

Module : Gathering**Session 1** : Gathered and Positioned to Hear - Part 1**Gen 49:2a** GATHER TOGETHER and HEAR

Deut. 4:10 Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.

Exposure to the sound of God's Word generates faith (Rom.10:17). One of the effective strategies of Satan is to keep people out of the range of God's speaking through a credible and authentic voice. He does so by opposing the necessity to gather and meet to hear God's Word. This is true on the following levels:

- The gathering of spiritual fathers or leaders over local churches to receive apostolic doctrine
- The gathering of saints in a local church or Household of Faith.
- The gathering of different churches, which relate together under a specific apostolic fathering grace.
- The gathering of different churches in a city.

THE HEARING OF THE WORD OF GOD is essential because it produces God's nature and will within us when we respond to it obediently. The element of HEARING is a vital factor in the process of the Word of God attaining its desired outcome.

Romans chapter 10 illustrates this.

Romans 10:5-17

- 5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.
- 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: DO not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down),
- 7 or Who will descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).
- 8 But what does it say? **The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,**
- 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, **you will be saved;**
- 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
- 11 For the Scripture says, Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.
- 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;
- 13 for Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

- 14 **How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?**
- 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, **How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!**
- 16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?
- 17 **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ**

Note verse 14:

1. Men need to call on the name of the Lord; they need to confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead.
 2. This requires them to HEAR the Word of God.
 3. This in turn requires that there is someone to SPEAK or DECALRE the Word of God.
 4. That which is spoken has got to be good news of good things – salvation.
 5. This person who speaks the Word has got to be SENT by God.
 6. This person's feet has got to be beautiful, which alludes to the preacher speaking a relevant or timely word in season that results in fruitfulness or blossoming.
- (refer to session 7 – pages 5 and 6)

Note the Process:



Each element in the above process is vital for the desired outcome to be attained. In this study we focus on the importance of actually positioning oneself to hear the message proclaimed. The enemy is seriously intent upon prohibiting the manifestation of God's will in our lives. He either will cause God's people to hear inaccurately, or not hear at all. Where there is no hearing of the Word, there can be no benefit or results derived from the Word. Much of God's purposes is locked in and attendant with the proclamation of His Word. His Word formed and framed the Worlds. His Word is an expression of Himself. His Word contains grace, the essential substance that defines Him as God, and that configures sons in their sonship identity and empowers their function in the execution of God's will. His Word has a multitude of benefits. All divine purposes vested in and with His Word are lost if there is no hearing of the Word. Sons of God have got to prioritise their corporate gathering to hear God's Word, declared by the voice of their spiritual father. At Ephesus, people were under the sound of the Word of God emitted through Paul's voice for at least two years, and even possibly up to three years, daily – see previous session 11. This rigour, discipline and devotion that people expressed to hearing and obeying God's Word is largely absent today. At best, the average 'Christian' is exposed to approximately 30 minutes

of preaching on a Sunday – and still much of the preaching is not Word-centred – not proceeding or present truth.

When there is indifference to an activity, this proves that the value and purpose of the activity is not understood. When people neglect the importance of regularly gathering to hear God's Word, it highlights their lack of understanding and revelation as to the sheer importance of the entire process of HEARING God's Word.

Let's spend a few moments highlighting the importance of the process of GATHERING itself.

PRINCIPLE 1: THE VERY ESSENCE OF 'CHURCH' INCORPORATES THE IDEA OF GATHERING

The Greek term translated 'church' is 'ekklesia', which inherently incorporates the idea of the 'gathering' of a select people.

Heb. 12:23 to the **general assembly and church** of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect

The church is the general assembly – not the 'disassembly'. The word 'assembly' denotes a festal gathering. The 'feast' in our context is the feeding off the Word of God. This is our nourishment and strength.

PRINCIPLE 2 : GATHER IN THE NAME OR NATURE OF CHRIST

Mat 18:20 "For where two or three have gathered together **in My name**, I am there in their midst."

We have often used this verse to excuse poor attendance at meetings and to reassure the few who actually attended, but it has very little to do with this. God's presence is guaranteed where two or three gather in HIS NAME. The biblical idea of 'name' alludes to both nature and function (will); or to both identity and destiny. The gathering has got to be 'in HIS name' – i.e. in keeping with His nature/character and in accordance to and with a commitment to doing His will. Everything about our gatherings must be characteristic of who Christ IS and what He desires to effect. Where these elements are a reality, His presence is guaranteed – "I am there in their midst". Amazingly, as we have demonstrated in previous sessions, the WORD OF GOD reveals both the nature of God and the will of God. Gathering in His name is gathering around the principle of His Word, which reveal His name – nature and function.

