

CONTENTS

-  **FEATURE > THE HANDS OF ZERUBBABEL.....**
-  **CHURCH NEWS > USGA'S CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND SACRED WORK UPDATE.....**
-  **CHURCH NEWS > CURRENT MINISTRY IN TONGA AND SAMOA.....**
-  **INTERCESSION.....**
-  **ONE DOLLAR ONE SOUL.....**

Feature

The Hands of Zerubbabel

Peter Shee

A question was posed at a recent Truth Research Committee Meeting: The post-apostolic church declined and plunged into apostasy, will the True Jesus Church suffer the same fate? As we mark the 100th year since our official founding, this timely question needs to be answered with proper biblical perspective, not with sheer defensive enthusiasm.

Firstly, what do we make of the declaration: “on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18)? In biblical light, how could the church built by Jesus Christ through His apostles degenerate to the point of dilapidation? Next, intrinsic to our affirmation that we are the revived true church is that we are the final restoration, leading to the consummation of all things, but how can we be assured of this?

Understanding biblical prophecy is a key to discerning the times. Interestingly, Jesus mentioned the signs of the times and the sign of Jonah just before talking about building His church (vv. 2-4). He then moved on to announce His death and resurrection (vv. 21) as well as His kingdom (vv. 28, 19). Clearly, the sign of Jonah is the sign of His resurrection, the most important

milestone in God's restoration of Israel.

The Temple & the Church

The resurrected body of Christ is identified with the church as a body of believers resurrected in Christ through baptism (Eph 1:20-2:1; Col 2:12). The unmistakable link between the temple and the church uttered by Jesus Himself (Jn 2:19-22) was well understood by New Testament writers (Eph 2:19-21; 1 Cor 3:6; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:2,10,22) who saw the church in their era as the real temple, fulfilling the shadows of OT temple rites (Heb 8-10) as well as exilic and post-exilic prophecies about God dwelling with His people (2 Cor 6:16 cf Eze 37:27-28; Zech 8:8-9).

Since the body of Christ is the real temple made without hands, it should last till the end of time; it will not be destroyed and there should be no need for rebuilding. How then do we explain the downward spiral of the post-apostolic church, the dark ages of apostasy, and the current fragmentation of denominations? How does the True Jesus Church fit in?

The answer lies in careful study of prophecy and fulfilment in this regard. Exilic and post-exilic prophets projected into the distant future in their prophecies surrounding the second temple. Hence, "I will shake heaven and earth...I will shake all nations...and I will fill this temple with glory...The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former" (Hab 2:6-9) does not refer to the temple Zerubbabel built, but to a future temple built with living stones, the church of Jesus Christ to whom salvation came (1 Pet 1:10-12; 2:5), whose foundation was laid during the apostolic age (1 Cor 3:10-11; Eph 2:20). The fact that the apostolic project did not promptly result in worldwide spread of the gospel and the destruction of Gentile kingdoms (cf Hag 2:20-22; Zech 14:8-9, 17-19) is no reason for any doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed commissioned by God, whose disciples constitute the eternal temple, to which all Gentiles will turn (cf Acts 5:38-39). The Jews stumbled at a crucified Messiah, because they did not understand that He shall come a second time in glory. Thus we should recognize that only at a later time will the church He built have greater in glory than Solomon's temple – when she shall be adorned for her husband, reflecting the very glory of God (Rev 21:2,10-11). Since death could not restrain the crucified Christ (Acts 2:24), the church would certainly be revived in time even though she seemed to have descended into abysmal doom after the apostolic age.

Zerubbabel and Temple-Rebuilding

As the temple-rebuilding was used prophetically to refer to the church being the final dwelling place of God, we must pay attention to the key figure Zerubbabel who led the delegation of

rebuilders to Jerusalem for this great task (Ezra 2:2; 3:8). He was of Davidic descent, made governor of Judah (Hag 2:2; Mt 1:1,12).

Concerning Zerubbabel, the word of the LORD came to Haggai saying: “I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel, and will make you a signet ring; for I have chosen you” (Hag 2:23). This is of utmost significance, because Zerubbabel descended from the second last king of Judah, of whom the LORD through Jeremiah declared: “though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off... none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah” (Jer 22:24,30). Zerubbabel the governor of Judah was never installed king over Judah, hence the prophecy of the choice signet again refers to a later fulfilment in the Messiah, whose virgin birth averted the curse upon Coniah, and hence “the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:30-33).

