

The Value of A Canopy of Prayer:

Moving from Courtship to Marriage

Isaiah 61 and 62

Summary:

The purpose of this paper is to outline from the scripture mainly Is. 61 and 62, how it is possible to raise a canopy of prayer over a geographic region that immediately affects a dramatic positive change in the spiritual climate that is inherently sustainable and “gives birth” to a grass roots movement of prayer leading towards the transformation of the region and beyond.

Evidence from Experience

On August 6th we raised a canopy of prayer over the San Francisco Bay Area through a massive mobilization of prayer in the air on land and at sea. We had teams on land in each of 15 counties praying at various locations: airports, schools, high places, business centers, freeways, government building etc. We had intercessors in private airplanes circling the Bay in prayer (over 20 flights) and we had 600 intercessors, pastors, youth and marketplace leaders packed into a boat that prayer cruised the bay for 4 hours, we estimate that all together 3000+ people participated. We then anchored this canopy of prayer in a united rally on August 12th with about 700 people in attendance.

This canopy of prayer has resulted in a dramatic shift in the spiritual climate over the Bay Area, evidenced by a variety of factors including: increased unity in the body of Christ; new favor with political leaders; more intense and more consistent hunger for God and desire to pray among believers particularly youth; new favor and much greater results when ministering to the lost; a sense of empowerment and pro-activity with intercessors so that many are hearing from God and taking initiative to launch or organize prayer gatherings and networks, etc.; consistent reports of “encounters with God” whether individually or in corporate gatherings.

In addition to what is happening here in the Bay Area, we have also observed similar (and even more dramatic) shifts in the spiritual climate over various regions when a canopy of prayer was raised through similar exercises. For example: 2002 Argentina, the nation was quickly heading towards total economic, social and political melt down, a canopy of prayer was raised Nov. 2002 and everything changed, the nation is now being sited as a model of economic turn around. We saw similar results in Elk River, MN; Hawaii; South Africa and Africa to name a few.

The above stuck out in my mind in sharp contrast to other efforts we had organized or participated in that were well organized well attended and characterized by fervent prayer, but were not sustainable and did not result in the grass roots movement of prayer we had envisioned. They were in essence wonderful days of prayer but nothing more.

The crucial question to answer is: “What is the difference between the two?” —The answer comes from Isaiah 62.

Canopy of Prayer in the Scriptures

Is. 62. 4-5

You [Jerusalem] shall be called *Hephzibah*, and your land *Beulah*;
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be *married*.

⁵ For *as* a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;

Jewish couples are traditionally married (now as in the time of Isaiah) under a “huppa” which is a canopy. This canopy symbolizes the covering of God’s blessing that comes over their marriage

when they covenant with each other.

When we “raise a canopy of prayer” over a region, we are in essence declaring our marriage commitment to the region and Marrying her, then as symbolized by the huppa, in the Jewish wedding ceremony, God fulfills his part by lower the covering of his grace over the area, blessing our marriage.

A Spiritually Legal Marriage Covenant

This marriage shifts the spiritual climate because it is a spiritually “legal” covenant witness and recorded in the spiritual courts of God. Just as with a marriage, once you marry a girl everything changes, you are no longer on equal footing with all others suitors, their advances are now inappropriate and illegal. The girl goes from being yours to win to being yours to lose. Other suitors have to work clandestinely and secretively to try to try to win her and then they are limited in what they can gain. Never will she be a free woman again.

This is what happened when we raise a canopy of prayer over a region. We make a covenant that is spiritually binding, and backed by God, the power comes from God in response to our commitment, not our works, and thus the heaven open over the region

A Grass Roots Movement of Prayer

Isaiah continues 62.6

I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
they will never be silent day or night
You who call on the Lord give yourselves no rest...

After we marry the land, the LORD post watchmen on the wall. I.e. he releases a grace to raise up intercessors, his spirit drives a grass roots movement of prayer, AFTER we marry the land. Again the grace comes because of our commitment, not our works; we don't have to post the watchmen, GOD does!

Summary

All of this is dependant upon a proper understanding of and thus faith in, the complete work of Christ on the cross.

“The son of man came to seek and to save *that* which was lost.” Lk 19.10

We must understand that Jesus died not only to save individual sinners, but also to redeem the corporate entity of cities and nations and to redeem back the land itself from the curse of sin.

A canopy of prayer is “raised” when we declare our belief in Christ’s total redemption; declare our covenant to partner with Him in the manifestation of that redemption and commit to “marry” the land that He has sovereignty placed us in.

It is this commitment that characterized and gives the spiritual potency to the canopy of prayer, not the quantity or time commitment of our prayers, those come second and are a **fruit** of the canopy not the **essence** of the canopy.

A Biblical Metaphor:

“Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed” Rms 8.19

We have gone out on dates with the land, days of prayer. She likes us and we like her, there is clear chemistry. At the end of the date, the day of prayer is over, we get her number and drop her off at home, the next morning she is waiting eagerly by the phone, waiting for us to call, one day passes, two days, a week a month and we never call. We have gone back to church as usual, while the land stays there by the phone with a broken heart. Finally a year later we call her back and ask her out on another date only to repeat the process over again.

She is waiting for us to get over our “issues” and marry her. It is time we grew up faced our fear of commitment and made the plunge! ***It is time to marry the land!***

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