

**Towards a biblically faithful operative theology¹ with regards to
2 Chronicles 7:14 at Christian Life Fellowship, Jamaica**

By

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¹ Operative theology is “the theology that is in operation amongst a community of God’s people, as reflected in their worship, preaching, ministry, ethics, etc.” (Smith 2014:14).

The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary or the Supervisor (s) of the research.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Signed: Sheldon Campbell Date: 20 June 2017

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Abstract

Many pastors and Christians in Jamaica view 2 Chronicles 7:14 today as a means, if they adhere to its conditionalities, to precipitating widespread spiritual revival, including social, economic, and material blessings. This is the view of the four elders at Christian Life Fellowship Church and many of its members.

The situation in Jamaica and this understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 among the churches prompted me to rethink the meaning of this passage. Was the popular understanding of the text the most accurate and faithful one? With this in mind, I considered four questions: 1) How does this view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 pan out in real life today? 2) What does healing of the land in this Old Testament passage mean? 3) What are some of the problems (possibly undermining of God's sovereignty, deception, and disappointment) that may arise from believing that, if followed, 2 Chronicles 7:14 guarantees national revival and even material blessing possibly on a nation-wide scale? 4) How should pastors, preachers and teachers in Jamaica faithfully teach on this passage today?

As a result, I obtained the official Church position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 from all four pastors (the title "pastor" is used interchangeably with "elder" at CLF). Then a small-scale qualitative study was conducted with ten other CLF members to gain their perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the impact on their faith.

This was followed by a critical study from the following different perspectives in an attempt to gain a faithful understanding of the text: text exegesis, biblical theology, church history, systematic theology, and also non-theological perspectives. The theological reflection was also aided by observing the text through the missional and Christocentric lenses.

Finally the mini-thesis proposes and defends a new operative theology with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 and a strategy on how to effectively communicate it to the church and implement it practically.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Background.....	10
1.2 Objectives.....	11
1.2.1 Primary Objective.....	11
1.2.2 Secondary Objectives.....	12
1.3 Research Plan.....	12
1.3.1 Design.....	12
1.3.2 Methods.....	13
CHAPTER 2: INTERPRETING THE OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF.....	16
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 Background information on CLF.....	17
2.2.1 CLF's history.....	17
2.2.2 CLF's theology.....	17
2.2.3 CLF's vision.....	17
2.2.4 CLF's ministry context.....	18
2.2.5 Summary.....	18
2.3 Methods used in the qualitative study.....	18
2.3.1 CLF's position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 presented by the elders.....	18
2.3.2 The interviews and questionnaire.....	20
2.3.2.1 Participants chosen by systematic sampling.....	20

2.3.2.2 Information package.....	21
2.3.2.3 Instruction package.....	21
2.3.2.3.1 Interview 1: This was to get the respondents' initial views on... 21 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	21
2.3.2.3.2 Questionnaire: This probed more deeply the respondents' views on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	21
2.3.2.3.3 Interview 2: This was a semi-structured interview to probe still more deeply certain aspects of the respondents' views on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	21
2.4 Results of the research.....	21
2.4.1 CLF's position on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	22
2.4.2 Results of the first interview requiring respondents' initial interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	22
2.4.3 Results of administration of the questionnaire.....	23
2.4.4 Results of semi-structured interviews.....	33
2.4.5 Summary of the all the data collected from the respondents.....	36
2.5 Discussion of the results of the qualitative research.....	38
2.5.1 Comparison of individual responses.....	38
2.5.2 Implications of the results.....	39
2.6 Summary and conclusion.....	43
CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPING AND DEFENDING A FAITHFUL OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF.....	44
3.1 Introduction.....	44
3.2 Towards a normative operative theology for 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	44

