Revelation, when you study Revelation Chapter 9, then you will discover there you have 7 trumpets. Now we talk about 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 vials. So when the angel blows the sixth trumpet that already means great tribulation.

So, according to the Bible there will be four angels near the Euphrates River. And those angels, they are fallen angels, so they will be released. Now after they are released they want to carry out a plot. Now according to that plot on a certain day, a certain month and a certain year, one third of the population will be wiped out; it means at least 2 billion people. So what does this mean? The new terrorism we talked about last night, it will reach the peak during the Great Tribulation. Remember the new terrorism was born around September 11, 2001. So we all have witnessed the birth of new terrorism. But if you ask me when that will reach the peak, according to the Bible in the great Tribulation at that time it will reach its peak.

So the Bible never predicts anything about September 11, but the Bible did talk about new terrorism. And the Bible did predict a day when the new terrorism will reach its peak. But more than that, according to Chapters 6-9 of Revelation, there will be three plagues, which is why a third of people will be wiped away. So if only three plagues could cause the death of a third of the population, so these three plagues must represent the weapons of mass destruction. So if you study the Bible, the Bible does tell us about weapons of mass destruction.

So remember brothers and sisters when we come to the great tribulation, by that time there will be weapons of mass destruction that will destroy a third of the world's population. But since September 11 we begin to wake up to the fact. Now this whole world is open to the threats, which are weapons of mass destruction. So if these weapons fall into the hands of the terrorists now it will be a great horrible thing to happen. So remember that is what happened after September 11, the whole world wakes up to a reality that there exist the weapons of mass destruction.

Now whether today Iraq has the weapons of mass destruction or not, that is the big question. According to the intelligence, yes, not only American intelligence, not only British intelligence, but

also French and German. According to intelligence, yes, but according to reality, we don't know. But one thing we know, in the first Persian Gulf War, we know Iraq did have the weapons of mass destruction. Of course at that time they did not have nuclear weapons, but definitely biological and chemical weapons. That is for sure, because that is part of the historic records.

Now we are able to find out and to know the details of these weapons. Actually in the first Persian Gulf War these weapons were already on the warheads. So if Saddam Hussein were able to use them in a very effective way, then the force that these weapons have, according to the records of the United Nations, now actually it can destroy the whole world. So the weapons of mass destruction are very real brothers and sisters.

So that is why Americans were very nervous about Iraq. So after September 11 we all wake up to that fact. So if we talk about WMD everyone know what it is, especially after September 11, now everybody they do recognise the fact. That is why they want to put the pressure on Iraq. Even they may agree to use the force to deal with it. But the whole world unites together to recognise the threat of weapons of mass destruction, especially about the biological weapons.

Now biological weapons actually are called the Hydrogen Bomb of the poor. According to experts, if you want to conquer a territory of 1 square mile of your enemy, if you use traditional weapons it will cost you \$1200. Now if you want to use nuclear war to obtain that territory, it will cost you \$800. If you use chemical weapons \$500. If you use biological weapons, only \$1. So no wonder it is the weapon of the poor. So no matter if you are an already developed country or not, many poor people may have these biological weapons.

So now we understand why we have this Persian War. We know that this was about the weapons of mass destruction. Now because when you are involved with anti-terror war, instead of being defensive you ought to be very offensive. So now that is why we have this war. And this war is about the weapons of mass destruction. Now we still don't know whether Iraq really have them or not. Now according to the US or British Intelligence, they are pretty sure they must be there.

But according to the Bible, those weapons of mass destruction are in the area of the Euphrates. Now remember the Euphrates involves three nations: Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Now one thing is sure, one day definitely you will find weapons of mass destruction there according to the Bible at the End days. So according to the message we had yesterday, we find Syria, we find Iraq, but we don't find Turkey. So now brothers and sisters you can understand roughly when we come to the great

tribulation here, either through Iraq or Syria or in both. By that time definitely they will have weapons of mass destruction. Now we are still not there yet.

Now this war is just over, and we don't know the future of Iraq, whether they have one or not. But now there is a rumour somehow Iraq moved these weapons of mass destruction to Syria. Their scientists have already entered into Syria. So brothers and sisters, do you see that. We don't know what will happen later. Now you have to watch very carefully. You not only want to know what happens to the Kurds, we also want to know what happens to Iraq and Syria. Whether those scientists really fled to Syria we don't know. Whether they really shipped these weapons of mass destruction to that part we also don't know. So let us keep our eyes very wide.

Now we know that according to our Lord's prophecy, that when you see Syria and Iraq put forth its leaves, when it really becomes a power, now brothers, according to Daniel 11, definitely Syria will become a threat to the people of Israel. And brothers and sisters, strictly speaking, before the Lord's return, you have an Islamic alliance. Not only Iran and Iraq, also Indonesia and also Malaysia. But brothers and sisters you know the problem there. You know what they want; they must possess for themselves the habitation of God.

So remember brothers and sisters that is according to Psalm 83. We already have seen the situation there. We already see the conflict in the Middle East. So now we just wait and see. You discover everything is going in that direction. We already see the megatrend. And when we reach the sixth trumpet, four angels will be released. Then for sure the weapons of mass destruction will be used, and a third of the population will die, just like then. So then the New Terrorism will reach its peak. So this simply tells us, actually the great tribulation is much sooner than you think.

Before September 11 you just think that great tribulation must be very remote. But if you ask many Americans, when they went through September 11, you know somehow they have a feeling. Formerly they thought that the world in United States is very different from the world of great tribulation. It is very remote. But brothers and sisters, according to the Bible, September 11, is only the birth of new terrorism. And then finally, when we reach great tribulation, new terrorism will reach its peak. So today we already have reached post 9/11 era. Do you see, this is very important, and this is the reason why the world is divided because of this war. Because those who have gone through Septembers 11 and those who never go through September 11, you are pretty sure they have a different idea. You see?

Let me give you an example. Now if a good dentist always has very good teeth, he may a good dentist, but he will never sympathise with you. Only when a dentist goes through some suffering at midnight, so he knows how terrible that feeling is, then he can sympathise with you. You see brothers and sisters, it is very different for someone who has never experienced tooth pain. And for some people after they experience the tooth pain it is completely different. So now remember our world is divided because some people they have experienced the September 11, some people they haven't. That is why their reasoning is completely different. So now you understand today we already enter into the post 9/11 era. It means that the Lord's return will be very, very soon.

Great tribulation is not American tribulation. September 11 is American tribulation. Great tribulation is a global tribulation. According to the Bible now we are approaching that time. So now we should learn how to escape that great tribulation. Now the rapture of the saints is no longer an academic topic. It becomes very real to us. For yourself and for your children, they have to be ready. Because September 11 is a wakeup call for every Christian. Now the tribulation is coming.

If you only see the birth of new terrorism, then you know when the angel blows the sixth trumpet, new terrorism will reach the peak. One third of the population will go like that. So brothers, now according to Daniel, we have to watch Syria carefully and anything that happens to that nation because our Lord said: *'Behold the fig tree and all the trees'*. Behold means you have to watch carefully. We watch carefully what happens to Israel, we have watched carefully anything that happens to Iraq, Iran and Syria. Syria definitely is one of all the trees. So according to Biblical prophecy we should be able to see the megatrend of the world.

Now we want to go even one step further. When you turn to Daniel, especially chapter 2, remember now Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream. And he saw a great statue. Golden head, silver breast, and copper belly, and iron feet. Now I think we are all familiar with that great statue, and we know that statue actually represents the flow chart of history of mankind. So somehow it gives us a timetable of this world. The gold head speaks of Babylonian empire. Silver breast – the Persian Empire, then Greek Empire, then Roman Empire. And you know that is why that prophecy was very important. Do you see that?

Now for us, most of them have become history. Now we are in the part of the feet. Now when we come to two feet, you remember according to Daniel you have hard clay and you also have iron. Now before the Cold War you know how the world was divided into two parts. One part belonged to clay, another to iron. So now you see you have a nation with iron curtain, and you also have

democratic countries. So for many years you know about the Cold war between these two parts of the world; between the part of the clay and the part of iron. But you know very well after the collapse of the Empire of Moscow, now brothers, we are approaching the part of the ten toes. Do you see that?

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, if you look at this great statue, where are we today? We are already at the very end times. So what do we mean by 10 toes, what does that mean? And because of that you not only have Daniel 2, but also chapter 7. And there you find from the feet lies a lion, bear, leopard, and an unknown beast. So you see you have four beasts there. Now these are another prophesy to the same event.

Now we know these four beasts actually represent four empires. Now the Babylonian empire was compared to a lion, Persian Empire – the bear, Greek Empire – the leopard – very fast, very fast. Within 2 years, Alexander the Great conquered the world at that time, just like a leopard. Then you have an unknown beast, which represents the Roman Empire. Remember, these are all the empires of history. These are the empire mentioned in the Bible. We know that they all went into history.