As for the temple, Zerubbabel’s hands were frustrated after the foundation was laid, and the work discontinued for about 15 years (Ezra 4:4-5, 23-24). Nevertheless the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah brought about a revival and the rebuilding work resumed (Ezra 5:1-2). Likewise, through the worst of times encountered by the post-apostolic church, the foundation that was laid through the apostles is preserved in Scripture, and in God’s own time He brought about a revival, with the True Jesus Church continuing to build upon apostolic foundation. Therefore the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel is especially applicable to us today: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit....Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”” (Zech 4:6-7)

Will the True Jesus Church fall away from truth? Not if we are truly the continuation of the work of the eschatological Zerubbabel, building on the very foundation He laid when he first established His church (Eph 2:20). If the gospel of salvation we preach is the very “faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), then we can claim the scripture saying: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it” (Zech 4:9).

▲ [TOP](#)

USGA's Church Development and Sacred Work Update

Hallelujah, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would like to share with our brothers and sisters around the world recent developments in the holy work of the USGA and among the churches in the United States.

National Evangelical Personnel Workshop

The National Evangelical Personnel Workshop was held on February 17-19 at Baldwin Park church. The theme of this year's workshop was "Proclaim The kingdom of Heaven." Besides covering topics related to the theme, the workshop also included other sessions, such as evangelical work sharing, "from believer to evangelist," effective follow up, and Q&A. Around 50-70 attendants from local churches in US participated in this event. This two-and-a-half-day event is held every other year to equip the evangelical workers for more fruitful evangelical outreach.



International Youth Fellowship

The 2017 International Youth Fellowship (IYF) was held during June 1-12, in California, USA. The event started with a 5-day seminar at Irvine Church, followed by a 3-day Southern California tour & visitation and then a 3-day Northern California tour & visitation. There were 110 youths from 12 different countries who attended the seminar and 60-70 youths who attended the tour & visitation. The theme for this IYF is “100 Years - A Heritage of Grace & Spirituality.” The seminar included classes, prayers, hymn singing, discussions, testimonies & sharing (by country), group presentation (by country), Q&A, and fellowship activities. The tour included popular sightseeing venues (e.g. Disneyland, Golden Gate Bridge) and the church visitation covered Garden Grove Church, Cerritos Church, Baldwin Park Church, Pacifica Church, and San Jose Church.

Praise God, there were a lot of wonderful fellowship between the participants and also with the local members. Many participants also found the testimonies and sharing of the youth ministry work in the various countries to be edifying and encouraging. The overall atmosphere felt like that of one big family, despite the many different languages spoken and cultural background. May the Lord help the participants to bring back what they have learned about our heritage of grace and spirituality.



2017 International Youth Fellowship
A Heritage of Spirituality & Grace

TJC Irvine, CA
June 1-5, 2017

Theological Training Program Class of 2014 Closing Ceremony

Praise and Thank God for His blessings and guidance, three trainees of the TTP 2014 class completed their courses of two and half years on December 17, 2016. The closing ceremony was held after the Sabbath morning service at Cerritos Church. Dn. N.H. Chen and Pr. Enoch Hou represented the instructors and the USGA at the ceremony. The three trainees successfully graduated from their study and were encouraged to be God's faithful servants in their future servitude, no matter what area they are going to serve. After finishing their courses in classroom, Br. Pablo Chou was sent to Taiwan for one year of internship; Sister Lois Kuo has been serving in literature ministry; Sister Jessica Chen continued on to one more semester of training in special courses related to religion education.



Opening Ceremony for the Theological Training Program

On February 6, 2017, brothers and sisters of Cerritos church gather in the chapel with a grateful and joyful heart to welcome two new TTP students coming to Cerritos church to start their three years of study and witnessed their determination in answering God's calling to serve the Lord full-time as a living sacrifice. During the opening ceremony, Pr. Derren Liang represented the USGA, Pr. H.H. Ko represented the instructors, and Dn. S.P. Li represented the host church. They all shared words of encouragement with the new students. Thank God, Brother

Nissi Chin of UK and Brother Sean Yang of USA will be trained for three years to prepare themselves as faithful servants to minister to the churches.



▲ [TOP](#)

Church News

Current Ministry in Tonga and Samoa

Fu-Ann Shih

There are six pastoral visitations a year arranged to Tonga, and each visitation is usually four days. The cost of the visitations is to be covered by the Tonga Fund. The director of the Eastern Hemisphere Department of World Mission (EHDWM) and the residential preacher in New Zealand each visit Tonga once a year. The three churches in New Zealand also assign their workers to assist the holy works there.

In Tonga, there are 12 believers and 5 active truth-seekers, with a total of 17 participants. Most believers in Tonga are from Fuqing China who run small grocery stores.