3.2.1 Exegetical perspective on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	45
3.2.2: Biblical and systematic theology perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	47
3.2.2.1 Old Testament covenants and Israel.....	47
3.2.2.2 <i>The New Covenant and the Church</i>	49
3.2.2.3 <i>Christocentric and missional perspectives with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14</i>	51
3.2.2.3.1 Christocentricity.....	51
3.2.2.3.2 Missional-centricity.....	53
3.2.3 Revival perspectives and 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	54
3.2.4 Church history perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	56
3.2.5 Non-theological perspectives with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14.....	60
3.2.5.1 <i>Political science</i>	60
3.2.5.2 <i>Psychology</i>	61
3.2.5.2.1 Psychology, repentance and forgiveness.....	61
3.2.5.2.2 Psychology, expectation, and challenges.....	62
3.2.6 Conclusion about the normative view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 for any Church	64
3.3 Implications for an operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF.....	66
3.4 Defence of the proposed operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF.....	69
3.5 Conclusion.....	70

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ACHIEVE A BIBLICALLY FAITHFUL OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF 72

4.1 Introduction.....	72
4.2 Communicative plan for gaining acceptance of the new praxis of 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.....	73
4.2.1 Convincing the elders at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis.....	74
4.2.2 Convincing the other leaders at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis.....	75
4.2.2.1 Reflecting on the current situation and the need for change with the other leaders.....	76
4.2.2.2 Communicating the new praxis of 2 Chronicles 7:14 to the other leaders.....	76
4.2.3 Convincing the congregation at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis.....	76
4.3 The strategic implementation plan.....	77
4.3.1 Short term goals (Year 1).....	79
4.3.2 Medium term goals (Years 2 and 3).....	80
4.3.3 Long term goals (Year 4 and onwards).....	83
4.4 Conclusion.....	84
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	86
5.1 A review of the objectives.....	86
5.2 Tracing the argument.....	86
5.3 Summary of the findings.....	89
APPENDICES.....	93
Appendix 1: Randomizer.....	93

Appendix 2: Questionnaire.....	94
Appendix 3: Interview 1.....	99
Appendix 4: Interview 2.....	102
WORKS CITED.....	118

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Christian Life Fellowship (CLF) was established in 1981². I have attended CLF during the last ten years. For seven of them I have been both a member and preacher (not a pastor) at the Church. It is an autonomous, non-denominational Church located in Kingston, Jamaica. In 1974 a spiritual awakening in the evangelical tradition started in some high schools in the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew. By 1978 this revival had spread to the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona and other tertiary educational institutions. CLF emerged out of this revival. Cauchi (2014) also notes that in September 1860 there was already a great revival that started among the Moravians in St. Elizabeth. It spread throughout many congregations and parishes and led to the establishment of many Churches in Jamaica. While one cannot definitively know the impact of these two revivals and others in our history, Jamaica has one of the highest Churches per square mile in the world today. As a result of this background CLF and other Churches pray and work for continuous spiritual and numerical growth.

CLF is part of a prayer movement in Jamaica³ where 2 Chronicles 7:14⁴ holds a prominent place⁵. The verse was originally addressed to the nation of Israel and would apply when in the future it would be facing God's judgement on the nation for spiritual unfaithfulness to Yahweh. It is a call to repentance and prayer for God to once again bless the nation spiritually and materially. The verse is viewed as a blueprint for achieving a national evangelical revival in Jamaica and significant growth of the Church numerically. Some at CLF would say that the blessing would even include healing of the country's problems (Taylor 2017). Such an Old Testament (OT) passage would naturally attract significant attention and be

2 Christian Life Fellowship [2015]. About us. Online article. Accessed from www.clfja.org, 2015-08-25.

3 Christian Life Fellowship [2017]. Grow & Serve/ Partnerships. Online article. Accessed from www.clfja.org/grow-serve/partnerships, 2017-05-31.

4 Jamaica House of Prayer 2014 (September). Online Newsletter. Accessed from www.jahop.org, 2017-06-01.

5 Jamaica House of Prayer [2017]. Who We Are. Online article. Accessed from www.jahop.org, 2017-05-31.

interpreted in this way in a country marked by a history of evangelical revival and the eroding of moral and ethical values manifested in corruption, violence and poverty.