Now why in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar do you have gold, silver, brass, and copper? As a conqueror of the world, Nebuchadnezzar only sees the outward appearance of the Empire. It is very great, it is very awesome. If you know anything about the Greek Empire, Persian Empire and Roman Empire, now you understand it really gives you an awesome feeling. So remember brothers and sisters, if you visit Rome, even from the ruins of Rome you can still have a glimpse of the greatness and glory of the Empire of Rome; the grandeur of Rome. So remember, brothers and sisters, if you read the Bible, especially Daniel, and in the eyes of a conqueror, this Roman Empire is very awesome, very great.

So you see, that is only one aspect. That is the dream of the emperor. But now in chapter 7 it was a dream of a captive. You see the dream of an emperor and the dream of a captive is very different. The interpretation is completely different. Same four empires, but in the eyes of the emperor: gold silver, brass and copper. But in the eyes of the captive, the one who has been captured into Babylon, when he saw these four empires, what did he see? He did not see gold, silver, brass, and iron; what he saw was four beasts. Do you see that? The emperor only sees something outward, but the captive is able to see something inward. Now you can see the nature of this world.

When you visit Rome you visit the golden house of Nero, but you don't know if he built that house. If you see the inward nature of Nero, for sure, he was bestial in nature. So remember, if you look at the Roman Empire, outwardly speaking, you see the splendour, the grandeur, and the glory of this empire. But if you have the inner sight, you will see the cruelty; you will see the bestial nature in all this empire. That is why you have a lion, bear, leopard and an unknown beast.

So now you see the same reality, yet two perspectives. So either you look at it from the view of a conqueror, or from the view of a captive. So we know that chapters 2 and 7 actually speak of the same event. So that is why these two chapters ought to complement each other, to explain each other. I think that is very important.

For example if you want to know what are the ten toes are, now you have to go to Daniel 7, because in the fourth beast, that beast had 10 horns. So that ten toes actually corresponds to the 10 horns. Now that is very important. And also if you know history very well, Babylon has a long history. You know the first emperor of Babylon was not Nebuchadnezzar. Now why did God say you are the golden head? Without Chapter 7, you just don't know why Daniel said you are the golden head.

Now Babylon had a long history, why Nebuchadnezzar. Why does the Bible counts from Nebuchadnezzar? When you come to chapter 7 you understand it. Why? Because that lion came out from the Great Sea. Now that sea refers to the Mediterranean Sea. Now what does that mean? Even Babylon has a long history, but only Nebuchadnezzar brought the influence of Babylon to the Mediterranean Sea for the first time. So now you understand when the Bible talks about the golden, silver breast, these four beasts, when it talks about Babylonian power, it starts from when the Babylonian power reaches the Mediterranean Sea. The same thing with the Persian Empire. It had a long history, but it was General Cyrus who brought the influence to the Great Sea.

So you see brothers, now it is very clear, these chapters really supplement each other. Now I think that this morning we especially focus on the fourth beast. Now when you look at the fourth beast, or at the iron legs, we know that all refers to the Roman Empire. But we have to be careful. The Bible never says the Roman Empire. Now the Babylonian Empire, the Bible sounds that out. The same thing with the Persian and Greek Empires. You see the Bible even mentions the name of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, but remember the Bible was silent about the fourth beast.

Now of course, if you compare with history you know that was fulfilled by the Roman Empire – that is clear. But from the word of the Bible we were not told. We derived that conclusion from the fulfilment from history, that is all. So most likely, I think this is the correct understanding, the fourth empire should mean the Roman Empire. But because the Bible never says it, we know that it is being fulfilled by the Roman Empire. With that we have no problem.

However, when we come to the fourth empire, only when we compare with history, now we know that is the Roman Empire. Nowhere in the Bible does it use the word Roman Empire. So for that we have to be very careful. So if we are not careful, we may come to a wrong interpretation of the word. Now Roman Empire is correct, but only particularly correct. You have to be very careful to find out what is the whole answer.

So that is why when we come to the fourth beast the Bible says it is an unknown beast, it doesn't tell us what kind of beast this is. Do you see that? Now the first one you know is lion, then you know it is a bear, you know it is a leopard, but the fourth beast the Bible says it is unknown. You don't know how to describe it. It doesn't look like a lion; it doesn't look like a bear. Now what kind of beast is that? So now we can only understand from the prophecy of Daniel. Now when we come to the next part, the fourth beast, first we try to understand that a bit more.

You know Roman Empire is derived into the Eastern and Western Roman Empire, so that is why it has 2 legs. Now one represents the Eastern Empire, the other the western Empire. If these legs represent Roman Empire, what does that mean? It means that these two legs ought to be of the same length. But if you study your history, you find that actually the Western Roman Empire fell first. Then after almost 1000 years, then you have the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire. Now you see these two legs are not of the same length.

So this statue was a crippled one. Now the Bible never tells us. The Bible tells us a great statue, it has two legs. Of course they ought to be of the same length. So then we first ask how this prophecy will be fulfilled then. It was not fulfilled in history, because if you find out about the fulfilment, it ought to be of the same length. So now, something very interesting. Now if you find that they are not of equal length, that means you should study history more. That means we do not know much about our history.

So if you know your history very well, then something very interesting. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, there you have a Holy Roman Empire. Then when you have Holy Roman

Empire, you know that Empire is a German Empire. Don't forget, the title of the German King is Kaiser. Now Kaiser actually is the title of Roman Emperor Caesar. Now you find actually the Western Roman Empire continues now in the form of German Empire. So they continue with the same title of Caesar. So now you know that history continues.

Now the same thing with the eastern Roman Empire. Now after the fall of the so-called Eastern Roman Empire, then you see how the Empire of Russia arose. Now you know the king of Russia has a title called Tsar. Now remember, the title Tsar actually is the same title, Caesar of Roman Empire. So now you see the so-called eastern Roman Empire continued in the form of the Russian Empire. So both lines continue now. Then you want to ask when was the last emperor of both empires. So then you discover William II actually is the last emperor of the German line. Nicholas II was actually the last emperor of the Russian line. So when these emperors were dethroned? 1917.

So brothers and sisters, now you see that these two legs are of the same length. So how do you know that we have already finished that part? The end of the First World War. Here you find two legs are of equal length. But be careful. If you really study history carefully, now it is true, especially if you study the Eastern Roman Empire. As far as the title of the emperor is concerned you know the Empire of Russia really took that line.

But do you know who destroyed Eastern Roman Empire? The Ottoman Empire. It was the Ottoman Empire who really destroyed them. So then Ottoman Empire continued. But the important thing is this, the territory the Ottoman Empire has, was exactly the territory of the old Eastern Roman Empire. So as far the title of emperor is concerned, the Empire of Russia followed that line. But as far as territory is concerned now remember it was the Ottoman Empire that took its place.

So now we ask when did the Ottoman Empire collapse? Again 1917. You see that brothers? It is very clear now. Now you know the Roman Empire always likes to use force. The Ottoman Empire also likes to use force because you remember the Ottoman Empire follows the Islamic Empire. So the Islamic Empire and the Ottoman Empire they share the same nature. So because of that when we talk about the fourth kingdom, now remember in your mind, not only is there the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, but also the German Empire, also the Russian Empire, and also the Ottoman Empire. So remember these all included in the fourth empire. They share the same nature of iron. Do you see that? And so this is the latter part of that statue.

Now something very interesting. Now brothers, if you study the four beasts, you will find 10 horns there. Now if you study history, of course those 10 horns should represent 10 nations. But according to history you never find 10 nations among the Roman Empire. So that means that part of the prophecy was not fulfilled yet, because 10 horns correspond to the 10 toes. So that should represent the 10 nations before the Lord's return. And they were supposed to be in the old territory of the Roman Empire. Now you know Europe was the old territory of the Roman Empire. So if you study history, that bit was never every fulfilled. So this suggests that somehow before the Lord's return the Roman Empire ought to revive. This is only a guess, we need a confirmation.

Now if you study Revelation, when you come to Chapter 13, do you remember there is a beast that comes out of the sea. You see again a beast from the sea. But now when you look at the beast, it looks exactly like the fourth beast in Daniel, and there are 10 horns there. By 10 horns immediately you know that is the fourth beast. Now actually to history, according to Daniel, there are 4 beasts in history. Now when we come to Revelation, what do we see? We see the fourth beast coming out of the sea again. What does that mean? That means the revival of the fourth kingdom.

So now brothers and sisters, now you understand what that means. One day when you see the fourth beast come from the sea it means that the fourth empire will be revived. And finally these 10 nations will have something to do with the Anti-Christ. So now according to the Bible, the Roman Empire definitely will revive, especially in the old territory of the Roman Empire.

