

► **Cruise ship to Landing ship**

The Rock 22/3/2015 AM

Some prophecies are given to warn people of judgement coming in the future so that they might change their ways, others are given to encourage people about blessing or restoration coming in the future so that they don't lose hope.

Some prophecies help us understand what God is leading us into, or even what we are experiencing right now, so that we might find Him in our circumstances and grow in them.

There was a prophecy spoken over us in 2012, a prophecy that conjured the images of a cruise ship and a landing ship that does that; that helps us understand the season that God has led us to, a season of wilderness, a season of preparation, a season of transformation. Let's talk about that this morning.

Here's the prophecy...

► *There was a cruise ship where people were eating, drinking being merry, laughing - cruising.... Then it changed to a landing ship incredible sense of readiness and purpose - alertness - WAR! Everybody on board knew their task and were living for this purpose. David Peters - 11 November 2012*

Right let's break this down...

The vision that David was given of The Rock was of a ► **cruise ship**. Now what's the deal with a cruise ship? A cruise ship is designed for comfort. It is designed for entertainment. It is designed to make money. It is designed to make some people happy. Not all people, just those being entertained, and those people making all the money.

Now there are two kinds of people on a cruise ship, there are staff and there are passengers. The staff, as you know, serve the passengers, the passengers sit back and enjoy the cruise. They eat, they drink, they laugh and make merry. The staff does all the work on a cruise ship, the passengers don't have to do a thing. They don't have to make any food, they don't have to do the dishes, they don't even have to make their beds. Everything is done for them.

► **Now a landing ship** is very different. A landing ship is a naval vessel, a military ship that has a very particular purpose. The purpose of a landing ship is to transport military personnel, vehicles, supplies and other equipment to a war

zone for deployment into battle. There are no passengers on a landing ship. Everyone on board has a job, a role, and it is crucial. Everyone is working towards the same mission. And so it is in the Church...

► 1 Corinthians 12...

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

► Ephesians 4:7, 11-16...

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it... ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

► There are no passengers on a landing ship. Everyone on board has a job, a role, and it is crucial. Everyone is working towards the same mission. And so it is in the Church. There aren't supposed to be any passengers. We all have a role, we all have purpose, a purpose which God has called us to within the greater purpose for His Church. And He has given us spiritual gifts, and passions, and skills, with which to fulfil our role and calling. But as God looks down on His Church He doesn't see a highly functioning, well oiled military machine. He sees a cruise ship, with half of us cruising. This is an issue that He specifically raised in this prophetic word from 2012, and it is an issue that He is specifically addressing through the restructure that He is leading us into now. As of mid April all but one of our current ministry roles will cease to exist. There just won't be the workers on staff to do all the work they have been doing around here. God's plan is not, and never was for a small staff to carry the workload of His church, His plan is for the church to carry the load in partnership with His Spirit.

► Psalms 110:3 says...

Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;

Surely that day has come! Now I don't want to in any way minimise the substantial contribution that volunteers make and have made in and to this community, our volunteers are amazing, they're just a minority. And that has to change.

Something else that has to change is us. Much more important than what we do, is who we are. That is the most significant change God is calling us to. The people on the prophetic landing ship were alert, they were ready, and they had purpose.

These are signs of equipping, and maturity; and that is the work God has been trying to do in us over the last few years and is committed to persevering in until He returns. We could benefit from that work if we can be humble to receive it, and seek what He has for us - not what we want.

On a naval vessel what you want is irrelevant. What the commanding officer says is what matters. Orders in our navy come down from the commanders: Every ship has seamen who are accountable to petty officers, who are accountable to chiefs and officers, who are accountable to the captain, who is accountable to the Chief of Navy, who is accountable to the Chief of Defence Force, who is accountable to parliament and the Governor General who is accountable to the Queen. Authority and accountability are huge in the navy; it's what their whole structure is based on. And guess what, it's the same in the Kingdom of God. It may not look the same, but it's still there and it's crucial.

On a cruise ship the staff are bound by the terms of their employment contract, and the passengers are bound by the terms and conditions of the ticket they purchased. On a naval vessel however, every sailor is bound by the oath they made on enlistment:

"I, Derek Ian McGregor, solemnly promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lady the Queen, Her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Naval forces, and that I will loyally observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, Her heirs and successors, and of the officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me God."

That's the oath my father took when he joined Her Majesty's New Zealand Navy in the 70's. Dad served on HMNZS Taranaki as a seaman gunner - a weaponman on the 4.5inch turret; and on the Waikato as a leading seaman and petty officer – a Fire Controller for the Sea Cat missiles.

I've never been on a cruise ship...not unless you count the inter-islander...which I imagine you don't; but I have been on a naval vessel, not a Landing Ship per se, but a Leander class Frigate from our navy, and the same principles apply to culture. I was a kid when dad took me on his ship, and to this day I can still remember the smell of the marine diesel, and the salt, and the gun oil, and dad's pride of the ship he served on.