There are four pastoral visitations a year arranged to Samoa, and each visitation is usually 3 to 4 days. The relevant expenses are to be covered by the budget under EHDWM. Holy Communion is to be held once a year. The EHDWM director and the residential preacher in New Zealand each visit Samoa one time a year, the churches in New Zealand also assign their workers to assist the holy works there.



We plan on increasing the frequency of pastoral visitation to Samoa from four visits to six visits a year starting with the next year. A Samoa Fund account will be created where the EHDWM will initially transfer funds into it, and churches from New Zealand and other individual church members are also able to contribute towards this fund.

There are seven members and six truth-seekers, with a total of thirteen attendees in Samoa. They are also mostly from Fuqing and own supermarkets or grocery stores. We plan to hold the first water baptism this September.



This year we established the Tonga and Samoa Ministry Committee. The director of EHDWM, Eld. Joshua Phoong, coordinates this committee, and Pr. Ezra Chang from the Malaysia GA acts as the assistant. The members of this committee include the residential preacher in New Zealand as well as three deacons from the churches in New Zealand, Dn. Michael Lee, Dn. Daniel Li, and Dn. Tian He Wu. This committee is in charge of all the evangelical and pastoral affairs in Tonga and Samoa. The other workers who support the ministry in Tonga and Samoa are to be recommended by the local churches in New Zealand and assigned by this Ministry Committee.



From now on, we will put more effort on evangelizing toward the aborigines in Tonga and Samoa, and hopefully the Gospel can be spread even further.

▲ [TOP](#)

 *Intercession*

1. Please pray for IA work assignment as below:

Date	Location	Program	Personnel
8/3-8/27	Indonesia	Spiritual Convocation (Solo/Surabaya/Banjarmasin)	F.M. Tse
		Evangelical Service (Bandung)	
		TJC Hundred Year Celebration (Solo/Cianjur/Surabaya/ Banjarmasin)	
		Bible Class (Cianjur/ Gatsu/ Makassar)	
8/28-9/24		Bible Class (Sunter /Jakarta)	En-Yuan Hou
		Spiritual Convocation (Jakarta/ Tangerang/ Tanjung Duren)	
		Preachers& Ministers Seminar	
8/4-8/21	Sabah	Divine Workers Spiritual Seminar	Y. H. Chiu
		Spiritual Nurture Session for Preachers& Ministers	
		Spiritual Nurture Session for Ministers & Spouses	
8/19-8/27	Singapore	Preachers' Spiritual Nurture Session	S.C. Chen
		Spiritual Nurture Session for Board of Ministers, SCB Council Members and Local Church's EXCO members	
		Spiritual Nurture Session for Ministers' Spouses	
8/31-9/25	Malaysia	National Ministers Training	S. C. Chen
		Regional Pastoral	

8/14-8/28	Cambodia	Spiritual Convocation	E. L. Lin
8/1-8/18	Japan	Students Spiritual Convocation	J. L. Chen
8/7-9/7	US	e-Learning Project	HH Ko
8/14-8/24		Regional High School Student Theological Seminar (Queens)	H. C. Hsieh
8/23-8/27		Evangelical Service & Spiritual Convocation (Queens)	H. C. Hsieh
8/25-9/17	Brazil	Pastoral Work	Jonathan
August	Ecuador	Pastoral Work	CM Chu
8/7-8/27	UK	National Youth Theological Seminar (Sunderland/ New Castle)	Tony Kuo
8/5	Germany	Special Service with Holy Communion (Heidelberg)	HH Ko
8/14-8/21	Italy	Spiritual Convocation (Napoles/Prato)	NH Chen Bao Qin Wang
8/22-9/1	Spain	Visit & Concern (Barcelona/Madrid/Albacete)	NH Chen
8/17-9/13	West Africa	Workers Training (Nigeria)	Steve Hwang
8/30-9/10	Mid East-Dubai	Bible Seminar	Ezekiel Chang

▲ [TOP](#)

🍌 *You Could Help the Worldwide Evangelism Mission Simply by Contribution*

a dollar a day...



How You Can Help

You are called to take action for the sake of worldwide evangelism and the spreading of the gospel... with **a dollar a day**. If everyone could daily extend one dollar towards the International Assembly World Evangelism Fund, we could, together, accomplish the commission that our Lord Jesus Christ left behind. Your financial commitment will open up possibilities and resources that will lead us to save many souls.

Please take time to fill out the offering sheet available at your local church, to pass this message on to loved ones and family, and to pray for God's ministry. May the Lord be gracious to you!

To find out more about the dollar-a-day program and donation options, ***please contact*** ia@tjc.org **or** tjciatwn@ms25.hinet.net.

✧ *May our Lord remember your contribution and bless you abundantly!*

▲ [TOP](#)

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