Now brothers and sisters, you are in this part of the world, you know very well how today the European Union has become a reality. And then you remember in the beginning it was only the European Common Market. Now gradually you know it becomes a very important identity, even political, in the future probably even military. So brothers and sisters, today's European Union it is the initial and partial fulfilment of the fourth kingdom.

In Europe you use Euros. Let me ask you, last time when Europe used the same currency was when? That was in the time of our Lord Jesus. So by that time you see only in the Roman Empire they use the same currency. So when you use Euros, you already know that somehow that fourth kingdom is revived. But now it is still in the initial stages.

Now the Bible talks about 10 horns. Horns always speak of strength. Now in the European Union you may have more than 10 nations. But before the Lord's return, you will find 10 strong ones.

Now some of the components may be very weak, but for sure you know France and Germany, definitely they are very strong. So you can select carefully, now in a political platform, sooner or later you will discover Germany and France they will be together. Now that explains many things when you read your newspaper. So brothers and sisters we are only in the initial stages of the prophecy here. Now since you live in this part of the world, you will see much clearer than we have in the States. So no doubt fourth empire includes Roman Empire.

So now today's European Union is the initial and partial fulfilment of this prophecy. Be careful, I use the word initial and partial. We still cannot see very clear, because things will develop. One day it will become very, very clear. You see. Also whether the UK will again use the Euro or not is a different story. Now you have to watch very carefully. But no matter what this fourth kingdom is being revived. But more than that, the fourth kingdom also includes the Ottoman Empire. What does that mean? That means the Ottoman Empire also will revive. After September 11, now we begin to see the initial and partial fulfilment of this prophecy. So that is how it explains what happens today.

So my brothers and sisters, now you see that when you talk about all the trees, not only Babylonian Empire, not only Islamic alliance, not only Syria, but also the Roman Empire, and also the Ottoman Empire. Now brothers, again I mention this, some people they probably do not know much about the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire is actually the Turkish Empire. Now the main components are the Turks. So after they conquer the world, they make Islam as their national religion. Then they unite all the nations with an Islamic faith. So now they become the Ottoman Empire. So when you see the Islamic alliance predicted by Psalm 83, if you can see the further development then it will become a political one, a military one. Finally, the revival of the Ottoman Empire.

So brothers, now we conclude our study here. According to the book of Daniel, now we will add to the list here. Now of all the trees, you have Roman Empire, and also Ottoman Empire, and also don't forget Syria. So if we know '*Behold the fig tree and all the trees*', now we should be able to know what time it is now. We are pretty sure it is already past midnight. Now the night is very, very dark. We are waiting for the morning star to appear. Now our Lord will come back as the Son of Righteousness. No matter if you watch or don't watch, pray you will see the sunrise. However, only for those who watch and pray, they will see the morning star, the brightest star before the sunrise.

Now why does our Lord says watch and pray? Remember brothers, we are going to see the morning star. For the worldly people, they don't have to watch; anyway they will see the sunrise. But the morning star is a reward, especially reserved for those who watch and pray. So brothers and sisters, we pray that we all will see the morning star. Thank the Lord.

Before the feet of our Lord on the Mount of Olives, our Lord will come secretly as a thief. And he won't give you a phone call first. And when the thief comes he always tries to get the treasure. If the thief always comes to my house to collect the garbage, I wish that he would come everyday! But no, the thief always aims at the treasure. We are the treasures of our Lord. And because of this, Jesus died for us. Thank God, he will come back and steal us away. So then we really see the morning star. Do you see that?

This is a most difficult time. Because before the dawn is the most difficult part. The night is very dark and also it is very difficult to keep awake. And you almost fall into sleep. But let us carry on, let us continue, let us march on, let us refuse to sleep. Now brothers, this is the way that we will meet the coming of our Lord. May the Lord really speak to our hearts.

There was a true story in Taiwan. A couple they were separated because of the Japanese war. So the wife in Taiwan was waiting for the moment that she will have a reunion with her husband. But that war seemed to last forever. So she couldn't wait anymore. One week before Taiwan was going back to China, she couldn't wait anymore. And then she remarried. She remarried! Then after 1 week, her husband came back in glory. She was so regretful. She said if I knew that it was only 1 week more, I would be faithful to the very end.

That was a tragedy brothers and sisters. Now brothers and sisters we ought to be faithful to the Lord to the very end. Just a few more miles brothers and sisters. Probably just one week. Let us be faithful. Let us hold on to the very last moment. And then you will discover that the morning star will be our reward. So may the Lord speak to our hearts.

Tonight we will cover the book of Ezekiel. So this time we have gone through Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. So we go through these four books to explain the prophetic words of Christ, to explain the fig tree and all the trees. Now tonight, something very important. Now we can only have an overview of these books. We did it very quickly. Actually, what we had was only the outline. But this is a very good challenge to you. Because by this way you are able to have the key to open these four major prophets. Then it will be very easy for you to go to the Minor Prophets.

Then the 17 prophetic books will be open to you. So let us pray and ask the Lord to help us to understand his prophetic word.

Now this time when I was in East London, I shared with them about the fundamentals of Christian life. We touched on the Word of Life. But this time when we are here we talk about the prophetic word of Christ. So I suggest to brothers and sisters, if possible you try to get the tapes from East London, because we need the balance. We need these two sides of the word of God, then we may follow him in a very healthy way.

Sorry, I have borrowed 30 minutes this morning. I have no way to give it back to you. So I have to say I am very sorry, and let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we really commit this time into Your hands. We thank You, You did speak to us. We pray that may this word sink very deeply into our hearts. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2003: Brother Christian Chen, Portsmouth – 7.30pm**

Let us turn to Luke Chapter 21:29-31.

*<sup>29</sup>He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*

Let us look to the Lord once again in prayer.

*Dear Lord, we thank You so much because You are with us these days. We thank You for Your presence. We thank You for Your anointing. We know that You must have a purpose for this conference. We know that the reason we are here is because You have a purpose for every one of us. Now we come to the last session of this conference. We really pray Lord, continue to anoint our ears. We also pray that Your presence will be so real in our midst. Now we pray that You continue to speak to us and our prayer is that Lord, we will be like those wise men. After meeting You they would no longer go the same way back home. Thank You Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

Now we come to the last session of this conference. We all know that we are occupied with the prophetic word of Christ. We almost just took one verse and dwelled on that verse: ‘Behold the fig tree and all the trees’. Now I think somehow, by the grace of the Lord, we will begin to understand that important verse. Now tonight we will go one step further. Tonight I think we would like to approach it from the prophecy of Ezekiel.

We know there are four Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. Now in order to understand the fig tree and all the trees, we have touched a little bit on the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. Now about the fig tree, that really tells us the prophecy of Israel. Now about all the trees, this is the prophecy about the Gentiles, about the whole world, or about nations. Now you know in the Bible, they try to classify human beings into three classes: the Jews, the Greeks, and the Church of God.

Now if you study all the prophecies in the Bible, by now you know there are about 1800 of them. So if you try to classify these 1800 prophecies, then you can divide it into 3 classes. Now a group

of prophecies belongs to Israel, and another class of the prophecies, concerning the Gentiles, or the world, or the nations. Then definitely you will find a class of prophecies, speaking of the church.

Now, our Lord said, let us learn the parable from the fig tree. Now since the fig tree in the Bible always represents Israel, but now the Lord puts it in a very interesting way: 'Let us learn the parable from the fig tree'. In another words, Israel is nothing but a parable. Now if Israel is only a parable, then what is the reality? In other words, Israel is nothing but a shadow. So somehow in God's heart, there must be something which is much more real than Israel. So our Lord simply uses Israel as our illustration. He uses Israel as an illustration kit. Then we are able to understand something that is really in the heart of God.

So now we ask one question. In the Bible, if we somehow can borrow the ladder of Jacob, now suppose we today can climb to heaven. If we ask God, now what is really in Your heart? So I think this is the matter we will be occupied with tonight. So in other words, tonight we will talk about the church. Now we have talked about Israel, we have talked about the nations. Now definitely we have talked about something that happens to this world. But there are definitely a class of prophecies, which really speaks concerning the church.

So now we would like to find out, according to the prophetic word of our Lord, when we study the prophecy in the Bible, can we somehow see the future of the church? Or let us ask another question. Do we think the church will have tomorrow? Now the church has today, we are pretty sure. But do we think the church will have tomorrow?

Now to answer that question, it simply means whether, according to the Bible, if there are any prophetic word about the church. So now that phrase our Lord said: 'Let us learn the parable from the fig tree', somehow it tells us the prophecy concerning the church in some way is related to the prophecy of Israel.

Now if you understand well the prophecy of Israel then we will understand the prophecy concerning the church. Now the reason and logic is very simple, because even God has two classes of people. Now earthly people: the Jews or the Israelites; heavenly people: the church. So Abraham has two classes of descendants: Earthly descendants, the people of Israel; heavenly descendants, the saints, or the church of God.