N.B. :

1. All relationships within the gathering must be reflective of the nature of Christ. There must be no tension, unforgiveness, etc. Divine love and one-ness must characterize our gatherings.
2. We must not have misguided or selfish ambition or personal motives when we gather corporately. We subject our own will to the will of Christ as it is expressed your spiritual father who presides over the gather on Christ's behalf.

Luke 5:15-17

- 15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and **large crowds were gathering to hear Him** and to be healed of their sicknesses.
- 16 But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.
- 17 One day **He was teaching**; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; and the **power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.**

N.B.: Gathering must be voluntary and borne out of a revelation of the importance of the actual need to gather. There must be a regularity and consistency of gathering, yet it must not be so regimental and religious to the point where it becomes clinical and used at times by leaders as a tool of domination, manipulation and control. You must gather, not out of fear for your leader, but out of your understanding of the nature and purpose of the gathering.

PRINCIPLE 5: OUR GATHERING IS TO BE GOD-FOCUSED

Psalm 50:5 "**Gather** My godly ones **to Me**, Those who have made **a covenant** with Me by sacrifice."

Implications:

- Gathering is for 'godly ones' – those with a sense of holy reverence and fear who live in practical holiness and righteousness
- Gathering is for those who are highly covenantal

PRINCIPLE 6: OUR GATHERING IS TO A SPIRITUAL FATHER/ GRACE CARRIER

While our gathering is God-focused, we gather around God's chosen and designated leader over us. This individual represents the grace of the Heavenly Father over us.

Jeremiah 23:3-4

- 3 "Then **I Myself will gather** the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and **bring them back to their pasture**, and they will be fruitful and multiply.
- 4 "I will also **RAISE UP SHEPHERDS OVER THEM AND THEY WILL TEND THEM**; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, **NOR WILL ANYONE BE MISSING**," declares the LORD.

The gathering process is God-initiated – "I Myself will gather". To maintain the gathering, accurate shepherds are essential. Note verse 4: Shepherds are 'over' the people for the specified function of tending to them. We are called to remember those whom GOD has placed over us in the Lord. They are 'among' us yet over us. Their oversight over us is not for domination and exploitation, but care and nourishment. They do this primarily through the teaching of the Word of God.

Note the following Scripture:

Jeremiah 3:15-19

- 15 “Then I will give you **shepherds after My own heart**, who will **feed you on knowledge and understanding**.
- 16 It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the Lord, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord. ’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.
- 17 At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the Lord, ’ **and all the nations will be gathered to it**, to Jerusalem, for the **name of the Lord**; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.
- 18 In those days **the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together** from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.
- 19 “Then I said, ‘**How I would set you among My sons And give you a pleasant land**, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations! ’And I said, ‘**You shall call Me, My Father**, And not turn away from following Me.

- v.15 :** - Shepherds after God’s own heart = Shepherds that are reflective and representative of Him, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

1 Peter 5:1-4

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- By definition, shepherds feed their flock. Shepherds of God’s people feed their flocks knowledge and understanding. The success of Shepherding is measure by the extent to which people understand and know God.

Jer. 9:23-24

- 23 Thus says the Lord, Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;
- 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, **that he understands and knows Me**, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.

- V16. &17:** - Jerusalem is depictive of the church. The ark of the Covenant with that it symbolizes is now fully embodied in a people – the church – we are carriers of His glory, expressions of his authority, etc. Heaven is God’s throne, but this has now shifted to His people in the earth.

- The nations gather unto this reality in the people of God. Their gathering unto the house of God breaks their natural inclination towards stubbornness.

v.18: - This verse depicts the oneness in the church. Judah and Israel become one (cf. stick of Judah and Ephraim becoming one). Then the church is set among the nations – and other sons emerge. Then all respond to God as FATHER!

Men Gathered to David:

At Adullam:

1 Sam 22:2 Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented **gathered to him**; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

At Hebron :

1 Chron 11:1 Then all Israel **gathered to David at Hebron** and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.

At Adullam the gathering of the men around David initiated him into movement to various locations in his flight from Saul. David journeyed from place to place, a total of twelve locations. When he came to Hebron, all the tribes converged towards and gathered around David. Here he lived for seven and half years, and then proceeded to Zion (the thirteenth location). The principle is this: The GATHERING of MEN catapulted their spiritual father to ever increasing places of greater accuracy. The journey to each location meant a step closer to his position of rulership from Zion. Each gathering accelerated God's purposes for both David, those under his oversight, and indeed, ultimately, the entire nation. The same holds true for us today: if all the principles attendant with biblical and godly gatherings are not in place, the leader is stifled in his personal development toward fullness. Then, the same result is brought to bear upon those he leads, and also, the God-intended impact on an entire regional jurisdiction could be aborted.

The gathering of David's men around him was fueled by their honour of him and an understanding that he represented God and His purposes for the entire nation.