The situation in Jamaica and this understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 among the churches have prompted me to rethink the meaning of this passage. Is this understanding most faithful to the text? It carries certain implications for believers, some of which are negative for their faith. With all this in mind, I needed to consider four questions: 1) How deeply is this view of 2 Chronicles 7:14 held at CLF and how has it affected the country? 2) What are some of the problems (possibly undermining of God's sovereignty, deception, and disappointment) that may arise from believing that following 2 Chronicles 7:14 guarantees national revival and possibly also the healing of the nation's problems that might be preventing prosperity in Jamaica? 3) What did the healing of the land in this OT passage mean for Israel of old and what, if any, is its relevance to the church? 4) In the light of answering questions 1, 2 and 3, if the current teaching at CLF on this verse is found not to be biblically faithful, how could the pastors, preachers and teachers be persuaded of the need for change and how would this best be achieved?

The research question was thus *what is the most faithful interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and its application at CLF?* This would be the operative theology with reference to this verse for CLF. Further, the research question requires establishing a strategy to gain acceptance and the implementation of this operative theology at the church. The research question would be answered through investigating the above four questions.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 Primary Objective

The primary objective of this study was to formulate a theologically-informed strategic plan to ensure that the praxis of CLF with respect to its understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is faithful to God and optimally relevant to its ministry context. This verse was relevant to the nation of Israel. It concerned those times in the future when there would be widespread sin and national unfaithfulness to God that would lead to his judgement on the land involving great trials and poverty. It was a call that when this happened they were to repent from personal and national sins and pray

for national healing of the land with the assurance that God would grant their request.

1.2.2 Secondary Objectives

The primary objective will be achieved by dividing it into three secondary objectives, each of which serves as the objective for a chapter of the mini-thesis. The three secondary objectives are:

1. Interpret the operative theology of CLF with respect to their understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14.
2. Determine and defend a faithful operative theology with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF in its context.
3. Develop a strategic plan for introducing a faithful operative theology with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.

1.3 Research Plan

1.3.1 Design

The research design for this mini-thesis is Don Browning's (1991, chap. 3) four-step approach to strategic practical theology. In Browning's vision of practical theology, as in Smith's (2013) approach to integrative theology which this master's programme follows, strategic practical theology is the climactic final movement. Browning's model of strategic practical theology follows an in-depth theological analysis of a selected theme, and provides a framework for exploring the outworking of the theoretical research and situational analysis (the latter to a lesser degree) and their correlation in a particular faith community. Browning (1991:55–56) proposes four questions to be answered for this task:

1. How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act? (flows from the first movement)
2. What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? (flows from the second movement and part of the third movement)
3. How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? (flows from part of the third movement)

4. What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation? (largely unique to the fourth movement)

This mini-thesis follows this four-step approach, but treats the second and third steps together, resulting in three content chapters. This yields the following structure for the thesis:

Chapter	Title	Notes
1.	Introduction	This chapter introduces the research by providing the background, objectives, methods, and structure.
2.	Interpreting the operative theology at CLF concerning the relevance of 2 Chronicles 7:14 today.	This chapter covers Browning's first question, namely interpreting the present praxis of CLF in relation to its understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 today.
3.	Developing and defending a faithful praxis with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.	This chapter covers Browning's second and third questions, namely, developing and defending a vision of what the ideal praxis should look like at CLF in its ministry context.
4.	Developing a communicative and strategic plan to improve the praxis at CLF with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14.	This chapter covers Browning's fourth question, namely, formulating a communicative and strategic plan to strengthen the understanding and praxis of CLF in relation to 2 Chronicles 7:14.
5.	Conclusion	This chapter concludes the research by reviewing the objectives, methods, and findings.

1.3.2 Methods

Chapter 2

This chapter addresses Browning's first question which necessitates research into the current praxis regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. This is not only to describe this praxis, but also to uncover the theory behind practices (according to Browning, every praxis is "theory laden", 1991:55). To be able to answer Browning's first question I first noted the background and beliefs of CLF. Then I conducted a small-scale qualitative study of CLF with emphasis on qualitative research. The research was focused, firstly, on the elders and then, secondly, substantially on a sample group. The elders agreed to have their combined view on what they believed was the church's official position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 included (there was no official document). The selected respondents for the qualitative research were willing to participate and were assured of confidentiality both verbally and in writing (see appendix 2). To achieve this where certain interviewees are quoted directly the names were changed.