So now I think we are very clear about this. But then if you study the whole Bible, the Old Testament talks about something in relation to the earthly descendants, the earthly people. Then when you come to the New Testament, now we know something about how God is dealing with his heavenly people. If you really study them carefully then we find that God has only one way to deal with these two people, whether they are heavenly, or whether they are earthly. The way he dealt with the earthly people is the same way he deals with the heavenly people. So because of that now this history of earthly people in some way reflects the history of the heavenly people. So because we have arrived at this conclusion, then this will give us a very important key. When the Bible predicts something about the people of Israel, somehow in the same way the Bible predicts about the church.

Now I think I have to explain a little bit before we can go on. So now let me just give you an illustration. For example, let's turn to John 7:37-38.

*<sup>37</sup>On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*

This is a very interesting portion of the word. Let me use this illustration to explain what I am driving at. Now in order to understand this portion, first you must understand the last and greatest day of the feast. Now this feast actually is the Feast of the Tabernacle. From the Bible we know that the Feast of Tabernacle has 8 days. So therefore we have the last day. And then Jesus stood up and cried out. So why our Lord Jesus lifted up his voice? Why cry out? Because that is something to do with that background.

So we have to understand that background. Normally on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacle, all the people of Israel they will gather in the temple. Now if you study the tabernacle, you have the Outer Court, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies. Now on the last day, remember the people of Israel they will travel to Jerusalem three times a year: Feast of Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacle, so from every corner of the land of Israel, they are all gathered together. Finally they reach Jerusalem and come to the temple site, and now they gather together. How good it is that the brethren will dwell together. So now they are in the temple of God.

Now I have to try to explain a little bit. Now suppose this is the temple mount: South, North, West and East. Now normally the people of Israel, they approach the city from the south. So I already

told you this temple complex is a huge one, from the south to the north is almost equivalent to 6 American football fields. Then from the west to the east, about 5 football fields.

Now when you first enter into the temple site then you enter into the Gentile Court. The Gentile Court means that even Gentiles can be there. Why? Because the temple of God is supposed to be the temple for all nations. Now what does that mean? That means this will become the house of Prayer for all nations. All the Gentiles can come to the temple to pray. So where they can approach and pray, there you have a Gentile Court.

Then when you approach the middle part of the temple there you will find a wall. Not very tall, but that wall makes it clear that Gentiles cannot go across that. So only the people of Israel can cross that line. So then you come to the middle part of the temple, and actually this is the proper temple. The whole site is the temple complex, but as far as the proper temple is concerned, it is the middle part. Then you will find that this whole building is facing east.

So then you have entered through a gate. Now this gate is the Beautiful Gate described in the Bible. Now if you enter into that gate, you don't come to the outer court yet, not yet. Then you will enter into a court called Women's Court. Now the Women's Court doesn't mean it is just for the women. The Women's Court actually is for the whole family of Israel. So children, women, men, they all can be there. Do you see that? So if you say we are going to dwell in the house of God, now that refers to the Women's Court. So now you discover it is so wonderful that the brethren call dwell together.

Remember, they sing Psalm 133. When do they sing that song, and where do they sing that song? Now you see after the journey, now they really experience the highway to Zion. So finally they reach the Mount of Olives, then they descent into the valley, and then from there then you climb to the lowest hill among them all, that is Mount Zion. Ok, so then from Mount Zion, finally Mount Moriah. So now you can see that is how you approach the temple site, and finally you come to the temple site.

Let me put it this way. Because they come from different places, and then when you approach the Temple Mount, so actually this way you are only going up. So now you understand sometimes they are very tired. So when they travel together, normally they sing the song of the Psalm 133. You see, for them they start from Psalm 120, so then when they sing Psalm 133, now they are not just in Mount Zion, now they come to the temple site. Now when they enter into the Women's Court, then

they will Psalm 133. Behold, how good it is that the brethren can dwell together. Because when they enter into that Women's Court, now you discover the whole family of Israel, they are all there.

So now you understand, these people become the household of God. You have the House of God; you also have the Household of God. The House of God, you talk about the building, but when you talk about the Household of God, you talk about God's people. So this is very important. That is why in the New Testament it says we are the Household of God, and then that we are being built up as the temple of God.

So you see brothers, now very important. When you talk about Household of God, it means the family of God. So how do you experience the household? That means when you really enter into that Women's Court. So remember, that is why we say Women's Court.

If you from Women's Court go in this direction, you find that from the Women's Court you have to climb 15 steps. Then you will come to the Court of Israelites. Then only men can enter into that part. Women and children they will live in the Women's Court. So when we talk about the Household of God, now especially if you look at the Women's Court, everything is happening there. So after the 15 steps, then the Israelites Court, and then the Court of Priests. Now you really have the altar. So that is the so-called Outer Court. Then you enter into the Holy place. Then finally, the Holy of Holies.

I just give you this picture because this background is very important. Now when they sing the Psalms of Ascents, now on their way up to the mountain, on their way they sing those 15 Psalms. But especially during the feast, during those 8 days for example, when they gather together in the Women's Court, then the Levites they will sing the 15 Psalms. So for example, how do they do it? They will climb from the Women's Court. 1st Step they sing Psalm 120, then 121, and finally they finish the 15 Psalms. So during the feast, now that is what happened there. Some Levites they will sing the Psalms of Ascents.

Now on the last day, I think we better go back to John 7:37. <sup>37</sup>*On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink."*

Now on that day, normally the priest will go to a water source. You remember one day our Lord healed the blind. So he asked him to go to the Pool of Siloam, that is the water source in Jerusalem.

So now all the priests, they all go to the water source, and each one of them will carry water. Then they go back to the temple.

Now then they will go to the Court of Israel. From there they will pour the water from the threshold of the temple, then along these 15 steps, so the water will flow down from the threshold towards the people. Because there are so many priests, so they got so much water. So when that water really comes down from the threshold what do you see? Now you see a river. Do you see that? Now a river flows from the temple. So everybody is able to observe this.

Then our Lord took that opportunity. He stood and cried out saying: <sup>37</sup>*If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.* <sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.* Now everybody sees the water. So our Lord said: <sup>37</sup>*If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.* <sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'*

So with that background of the river of living water, the Lord uttered these words. Now our Lord even says as the Scripture has said. Now let me ask you, some of you know the Old Testament quite well. You go back to the Old Testament. Where in the Old Testament you have such a phrase as: 'From his inner most shall flow the river of living water'? Now you don't find any.

But don't forget those Jewish people were well versed with the Old Testament. Now why every Feast of Tabernacle do they have to let the water come out from the Temple? There must be some reason behind it. Remember, all those people knew the Bible very well. So that is why the Lord said: 'As the scripture said'. In other words, these things should remind you of something recorded in the Old Testament.

Now that is very important. Where could you find such a picture? You can only find this in the book of Ezekiel. Now this is the book we are going to talk about tonight. Now in order to understand the main message about that book this is a very good illustration because this simply tells you a picture recorded in the book of Ezekiel. Now I think I don't have time to go through it.

Now if you turn to Chapter 47 of Ezekiel, you discover water really comes out of the temple. From the threshold you discover that the water really flows east. And then when someone measures the water they find that it is 1000 cubits. Then the Bible says the water deepens. So now as deep as their ankles, and then another 1000 cubits. Now the water even to the knees. Then the third

measurement, to the loins. And now after the fourth measurement it becomes a river. So you see brothers, you have a river of living water that flows from the temple. And finally that water will reach the Dead Sea and then sweeten the Dead Sea.

Today the Dead Sea is nothing but death. You don't find any life there it is so salty. And then you find that you can even float on the Dead Sea. You can read your Bible while you are floating on the Dead Sea. So you know that the Dead Sea is the lowest spot in the whole of Israel, almost 430 metres below sea level. Now you have a river of living water all the way from Jerusalem, and all the way to the Dead Sea.

Now if you know your geography, suppose you take a cross section from west to east, and then you discover this side is the Mediterranean Sea. And then we have to go up, and then you come to the highest point, which is Jerusalem. Then you travel east, and then you are going down and down and down. Now it is even lower than sea level. And finally you reach the Dead Sea. Do you see that?

So if you look at the geography, Jerusalem is the highest point and the Dead Sea is the lowest point. Now you see why in the Bible, Jerusalem represents testimony, because God really puts the lampstand in the highest place. Now in terms of this Dead Sea, this is the lowest point. Now you begin to appreciate that the highest point is Jerusalem.

So now what happens in the book of Ezekiel? Chapter 47 tells us the water really comes out from the temple and finally towards the Dead Sea. Now eventually it changes the Dead Sea into the Sea of Galilee. Then you find the trees everywhere and then you find fishermen around the shore. So it reminds you of the Sea of Galilee. Today in the land of Israel you have two waters: the Sea of Galilee speaks of life, Dead Sea, speaks of death.