Now this prophecy is a metaphor, obviously The Rock is neither a literal cruise ship nor a landing ship, but there are aspects of these metaphors that speak to our current state and the redeemed, mature state that God is calling us to.

Again, this is a metaphor, Greg is not literally a naval captain that we must obey his every order or face court-martial. But there is prophetic truth in this metaphor for us to find and feed on. Greg is a man under authority - the authority of God, and God has given him a measure of authority to lead God's people here with a team of Spirit-filled elders.

Authority is a biblical concept, consider...

► **Matthew 8:5-10**, ⁵ *When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.* ⁶ *“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”*

⁷ *Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”*

⁸ *The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.* ⁹ *For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”*

¹⁰ *When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.*

Consider also, Jesus’ words in Matthew 28...

► ¹⁸ **Then Jesus came** to them and said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Jesus has all authority and He has delegated that authority to His disciples, in this particular case His apostles, to fulfil the mission that He launched. While we may not be court-martialed in this life for our disobedience - we will be held accountable for what we do with the revelation God gives us^a.

Consider also Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 10:10...

^a Romans 2:12-16

►¹⁰ *This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*

► *Or 1 Thessalonians 4...As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

► *How about Hebrews 13:17,¹⁷ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.* It's hard to get clearer than that.

On a cruise ship you can do pretty much whatever you want, but on a landing ship there is authority, there is a line of command, and that's how God works in His kingdom too. This has been a hard revelation for me, I have personally always struggled with authority. But I am now finding in humility and submission that God is performing a miraculous work of sanctification and maturity in my spirit, and I honour Him for it.

On a cruise ship it's every man for himself, as we saw in the tragic wreck of the Costa Concordia in 2012, but on a Landing Ship each sailor would lay down his life for his brother' just as Christ modelled and has called us to do. How do you think of the people around you in here? Are they strangers, are they fellow passengers? Or are they family, brothers and sisters-in-arms? Would you give your life for them? Would you give your life to God in the service of His Church? That is what so many disciples that have gone before us were prepared to do. Even in these days, in countries all around the world brothers and sisters are giving up their lives for the faith. For many of us it's hard enough just to give up some time and money.

The prophecy warns that war is coming, are you ready for it? One thing we must always remember when we use military metaphors in the Church is that...

► *"...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **Ephesians 6:12***

► **And that... though** *we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.* ⁴ *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.* ⁵ *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

God isn't preparing us to fight ISIS, or the "militant" atheists who want to take our Bible-in-Schools away. In the first instance God is equipping us to fight the sinful nature still at work in us; and then - from the strength of Christ in us - to fight the real enemy in this world which is not a physical army but a spiritual one.

And within this great war there will be battles that we all have to fight, in fact there are battles that we are already fighting. Battles of heart and mind and conscience. Battles for our time, for our attention, for our priority, for who or what we will give our heart to. Now the staffing restructure here is pretty full on for me and my family, and the friends I work with. I don't want to lose my job...but even more than that - I don't want to be outside of God's will.

If God doesn't want me to be employed here in this next season...or ever again...then I don't want to work here. I only want to do what He has planned for me.

Now don't think for a minute that when my contract expires on the 17th of April that coming off staff means I can relax as a passenger on this ship. I'm not being retired, I'm being reassigned. You don't retire from the kingdom of God, and you can't resign your calling from God. His word says in Romans 11:29 that His gifts and his calling are irrevocable.

When it comes down to it this message and this prophecy we're looking at, are not about jobs or volunteering at The Rock. Yes we need volunteers to serve here, but there is a bigger picture, there is a bigger mission. The Church is not what happens in here on a Sunday.

The Church is us, God's people, filled with His Spirit, releasing His Spirit to work through us wherever we are. Activating the spiritual gifts He has blessed us with wherever we are. Utilizing the skills He has been developing in us to advance His Kingdom wherever we are.

Wilderness

It seems like God is leading me once again into a wilderness season, or maybe I never left it. But it's all good. I don't fear the wilderness.

Despite what many seem to think, and how it may sound, the wilderness seasons in our spiritual journey aren't barren seasons, they are in fact our seasons of greatest growth, where God births new life in us. When the Israelites were in the wilderness for forty years they weren't alone, they were in the presence of God, being led by Him personally, being provided for by Him directly. It was in this season that they learned to let go of the culture of their past, and adopt the new spiritual culture that God had for them. It was in this season that they learned who their God really was, and how they could relate to them. It was in this season that they learned how to trust their God and how to follow Him; and those that couldn't trust and couldn't follow – couldn't enter the Promised Land. It was as simple as that.

The staff restructure and redundancies here is not a sign that the wheels are falling off this place, it's a sign that the wheel's are being realigned, it's a wheel alignment because we haven't been steering straight. The elders have been trying to steer us in the right direction but the wheels aren't pointing strait, aren't pointing true. So this structure will help us realign and rebuild according to God's blueprint for His Church. This is a season for renewal of heart and mind, of restoration and new growth.

That is the season that we are in, and it's a good season. Let us give into it and let Him have His way in us.

Let's pray...