Failure to perceive God's chosen 'sent one' to you will abort the gathering process.

Luke 13:31-35

- 31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for **Herod wants to kill You.**"
- 32 And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.'
- 33 "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.

- 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!* How often I wanted to GATHER your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!*
- 35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

If the sent-one is not recognised, disregarded, undermined, etc. there can no be gathering process. Gathering is contingent upon the recognition and regard for authentic apostolic fathering leadership. Israel, by not fully appraising and understanding the identity of Christ in their midst, sort to kill Him and thus aborted a gathering process initiated by Him. The gathering is described as 'under His wings'.

Biblically, gathering 'under the wings of the Lord' is a place of intimate relationship, empowerment, protection and provision – see Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4, etc. We gather 'under the wings of the Lord' through gathering to the one he has sent to function as your spiritual father.

Ruth 2:11-13

- 11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have *done for your mother-in-law* after the death of your husband has been *fully reported to me*, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.
- 12 "*May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.*"
- 13 Then she said, "*I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.*"

Note verse 12 above: By submitting to and supporting Naomi (spiritual father who teaches the Word), Boaz concludes that Ruth (spiritual son) has taken refuge under the wings of the Lord, the God of Israel.

The spirit of Herod kills the apostolic-prophetic. 'Herod' means 'hero'. Some want to appear 'heroic' to their following by viciously opposing the apostolic-prophetic. This is far more than simply opposition to something. This opposition is aimed ultimately at preventing a gathering process, and as we have said, there are aspects of God's nature and purpose that will only be revealed within the corporate context of gathering. Ultimately, it's God's manifested nature and expressed will that is being opposed.

Caution To Disobedient Apostolic Fathering Leadership :

- 1 Sam 13:11 But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Because I saw that the **people were scattering from me**, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

Saul as a leader fell out of favour with God through blatant disobedience – and hence there occurred a scattering (no gathering) away from him.

PRINCIPLE 7: THE APOSTOLIC PRINCIPLE IS A VITAL FACTOR FOR THE END-TIME GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

Jacob is a type of the apostolic fathering principle. He gathered his sons together to prophetically declare upon them their destiny. This has application for them in their time as well as for us, because the phrase ‘the last days’ (KJV) is used here.

Gen. 49:1,2 Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “**Assemble yourselves** that I may tell you what will befall you in **the days to come**. “**Gather together** and hear, O sons of Jacob; And **listen** to Israel your father.

Gathering will be around authentic apostolic fathers, who can reveal the will of God to their sons through the release of apostolic doctrine – the doctrine of Christ. Note: Jacob summons them, but Israel speaks.

Apostolic spiritual fathers need to be strong and like sick Jacob did, ‘collect their strength’ and speak as the ‘Israel’ of God, because sons of significant caliber as represented in Joseph and his two sons are coming to gather unto them.

Gen. 48:1,2 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, “Behold, your father is sick.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. When it was told to Jacob, “Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed.

Angels in Matthew 24:31 can also represent spiritual fathers or heads of households, to which sons gather.

Matt 24:31 And He will send forth **His angels** with A great **trumpet** and they **will gather together** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHRIST is the principle of father and son. Gathering around apostolic fathers who represent Christ in essence seek to impart the nature and will of Christ to their sons. This, our gather is unto Christ, and not to a man per se.

There is therefore also a requirement for gatherings to be around mature spiritual fathers, and not ‘boy-leaders’ – or immature leaders who are self-centred and self indulgent, building their own empires and not the Kingdom of God.

In this regard, study the following scriptures.

Eccl. 10:16,17

16 Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning.

17 Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness

Isaiah 3:4-7

- 4 And I will make mere lads their princes, And capricious children will rule over them,
 5 And the people will be oppressed, Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; The youth will storm against the elder And the inferior against the honorable.
 6 When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, saying, "You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler, And these ruins will be under your charge,"
 7 He will protest on that day, saying, "I will not be your healer, For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; You should not appoint me ruler of the people

Study the whole chapter of **Isaiah 22**.

THE TRIBE OF JUDAH was a leading tribe. Judah embodies the culture of an apostolic community that has a pioneering and leading role among the rest the tribal constituents of the Body of Christ.

It was prophesied of Judah that UNTO HIM shall the gathering of the peoples be:

Gen. 49:10 (kjb) The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and **unto him shall the gathering of the people be**

Gen 49:8-12 (nasb)

- 8 "Judah, **your brothers shall praise you**; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you.
 9 "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
 10 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, **And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**
 11 "He ties *his* foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes.
 12 "His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk.

Gathering/Obedience = yiqqāḥāh = to gather, to obey, obedience, cleansing, purging

As suggested by the meanings of 'gather' above, there is also the demand for 'obedience'. The purposes of our gathering is to bring us all into a place of corporate obedience and corporate purity.