Now this is the problem today. The Israel government and Jordan government they tried to have a joint effort to solve the problem of the Dead Sea. But don't forget, according to Ezekiel one day there will be water coming out from the Temple and it will become a river, and finally it will sweeten the Dead Sea. Now that is Ezekiel chapter 47. Now what does that mean? Why did our Lord said: <sup>37</sup>*If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.* <sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*

Now in order to understand that, I have to add one more footnote. That will bring out the theme of Ezekiel. Now if you study the whole book of Ezekiel, in the earlier part of that book we were told that the glory of God began to withdraw from the Temple of God. Now you know that according to the Old Testament, the glory of God is in the Holy of Holies. It is above the ark. It is between the cherubim, especially in the Mercy Seat. So there you find the glory of God.

But somehow this book of Ezekiel tells us, for some reason now the glory of God begins to withdraw. You see? But when the glory of God began to withdraw, He withdraws in a very slow way. Now from the Holy of Holies, He moves to the threshold, then leaves the whole temple site, and finally moves to the Mount of Olives. Slowly, from the Mount of Olives, He ascends to heaven. So now that is what happens in the book of Ezekiel.

Now why did the glory of God withdraw from the Temple? Very simple. When God no longer dwells among His people. In other words, because the unfaithfulness of His people, because of the unholiness of His people, because of the pollution of His people, this will produce an effect. Now it is as if this situation persecutes the glory of God, and in such a way, now the glory of God can no longer dwell there. So God said: You must be holy, because I am holy. Why? Because if you are holy then God can dwell in the midst of his people. Now when His people are far away from God, it is almost impossible for God to dwell there anymore.

So remember, when the people of Israel, when they become backsliding, when they turned their back to God, now even though temple service is going on, they still have the priests, they still have the temple, everything is as usual, but brothers and sisters, the reality is no longer there. Now remember, God hates counterfeits; God hates pretension. What God wants is reality. You see brothers? Now this is the way God deals with the earthly people of God, and it is also the way he deals with the church.

Now remember, the church cannot have pretension. Now remember, if we are holy, God can be with us. The presence of God is here; the glory of God is here. But when we are no longer in that condition, if we have lost our virginity. If we have lost the reality, then brothers, now God has to do something very drastic. We only have appearance without reality. God does not want to continue in such a pretension. That is hypocrisy. That means we become hypocrites. That is why our Lord Jesus always rebuked the Pharisees. Why? Because they don't have reality. So that is what happens.

Now in the time of Ezekiel, now you remember, Daniel was among the captives who were being captured to Babylon. Not only Daniel, but also Ezekiel. So when Daniel was in Babylon, he got the revelation of the book of Daniel. When Ezekiel was in Babylon, now he sees the revelation of the book of Ezekiel. So now we were told, the glory of God began to retreat. The glory of God began to withdraw. Finally, it ascends to heaven.

So no wonder, in the book of Daniel, God is described as the God of Heaven. Now if you study Genesis, God is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. But because now He withdraws His glory from this earth, God is no longer the God of the Earth. God withdraws Himself all the way to Heaven. So now God is described as the God of Heaven. So you see brothers, it is because of the people of Israel has lost her virginity.

So in order to react, in order to help people of Israel to repent, the Lord withdraws himself, and now the temple of God becomes an empty shell. The temple of God just becomes wood and stone. Then God allows it to be burned. God used Nebuchadnezzar to burn the whole city, and then in the Temple there will be no stone upon another stone. Brothers and sisters, that is the story of how the people of Israel were captured to Babylon. But before they were captured to Babylon, first God had to withdraw his glory. Then the whole Temple becomes an empty shell. Then it can be destroyed. Now no stone will be upon another stone.

So that happened around 600BC. And the same thing happened in 70AD. You remember when the disciples said, look at this building, what stone, and what a temple. And what did Jesus say? The time shall come when there will be no stone upon another stone. I will leave your house desolate. In the early times our Lord said, I should dwell in my Father's house. So he considers the Temple of God as the house of God, the house of my Father. But remember, one day when the reality is gone, so what our Lord say? I will leave your house. It is no longer my Father's house.

Now brothers and sisters, because it becomes your house, when the glory of God withdraws from that temple, now is the time. No stone upon another stone. This is honesty, this is real. Do you see that? Because you have nothing inside, no more God's glory, no more God's presence, so now there is no stone upon another stone. Those who are in love with wood and stones, let them continue, because God is no longer there, the glory of God is no longer there. So brothers, this is the early part of the book of Ezekiel.

But then, after the Jerusalem has really been destroyed, then you discover the tone of Ezekiel changed. And then Ezekiel tells us, now one day the glory of God will come back. The glory of God will return. So when you come to the latter part of Ezekiel, and you discover one day now that glory indeed comes back to the Temple. Now after the glory of God comes back to the Temple, then you come to chapter 47 and then you discover something new happens to the temple that has never happened before. After the glory comes back to the temple, then you discover water comes out from the Temple and it becomes a river of living water and sweetens the Dead Sea. Now brothers, this will happen only after the glory of God comes back.

So brothers, now you understand, why this people of Israel why every Feast of Tabernacle, you always see the river of living water come out from the temple, like the river of living water. So every Feast of Tabernacle the people of Israel are reminded of chapter 47 of Ezekiel. What does that mean? That means these people they are waiting for the return of the glory of the Messiah. Do you see that? So that is what they are waiting for, since the Messiah hasn't come. So for that reason, they are waiting for the Messiah. They are waiting for the glory of God to come back. So that is why every Feast of Tabernacle they have to have a celebration, they have to make a show, they have to remind all the people of Israel, Messiah hasn't come back yet. We are still waiting for the return of the glory of God. Now brothers, that was the background.

But now our Lord has a message: The Messiah already come. Our Lord Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Saviour of Mankind. While these people of Israel still waiting for the Messiah, our Lord wants to remind them the Messiah whom they are waiting for is already here. And the glory of God already returns. How do you know? According to John. What does John say? The Word became flesh, Tabernacle among men. So He is our tabernacle. Now in the tabernacle you ought to see the glory of God. So what does John say? We have beheld His glory. So in other words, the glory of God has already returned in the person of our Lord. If you meet our Lord, then you see the glory of God. So that is the message. Do you see that?

If He is the Messiah, if He is the Saviour of mankind, now let him come to me and drink. These people they are thirsty. They are still waiting for the Messiah. This means they are still thirsty. They have something empty inside them. Now who can fill that vacuum? Only our Lord Himself. So He is the Messiah. Do you see that? Now our Lord tries to teach them, do you see the water coming out from the Temple? What did our Lord say? <sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*

You saw the water from the Temple, but don't forget, those who believe in me, they are the Temple of God. So their innermost being, means that from the holy of Holies of the Temple, will flow the rivers of living water. So do you see that? You were occupied with the material temple; this is nothing but a shadow. This is only a parable. Let us learn the parable from the fig tree. The temple belongs to the fig tree, but this temple is not real, because this is only an illustration to tell you that if one day you believe in the Lord Jesus they become the household of God. Do you see that? Now they are the Temple of God. This is the reality. So for that reason, from their innermost being, shall flow rivers of living water. No wonder Paul told us, do you not know that you are the Temple of God? The temple is you.

So brothers, it is very clear. Now the people of Israel they are still waiting for the Messiah, but actually the Messiah is here. The glory of God is already back in the person of our Lord Jesus. But more than that, now the glory of God returns in His church. So where today you can find the glory of God? In Christ and in His church. So in Christ you see the glory of God and also in the church; that glory has already come back. So you see brothers, if you study Haggai, the Bible says: The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former. Now the former glory is the glory you can find in the temple of Solomon. But don't forget the latter glory of this house is much greater. Why? Because only in the church you will find the reality.

So my brothers now it is very clear. When you study the history of Israel, actually you are studying the history of the church. When you study the prophecy of Israel, actually you are studying the prophecy of the church. Do you see that? When our Lord said: Learn the parable from the fig tree. Yes, you have prophecy about Israel. But more than that, at the same time you will see the prophecy concerning the church. I think this is very important.

Let me mention one thing more, when you study the Old Testament, especially the prophetic books, for example like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, you find something very interesting. Now the Bible talks about Israel, the Bible mentions Zion, and many prophecies. Prophetic books, means the prophetic word of God. So definitely, those prophecies will be fulfilled.

Now we have a question: If you ask those people who insist on reform theology, if you really follow the reformation school, and then those Bible scholars will tell you, God has already set aside the people of Israel. Today the church already takes the place of Israel. So if you study Isaiah and Jeremiah, when you find some prophecy, for example, this morning we talk about God said to the far north, give them up. And God said to the south, don't hold them back. Now we know this is the

prophecy about the Israelites. How they really finally come back to their homeland, and that very important prophecy was fulfilled around 1990. So we do have the prophecy concerning the people of Israel.

