

Carlos Mraida

**Returning From Captivity**

(Short version)

“When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” Psalms 126:1-6

**I. Time of Captivity**

Theodicy:

A. Classical theistic stance: Behind every suffering, there is a loving and wise purpose of God, in order to uphold both the absolute sovereignty of God and his limitless love.

B. The problem of evil in the perspective of Jesus: the establishment of the Kingdom that involved an open confrontation against the kingdom of darkness.

C. God gave authority over everything created to the human being (Genesis 1.28). The human being submits to the authority of the devil (Genesis 3.5). The devil is the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this century (John 12.31, 14.30, 16.11; Ephesians 2.2; 2 Corinthians 4.4).

D. God continues to be sovereign, and has all authority, but on earth that authority was delegated to man, and then given, by man, to the devil. Jesus, as a man, came and defeated the devil on the cross. He regained the authority and gave it to the church.

E. Meanwhile, he is at the right hand of the Father, with maximum authority and power, waiting for all enemies to be put under his feet by the church (Hebrews 10.12-13 and Romans 16.20).

F. When we adopt the theistic and Western Enlightenment position, we turn the problem of evil from something against which the church must fight into something only to be explained intellectually. This explains why the western church has been

prone to theologize a lot about evil, while many times being powerless to confront it. The New Testament church, on the other hand, was not intellectually disconcerted by evil but spiritually empowered to overcome it.

1. ***Captivity of Biopolitical Surveillance:*** Some of the most prominent and read philosophers and intellectuals today say that a time is coming of increasing bio-surveillance and that, under the excuse of health care, there will be a strong restriction of freedom and a growing control over people, as well as the loss of democratic values in favor of more totalitarian governments, which will have control of the people through corporal biometric sensors within the entire population.
2. ***Captivity of Individualism:*** As in everything else, Covid-19 came to accelerate what was already a process in progress: a progressive plan to eradicate the concept of community. We have communication without community.
3. ***Captivity of Emptiness:*** the new only lasts an instant, and the emptiness is not filled with anything. This causes the hypercommunication and the intense lifestyle that are forms of hyperconsumption.
4. ***Captivity of Poverty and Social Inequality:*** The victims of the pandemic come mainly from the poorest sectors. In addition, Covid-19 has caused an expansion of the gap of social inequality and an acceleration of the robotization of jobs.
5. ***Captivity of Fear:*** The consequences of the pandemic fear are more serious than those of the virus itself, despite the fact that other diseases have caused more victims. There are four reasons for this: a. The values of individualism, hedonism and agnostic secularism typical of postmodernism have been mixed with fear of a world that has become totally unstable. b. Virtual and informative connectivity. c. People's health awareness. d. Economy that is global and unstable.

## II. A Time To Dream

It's time for apostolic ministries to have dreams, and inspire visions in pastors and new generations.

The vaccine for captivity is dreams and visions. Not only being informed about what is coming in the new reality, but especially being sensitive to receiving revelation about what God wants for the approaching era.

For those apostolic ministries "knowledgeable in the times", that which is coming will be better. And God gives new strength. ¡Don't wait to see what happens; make what God wants happen!

## III. A Time For Community Celebration

The apostolic task is to restore the essence of the church: Family of God, Body of Christ, People of God. In other words, its community character.

The preaching of the gospel is part of a wider global mission, which is the incarnation of the church.

The worship celebration in temples is a countercultural response to the spirit of this world, which sacrifices community on the altar of individualism.

The deformation of "we go to church", instead of "we are the church". The new post-pandemic deformation: "we see the church".

The church show in the post-pandemic time will have fewer attendees. There will be many more who fall away. It will foster self-centeredness and spiritual consumption buffet style or self-service.

Technology is a prosthesis that allows us to extend beyond the reach of our body, but presupposes an amputation (McLuhan).

It is time for the best of the church to surface. What is it? Alélon. In the New Testament this word appears 59 times and means: each other.

Apostolic task of changing the mentality of pastors.

#### **IV. Impact time**

##### ***Social impact***

Death of the humanist project. The world has no answers. Great opportunity for the church to bring in the new. Apostolic task of leading this process.

##### ***Renewal impact***

In ecclesial structures, forms, methodologies.

In the process of unity. A new pastoral covenant is required. Individualisms, disloyal pastoral practices, the weakening of organizations and representativeness that go into crisis all surface.

The church that will not only hold its own but will also grow, in the coming time, will have two characteristics: it will be a church filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and it will be a community church.

##### ***Revival Impact***

A great harvest is coming. For this to happen it is time to sow. Apostolic ministries that sow in the new generations. Let them sow with tears, because the church today is not what God designed.

A wonderful time is coming. Sheaves await us. We will reap a great harvest. The nations will walk in the light of the church. We will go out and we will free people from captivity. So it is X time for us to dare to dream. Soon our mouth will be filled with laughter and our tongue with praise, because among all the nations of the earth it will be said: Great things the Lord has done with us!

#### **Questions to guide group discussions:**

1. Biovigilance could increase control and decrease freedom in general, and in particular, that of worship and mission. How could we prepare ourselves for that?
2. Faced with the problem of fear, emptiness, depression and loneliness, what should be the mission strategies that the church implements in the present and after the pandemic?

3. What should we change in our message and in our mission so that the hyperindividualism that characterizes our culture does not penetrate and control the church?
4. What apostolic dreams can we dream at this time?
5. How can we establish a new unity covenant that, instead of retarding the unity process in each city, advances it?
6. How to stimulate people while we are developing the digital mission, so that after the pandemic, people will join together again?

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