The disposition of Judah as leader amongst his brothers is akin to the pivotal role that the church at Ephesus fulfilled amongst the seven churches in the book of Revelation. There are certainly some called to influence and impact the rest. If this is so, there will be an attraction to convergence to authentic apostolic-prophetic houses, which are designed to impart fresh grace, revelation and understanding of God's nature and will.

Hag 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with **all the remnant** of the people, **obeyed the voice** of the **LORD their God** and the **words of Haggai the prophet**, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the LORD.

Joseph was a man sent by God (sold by men). He saved his brothers and all whom they represented. He forgave quickly and easily and so the intent of God vested within him was facilitated effortlessly to swift execution. His brothers gathered unto him in Egypt. They once despised him, but now they gather to him. There is a company that God will use to express His salvation for the rest of the church. This is a Joseph company in this context. This company must be highly relational and deeply covenantal – that easily forgives brothers of offences both past and present. This disposition accentuates the latent ability with the Joseph company to emerge to strategic positions of influence by which God will express His salvation.

On the day of Pentecost – all it took was just 120 people in one accord in one place, strategically positioned on a right day – ‘when the day of Pentecost had fully come’. God did not wait for the entire nation to be gathered in unity – all He needed was a sufficiently represented remnant. He initiated something new within the scheme of long term purpose for the church and the earth, viz. Pentecost.

A brand new era in church history was birthed. Similarly, we too, if we have a sufficiently representative expression of oneness in our gatherings at churches and then in our cities, we could witness the initialisation of significant moves of God for the earth.

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Gathering and assembling as one activates the speaking of the Lord and hence the hearing of the sons of God. There is a dimension of God's speaking that we are exposed to as a result of how a spiritual father has positioned himself to access the Word, but there is also a dimension of God's speaking that goes beyond the private preparation of the preacher and that will only be activated by virtue of the gathering of his sons. Gatherings which are accurately constituted and reverentially observed will even cause spiritual fathers to speak on a higher plane. God will begin to speak specific things as gatherings of his family all around the world become more accurate, purposeful and regularly observed.

Neh 8:1 And all the people **gathered as one man** at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the **book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.**

Luke 24:32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts (singular : our heart) burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

After the death and resurrection of the Lord, the apostles remained gathered together. This was a pivotal point in human history and in the process of God's purposes. At significant junctures in God's purposes in the earth, the need to gather becomes all the more important.

The eleven which gathered were ideally postured to receive the report of the two men who had just walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They were upgraded as to events in their day and entered into an accurate knowledge and appreciation for the specific revelation of God to them and the world at that particular point in time.

PRINCIPLE 9: GATHERING IS NOT TO BE FORSAKEN

Psalm 122:3 Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is **compact together**;

Compact = Chabar = Unite, join together, have fellowship with, heap up, league.

Heb. 10:23-25

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;
24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
25 **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Forsaking	=	egkataleipō	=	abandon, desert; in straits, leave helpless; totally abandoned, utterly forsaken; to leave behind among, to leave surviving
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Assembling together = **episunagoge** = a gathering together in one place;

Habit = **ethos** = a *usage* - custom, manner.

This Greek word, *ethos*, does not merely denote the assembling for corporate worship as a solitary or occasional act, but as customary conduct. The English word, **ethos** refers to the characteristic spirit of a culture, era or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations. The ethos of the House of God includes an almost habitual culture of regular times of meetings around the Word of God.

The gathering is forsaken when the community and corporate expression of God's people as a family is devalued. Also, the Greek term suggests, to forsake the gathering implies a desertion of the family of God, an abandoning of divine purpose, a withholding of oneself and one's contribution with the ultimate effect of impoverishing the potential of the gathering's effectiveness. He who forsakes the gathering actually subconsciously leaves those gathered 'helpless or barely surviving' – suggestive of the fact that the fullest potential of those gathered will not be realised. Absence from the gathering subconsciously and inadvertently communicates the idea that there is a willingness (that might not be deliberate) that the gathering be impoverished.

May our gatherings around God's Word take on new priority and may every divine purpose attendant with them be fully accomplished.

[To be Continued]

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR PERSONAL REVIEW AND GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What significance is there in physically gathering together to hear the Word of God being taught?
 2. What does it mean to 'gather in the name' of God, and how is His 'name' manifested within our gatherings?
 3. While our gathering is unto the Lord and His Word, it occurs practically around the individual God has positioned to represent Him to us through His Word. Discuss this statement with reference to biblical examples.
 4. What do you understand by gathering around apostolic doctrine?
 5. How does the process or act of gathering facilitate the release of God's Voice?
 6. Why is it so important for key leaders to gather regularly around their apostolic father?
 7. What are the implications for 'FORSAKING' the gathering?
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