But now you have a problem. If you believe the church already takes the place of Israel, as some Bible scholars will believe, if this is true so that means that prophecies in Jeremiah or Isaiah does not apply to people of Israel, because the church has already taken its place. So actually this is a prophecy about the church, it does not apply to Israel at all.

But now if you follow dispensational school when we talk about the brethren, especially in this country, suppose you study in a theological school like Dallas Theological School, you find that many people they really follow the dispensational school. Now for the scholars who belong to that school, they will tell you, the prophecy in the Old Testament, if it says Israel it means Israel, it literally will be fulfilled. So you see brothers, now among the evangelical circles, then you discover the children of God are different in this view.

But don't forget, if we know what our Lord has taught us, it is true no doubt it applies to the earthly people of Israel, but don't forget when we study the Old Testament especially Isaiah or Jeremiah, then you find the fulfilment is a different fulfilment. A passage, a prophecy, now this prophecy, if you take its literal value, then it applies to the people of Israel, but if you take the spiritual value, now definitely it applies to the church. So for that reason in Isaiah 49 you have two Israels. You see? Literally you have two Israels. Now in the beginning Israel refers to Messiah. How do we know there are two Israels? Because later we were told that now the Israel will come to Israel. Now remember, Israel will come back to Israel. Now this Israel means Messiah. But another Israel refers to the people of Israel. Now probably you don't believe it, so let us turn to Isaiah 49:1-3.

*<sup>1</sup>Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.*

*<sup>2</sup>He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.*

Now listen carefully to verse 3.

*<sup>3</sup>He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."*

Now this Israel, refers to Messiah, does not apply to people of Israel. How do we know? Let us read on. Let us come to verse 5.

*<sup>5</sup>And now the Lord says – he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself.*

We have two Israels here; one Israel is given in verse 3. You have another Israel in verse 5. Now the first Israel is the Messiah, so the second Israel is the people of Israel. Now the people of Israel may be gathered to Messiah. So you see that, there are two Israels. When you see the word Israel, it may mean Messiah, it may also mean the people of Israel. So the Messiah is the servant of God.

Now in the book of Isaiah, you also find the people of Israel and also the servant of God. You have two Israels; you have two servants in the book of Isaiah. One applies to Messiah; one applies to people of Israel. So you understand brothers, for that reason it is very clear why the people of Israel are called Israel, because the name of the forefather Jacob was changed into the name of Israel. Since Jacob was called Israel, so all the people are called Israel. Do you see that? And because the Messiah our Lord is called Israel. So we are also true Israel.

So brothers and sisters, because of that this gives us a very important key to the Old Testament prophecies. When you come to the word Zion, it applies to earthly Zion. It also applies to the church. You see that is very important. On one hand this is the prophecy of Israel, one the other hand this is the prophecy of the church. Very clear. Now let me give you one illustration, because this is very important. Otherwise we won't be able to understand some of the prophecies given in the book of Ezekiel. Now for example, let us come to verse 12.

*<sup>12</sup>See, they will come from afar – some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Sinim.*

Now you have to read the context. Now why they come from afar? Because the people of Israel will come to Israel, because one of the missions of the Messiah is to call them back. So this indeed is a wonderful prophecy to tell us the people of Israel will come back to their homeland since 1948. But now they shall come from afar. These will come from the north and from the west. Now this north is far north, so this means they come from Moscow. And also from the west, these are the far west. This means they come from either Canada or United States. So this a very clear fulfilment here. And these from the land of Sinim, these are from China, far East. So here talks about East,

West or North, it is all far. So according to this principle, since 1948, you find many people come from the far north, far east and far west. From Russia, from United States, or from China. Roughly, from more than 100 nations of the whole world. So brothers, this is indeed a prophecy about the earthly people of God.

But don't forget, because Messiah has a double mission. On the one hand the people of Israel will gather to him. Now in 1948, our Lord did do that. He did gather his people to his wings. But on the other hand, this Messiah has another mission. Now the mission is very simple, I will also make you a light of the nations that salvation may reach to the end of the earth. So because of that in the context we talk about the spring of salvation. Now here you find many people from afar, from the north, from the far south, from the far west. Now they come to the spring of salvation. Do you see that? In other words, when they come to the spring of salvation they believe in Jesus as their Saviour.

So do you understand, our Lord Jesus on one hand He gathers His earthly people around 1948. But on another hand our Lord is also the Saviour of mankind. So many people from different parts of the world really come to the spring of salvation. So now behold, these shall come from afar. These will come from the north and from the west; these people come from the far north, from Moscow, now they come to the spring of salvation. What does that mean? You know very well. After the fall of Berlin wall, after the collapse of the empire of Moscow, do you know what happened to that nation? Somehow many people, we don't know why or how, they really come to the spring of salvation. It is a miracle in the last century.

Remember, after the people of Israel came back to their homeland, on one hand they did come back to their homeland, but on the other hand because our Lord is the Saviour of mankind, so you discover around 1990, God said to Gorbachev, give them up, and then more than 1 million Russian Jews came back to Israel. For a period of time almost every 20 minutes you will find a 747 which really carried Russian Jews back to Israel. Now there are about 1 million Russian Jews to their homeland. There were about 3000 scientists from Russia. And more than that, if they can organise 5 orchestras now you can see that these people really come from afar. They really come back to their homeland. Why? Because God said to Gorbachev give them up. Then the empire of Moscow collapsed.

Now brothers, for many, many years, people considered Communism as the ideal in their life. Young people devoted their life for that. But all of a sudden the empire collapse. A vacuum was

created. Their idol collapsed into pieces. Then the sea of the Gospel somehow reached that land. You don't know why. You don't know how, many people come to Jesus. So if you visit Russia today you will find that many people come to the spring of salvation. So behold these will come from the north, from afar. So what does that mean? These people come from Moscow.

But something even more interesting, these that are from China. Now brothers, the same thing happened. This nation has worshipped idols for more than 500 years. They don't know the true God. But brothers and sisters, the same thing happened. Somehow a vacuum was created in every one of them. And then when the seed of God's word had been sowed in that land, you don't know how many people God saved.

A few years ago according to the government records it is about 46 million Christians today. But don't forget, this is a very conservative estimation. I think it is not the exact figure. Today in China, at least you will find 100 million who come to the spring of salvation. So you see brothers, no wonder, we were told that there are these from the land of China.

So brothers and sisters, do you see the Bible fulfilment here. On the one hand it refers to the Kai Fung Jews that came back to Israel in 1948. But don't forget since the rebirth of the nation of Israel, for some reason we don't understand how there are so many Christians in that remote land of China which is most difficult for you to evangelise. But thank God, we really don't know why and we really don't know how, but now brothers according to this prophecy, there are these from the land of China. Now brothers, what has happened to China today, and what has happened to Russia today? That is why we have verse 13.

*<sup>13</sup>Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.*

Now the Chinese people, for more than 100 years, they are an afflicted people. They are people always of suffering, a war after another war. But brothers and sisters, thank the Lord, you just cannot imagine how all these Chinese are in His heart. So God has performed a wonderful miracle. You just cannot imagine how God can evangelise that land. Now you have more than 100 million people coming to the spring of salvation. Isn't that wonderful, this miracle indeed fulfilled in our eyes.

So brothers, don't fight. Sometimes reform people say this is the truth. We have the truth. And some dispensational people say now we have the truth. Both of them are correct. Do you see that? Because in Isaiah you have two Israels: one is a heavenly one, one is an earthly one. So the same portion of the Bible, do you see that? Just one portion. All we have is verse 12 here. It can be applied to Israel; it also applies to the church. So brothers, one single prophecy has a double fulfilment. So that is the law of interpretation.

So when you study the prophetic books, you have to use this key, otherwise you may lose the treasure here. If you insist that this Israel ought to be applied to the church, then you will be blind to certain things. So we have to come back to the word. In a single prophecy, you will find double fulfilment. So you see brothers, if we understand this, we are able to understand Ezekiel.

Now when you compare these four books, in Isaiah and Jeremiah, you have the fig tree and all the trees. And in Daniel there is the same thing. But Daniel makes emphasis on all the trees. And the fig tree is in the background. Do you see that? Now that is Daniel.

But how about Ezekiel? Ezekiel discovers the nations, all the trees in the background. But then you find the fig tree is in the foreground. Why? Because now important thing is this. Now God's eye especially focuses on His own people. Now the encouragement is this, one day they return shall come back; now the people of Israel should be restored. Do you understand? That is exactly the meaning of learning the parable from the fig tree. Now what does that mean? The fig tree has been withered from the root. According to our Lord, one day now that tree will be revived and will put forth leaves again. When that happens now the son of Man is near.

Now brothers, why did our Lord make such an issue? Now what do you mean? In 1948 the nation of Israel is reborn, what does that mean? As far as Israel is concerned, after they have been captured into this world for 1800 years, in 1948 the Lord really gathered them back. So what does that mean? This means revival; this means recovery. So brothers and sisters it is by the mercy of the Lord. Now what do you mean by revival? Revival means the glory of God returns. When the glory of God returns to his people, now that is the beginning of revival.

So brothers and sisters, this is very interesting, that is what our Lord talked about. Now after so many years the fig tree already withered, because of the miraculous work of God in 1948 then the tree began to put forth leaves. So this is something to do with God's work of recovery. Do you see that? Now because God still consider people of Israel as His chosen people, He never gives them

up. But because of that, now you discover God wants to restore. Why? Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, and that covenant is an everlasting one. Because of that, God wants to restore His people.

The same thing applies to the church, because God's covenant with us is an eternal covenant. So even when we fail brothers, God always restores us. So no wonder once saved, forever saved. We may lose the joy of our salvation, however, we never lose our salvation. So brothers and sisters, how are you so sure? Because the new covenant is an eternal covenant, an everlasting covenant. No matter what condition you are in now brothers, our God always honours His covenant. The people of Israel is just a parable, is an illustration. The way He dealt with the earthly people is the way He deals with the heavenly people.

So because of that we thank the Lord. Even though we fail, God always restores us. God always restores us. This is true of individuals; it is also true with the church. That is why the church needs revival. What do you mean by revival? Revival simply means that after so many years, God has withdrawn his glory. God has withdrawn his presence. You may have a building, you may have a wonderful building, but this is nothing but wood and stones. It is only an empty shell. But now only when God's glory returns, thank God, this is revival. This was true with the Welsh revival. But before the Lord's return, there will be great revival, there will be recovery. Do you see that? For that reason, now our Lord said let us learn the parable from the fig tree. So now we understand, that fig tree blossomed again. That tree put forth leaves again. Wonderful. You see this speaks of the work of recovery of God.

But listen carefully, when you go to the Old Testament, when the Bible talks of the fig tree, strictly speaking, the fig tree actually not only represents the nation of Israel, actually the fig tree in the Bible speaks of the four aspects of Israel. One aspect is the nation. So fig tree represents the nation of Israel, yes. More important than that, if you study Old Testament, the fig tree also represents the land of Israel. Now that is important. Third, the fig tree also represents the Temple of Israel. So what does that mean? That speaks of the holy temple. That speaks of the Temple of God. And more than that, the fig tree also represents the city of Israel. Israel has only one city, the city of Jerusalem. The city has only one temple, the temple of God.

So now you see the four aspects. So remember, strictly speaking, when the Lord said, when the fig tree put forth its leaves, don't forget it not only means that the nation of Israel will be reborn, it also means that the people of Israel will come back to its own land. Not only that, but in 1967 the city of

Jerusalem came back to its people, then before the Lord's return, the Temple of God will be rebuilt. Now you understand when that fig tree is putting forth leaves again, it means the recovery. But don't forget, this recover is in four chapters. The first chapter: the nation, second chapter: the land, third chapter: the city, the fourth chapter: the temple. Do you see that?

So now we know that the nation of Israel has already been reborn. Thank God. But how about the land? After so many years, now the people came back from the whole world. So, now remember, this land has been recovered. So that is the second chapter. The third chapter, the city. For almost 1800 years, they always pray next year we will be in Jerusalem; this is their dream. In 1967 their dream has come true. Now again, remember when we talk about the fig tree putting forth its leaves, it also means before the Lord's return, the Temple of God will be rebuilt. You see brothers; you see the four aspects of God's recovery? Now this is the prophecy of Israel.

But don't forget, remember, the double fulfilment. If this is true, now let us remember, before the Lord's return what is He going to do? Now remember if you talk about the church, the order actually reverse, very interesting. If this is true with Israel, this is also true with the church. In other words, one day God is going to build His church. So according to the Bible, God will obtain a church glorious. It is true, in the time of the Pentecost the church was in its glorious day. But after so many years you discover the church is in ruins. We are divided. Now today people do not know what is the church.

So brothers and sisters before the Lord's return, you know how God will gather His people and then He says I will build my church. He did that in the day of Pentecost. But today He will do that again. So brothers and sisters, now you see before the Lord's return, according to the Bible, He will present to Himself a church glorious.

Now because of that, then we have the testimony of God. Now the Bible always uses Jerusalem to describe the testimony of God. But more than that, then you discover finally all the people will come back, because we have been divided. Now thank God, before the Lord's return, He will gather us together from every corner of this world. Then we may be one. Now finally, the kingdom will come.

The Lord teaches us to say: 'May thy kingdom come'. So one day you will discover there will be heaven and earth. Jerusalem will come down from heaven. So brothers and sisters, Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen. So finally usher in the kingdom of heaven. So brothers and sisters, if you

learn the parable from the fig tree, then you discover Israel is only but a shadow. Now the church is the true reality. Now that is very, very important.

Now let me borrow a few minutes tonight. This is the last night, but now I have to mention a few things in Ezekiel. Let us turn to Ezekiel 37:1,5-10

*<sup>1</sup>The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.*

*<sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.*

*<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

*<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army.*

Now we know very well this is one of the important prophecies in the Bible. Now remember, this prophecy has double fulfilment. Now it is very clear that you will find dry bones in the valley. They are being scattered. But then God is doing some work. So finally, through an earthquake, bones come to the bones. And then you find God said he will put sinews on this body and make flesh grow back on you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may have life. But finally you need some breath from heaven, and so finally this whole body becomes a great army.

Now brothers, this is a very, very important prophecy in the Bible. Now first, let me try to explain this prophecy. Behind this prophecy there was a hint. In the early time there was a living body, healthy body, from the very beginning. But later we discover that body got sick, and got paralysed. How do you know that this body got paralysed? You read Ezekiel 4. You remember, God asked Ezekiel to stay on one side for certain days, and also to stay another side for several days. Do you see that? Now let us read Chapter 4:5

*<sup>5</sup>I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel.*

So the first time you know God asked Ezekiel to lie down on your left side. 390 days. And then lie down on his right side. 40 days. Now brothers, what does that mean? If somebody lies down on one side for 390 days, what are you going to say? This body is paralysed. This body is paralysed for 390 days. Then you move him to another side. So then again paralysed for 40 days.

So you see, in order to understand chapter 36, you have to remember that this body has a history. In the beginning it was a glorious body, a healthy body. For some reason that body got sick. Do you see that? Because this body was sick, that is why this body was paralysed. So now you can see, he can always lie down on one side. But now if you still read on in chapter 36, not only it got sick, but now one day that body has lost its life. So that means death.

But you know, according to medical science, death actually is a slow process. Not an instant process. For example, in the beginning one of the major organs is dead, but the cells of my skin is still alive. Do you see that? For that reason, now in order that death will do its work, from my major organs it gradually spreads, and finally to my skin. So do you see that? Now when my major organ was attacked, now you know that death begins to work, but it is going through a slow process. So gradually the death will spread into my skin. And then of course the cells on my skin are dead. But I still have my structure. Now according to medical science, the cell that will die the last is the cell between bone and bone. So when that is dead, now finally the bones are scattered. Do you see that?

So here you can almost imagine the slowing death process of a body. From a healthy body, finally you discover the bones scattered in the valley. Now brothers that was the picture behind it. Now God is going to do some work. This is the work of recovery, this is the work of revival. So now what God was doing is the rebirth of the death process. Do you see that? That is impossible, you ask any doctor. They only know that it is an irreversible process in this universe. According to the law of Physics, we always have an irreversible process in order to disorder. Do you see that? Yes the energy is always conserved in this universe, but remember, the quantity of useful energy will always decrease. So after mans' fall, the process is always going in that direction. It is irreversible.

Now no one can do that work. Do you see that? When you have a body, and then when that body gets sick, paralysed, death, then the death will work from the centre to the circumference. So now

the skin, and now finally the death between the bones. So now the bones are scattered everywhere. But thank God, God is able to do the work. He used an earthquake to gather these bones together. You see the reverse process. And then put sinews on, and then flesh, and then the skin, then the body. Then the body is there, but you still need the breath. Now when the breath of God enters into that body, a full recovery of that body.

Now remember, this work only God can do. This process is called the process of resurrection. Every work of recovery is the work resurrection. Every work of revival is the work of resurrection. Only God can do such a work. Now, very interesting. Now sometimes when you take a picture of your kids, when he slides from the top to the bottom, now you see always from the top to the bottom. But you never see a boy slide from the bottom to the top. But you do see them if you reverse your video. The same thing. We say don't weep over split milk. So when the milk is split this milk will go to the ground. And also there is a Chinese saying: When your daughter is married it is just like water being poured out. Now remember, this is an irreversible process. Actually today, even when your son gets married, also the water is being poured out. That is irreversible. So don't be angry, don't be mad, and don't be sad. This is the life today.

So you always see the picture of how milk gets split there. You never see the process of milk going back to the cup. You can see it if you reverse your video. But you never see it in reality. But before the Lord's return, in this universe, God is going to do something no medical doctor can do. All the doctors always witness that irreversible process. So my brothers and sisters, think about it, before the Lord's return, the Lord will do such a wonderful work. Now double fulfilment.

First, this definitely applies to the people of Israel. After 1800 years of wondering in the wilderness, remember the people of Israel were scattered into the grave of this world. So you discover, all the bones are scattered, now that is the history of Israel for 1800 years. But after 1800 years, around 1948, God used the earthquake. Now brothers, God even used the Nazis. God even used Hitler. Without the massacre of Hitler, many Jewish people they won't want to go back to their homeland. But it is a painful process. You find an earthquake, we don't know how God did that work.

Now finally in 1948 God really gathers them together. And not only that, putting on the sinew, putting on the flesh, putting on the skin. Now brothers and sisters, what do you see today? You see an identity, you see a structure, the nation of Israel being born. But don't forget, this is a body, yes, without breath. So when is this nation going to have a breath? Only when our Lord returns. So brothers, only when our Lord returns, now that breath will be given to that nation. So by that time

you have a spiritual revival of Israel. Today in Israel you only have a political revival, no spiritual revival.

Now 90% of people they do not believe the Bible. Only 10% believe the Old Testament. They even don't believe the New Testament. So brothers and sisters, God never gives us with these people. If through them the salvation is prepared and we Gentiles got saved, now my brothers and sisters, our God never forgets His own people. So remember brothers it is only political recovery, still not a spiritual recovery.

But remember, God's covenant with the people of Israel is forever. So let us remember, one day after the Lord's return, and then the breath will enter into that body. So that is a millennium kingdom in the Bible. So by that time, now my brothers and sisters, then you will have a spiritual revival. So this is the picture here. Now before the end days you know that will happen to the people of Israel. So now it is very clear, this fulfilment applies to earthly people.

But don't forget, because of the double fulfilment, this also applies to the church. In the time of Pentecost the body of Christ was born. It was healthy; it was glorious, full of the presence of God. 3000 people got saved. 5000 people get saved. Not only that, after 300 years of persecution, now the Roman Empire conquered the world, yet the church of God conquered the Roman world. After 300 years of persecution, and then you discover in the territory of the Roman Empire, for every two citizens you will find one Christian. Wonderful body of Christ!

But unfortunately, we know very well, the church has been captured into Babylon. It is the Dark Age in the church history. People do not know the message of salvation. They even try to buy indulgence. They even try to use money that they may gain salvation. Now brothers and sisters, do you see that the church was sick. This body was sick, sick terribly.

Now you remember one-day the great theologian, Aquinas Thomas, went to visit Rome. Now the pope entertained him and the pope showed him the St Peters Cathedral. And you know the St Peter's Cathedral is full of gold and silver, wonderful paintings, so then he pointed to that theologian. He said brother, our first Pope, he means Peter, our first pope used to say, Gold and silver I do not have, but I will give you all that I have. Rise up and walk. You remember Peter said that to the cripple, right? So he said: look our first Pope said, Gold and silver I don't have. Then the pope said look at the ceiling, look at the wall, and we have gold and silver. Our first Pope said no, but we have.

But you know, what was the response of that theologian? He said, yes, today we have gold and silver. But how about the power that will make the cripple rise? Where is that power? We no longer have that power. Why? The church was sick, the body was ill. And more than that, now the whole body become paralysed. According to the Bible, every member of the body should be functioning. Now when you come to the meeting, only a few members are functioning. Yes, the church is the body of Christ. What kind of body does it have? A body that is paralysed.

So brothers, what God is working for today before His return? Brothers and sisters, when we are in a situation, paralysed, God will do the work of a miracle. This is only part of it; the worst is yet to come. In the beginning only the body was paralysed. Gradually the world really enters into the church. All the light of Christ is gone. So brothers when you come to the church, it is full of activities. You have many activities, but where is the presences of God? You discover how the glory of God is withdrawn from it. We may have a wonderful building; God let us engrave all the wood and stone, but that is the tragedy brothers. So finally the condition is the state of death. Not only that, but no more life, then gradually our body begins to disintegrate. And finally we are divided.

Do you see that? No bone connects with another bone. Normally all the members are related to each other, but now we are all scattered. We are individuals; that is today's church condition. We are not only paralysed, we are divided. All God wants is that we should be one. But look at every place, we are divided. Where is the body of Christ? Brothers and sisters do you think before the Lord's return the church is lifted like this?

Suppose today, Paul somehow visit us. Now if Paul visits New York, when he enters into any place of worship, he will say, I'm sorry I have come to the wrong place. I never knew that in a church you have so many things here. So many things from pagans, so many things from Gentiles, so many things from the world.

And also they are divided. Some people say I follow Paul, some people say I follow Cephas. Some people say I am of Christ. Is Christ divided? Is this the church of God? Is this the body of Christ? So brothers, do you tell me before the Lord's return, and God has to confess defeat. Isn't the church the work of God? Isn't the church the body of Christ? No more brothers and sisters. Do you tell me before the Lord's return, that the bones scattered everywhere?

No, according Ephesians: And the Lord will present Himself a church glorious. If He bought us with His previous blood, He will wash us with His wonderful word. He will make us holy without blemish. Why? Before His return, He will present Himself a church glorious. So brothers, now you got a message, remember, don't spread the fatalism. Don't tell people our God is being defeated. It was Christ who built His church in the first century. You are telling me that before the Lord's return, our Lord will suffer all the defeat? He could not do anything. If we follow the flesh, then Christ simply cannot do anything. If we follow the world, then we simply cannot do anything. No brothers, our Lord is calling overcomers. God is calling a handful of people.

Thank God, God can use earthquake to put us together. Now brothers, we were nothing but dry bones, but because the work of shaking, for some reason we are close to each other. Somehow He put on the sinews, He put on the flesh, and He put on the skin, thank God. Now you see, now you have the shape of the body. But don't forget Holy Spirit today is already here. So He will fill us with His own spirit. Now finally what do you get? A wonderful glorious body, as glorious as the first century. So brothers, this is the message. Do you see that? Let us learn the parable from the fig tree. Now fig tree is only a shadow. The reality is the church.

So brothers, if you get the message here, before the Lord's return, yes, you look at outward situation, look at Israel, look at Iraq, look at Syria, these are very important. But don't forget you should look at the condition of the church. So brothers, do you think the bridge is ready? Why does the bridegroom delay, and delay, and delay? Because the bride is not ready yet. You see? So brothers, before the Lord's return we know the bride will be ready. If the bride will be ready it means finally God will obtain His church.

So brothers, important thing is this, how do you know that the Lord will come back soon? Look at the condition of the church. Do you see that? If the Lord really calls us overcomers, coming together by His wonderful work, then you discover Christ will obtain His glorious church. Now when this happens, now brothers this definitely will usher in the second coming of our Lord. So this is very important.

Now these three days we have spoken many things about this world. That is all surrounding us. But most important issue is this. The reason why the Lord cannot come back simply is because we are not ready. Now if we know that the Lord is indeed coming, if we know we are at the end times, now brothers, according to the book of Ezekiel, thank God the glory of God will return. Thank God

we are the household of God. Now from our innermost being, will flow the river of living water. So wherever we go we are going to sweeten this world. This world is too salty and too bitter.

Brothers and sisters, no matter where you are going, you bring heaven with you. Where you find the church you will find the gate of heaven. So brothers, I say before the Lord's return, He is going to do this work. So my brothers we will be very busy, our time is running out. We are not here waiting for our Lord's return very passively, we will be very, very busy because we know we don't have much time any more. Since September 11 the Lord really gives us a wake up call, we should not sleep any more.

So brothers, thank God, behold I have told you in advance. This is the prophetic word of God. Let us learn the parable from the fig tree. So I think my word ends here, let us pray.

*Dear Lord, We thank You so much. It is Your mercy that we may receive this word. We thank You, probably some of us were born because of this moment. We thank You very much because very people were born for this occasion. That we may hear Your word and by Your mercy we say Lord, no matter how difficult it will be by Your grace we will follow You. We would like to be overcomers. We would like to go through the work of Your shaking, that You may present Yourself a church glorious. Lord, please speak to us, even though our meeting may end here, may Your word continue to work, continue to speak, until we rise up and follow You. Now we really commit Your saints in this place and in Southampton into Your hands. May these words really be for them. May you really work among them. May You really be pleased by what You have seen in these two places. We really commit them into Your hands for Your wonderful work of recovery. We thank You and we praise You. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.*

Now finally I have to thank you for your patience. Now I think that it takes the patience of Job for you to go through this conference. Again, I ask your forgiveness, I have borrowed 45 minutes tonight. That is really too much! I have no strength to return to you, I cannot give it back to you, so I have to apologise. Thank you again.