Chapter 3

This chapter addresses Browning's second and third questions. This required establishing a faithful operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. To achieve this I critically investigated what the new praxis should be through exegesis of the verse and biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and non-theological perspectives. The implications for a normative understanding of, and response to, this verse for any church were then deduced. Then this was correlated with the results of Chapter 2 to lay the foundation in chapter 4 for a strategic plan to align CLF's operative theology with this position. Finally a defence of the position arrived at in this chapter is provided.

Chapter 4

This chapter covers Browning's fourth question and attempts to convey the procedural steps that should be carried out to gain acceptance of and the implementation of the new praxis for CLF with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14. To accomplish this a strategic plan was established to practically address the areas

highlighted where the present praxis at CLF was deficient. This strategic plan not only covers the steps to introduce the new operative theology, but includes the communicative dimension to maximise the chances of gaining its acceptance. This accomplishes Browning's position that all theology is fundamental practical theology, i.e. transformational (Browning 1991:55-58).

CHAPTER 2: INTERPRETING THE OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF

2.1 Introduction

As discussed previously, Browning uses four questions to direct his four-step approach to his strategic practical theology (Browning 1991:55–56). In this chapter we deal with Browning's first question, "*How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?*" This entails seeking to probe and interpret the operative theology at CLF in relation to 2 Chronicles 7:14. The bulk of chapter 3 will be an attempt to arrive at a more biblically faithful operative theology for CLF, and chapter 4 will seek to develop a strategic plan to bring about this new operative theology at CLF. Clearly before trying to make any adjustments it is vital to research the current situation: not only to discover its operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14, but to explore the reasons for this position. Failure to do so could lead to an inadequate strategic plan to achieve any required changes.

Browning's first question thus calls for a thick description of some church practice where there is or might be a difficulty or concern – a thorough description of both the *practice* in its context and the *theory* behind the practice as influenced by its traditions and other factors (1991:47-49). Browning favours a primarily hermeneutical methodology to achieve his thick description, but does also allow for qualitative research to get a better grasp of what is happening and why.

In this chapter of the thesis I thus critically reflect on the operative theology at CLF with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14. To achieve Browning's thick description I firstly include information about CLF. Such information plays a part in establishing the theory, and its origins, underlying the current praxis with regard to this verse at CLF. The major portion of the chapter follows which presents the nature, results and an interpretation of a qualitative study conducted to better appreciate the operative theology at CLF with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14.

2.2 Background information on CLF

2.2.1 CLF's history

As noted above, CLF had its origins in a revival that started in 1974⁶ in certain high schools tertiary institutions. Campus ministries and small groups eventually came together to form CLF in 1981.

CLF is located in very close proximity to two of Jamaica's largest universities (UWI Mona, and the University of the Technology). The Church adjoins the latter. It benefits from having many Caribbean students. The Church is fairly contemporary with casual to semi-formal attire worn at the Sunday service. Hymns are rarely sung and no liturgy is used. CLF has a very vibrant young adult population very serious about the Lord Jesus Christ.

2.2.2 CLF's theology

CLF is an autonomous, non-denominational Church. It believes the Bible is God's Word that was written by men through divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Bible is the ultimate authority in every aspect of faith and practice. The members believe in one everlasting, limitless, and sovereign God, who revealed Himself to man as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They believe the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, regenerates, sanctifies, illuminates, comforts, empowers, and preserves believers. They believe that mankind was created in God's image to have fellowship with Him but sinned and thus mankind can only be reconciled by true repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are no official documents covering CLF's beliefs or its position on 2
Chronicles 7:14. I obtained the position the elders took on this passage, which is presented in section 2.3.1. This apparently represents the official view of the church.

2.2.3 CLF's vision

CLF seeks to be a mature local Church that births many versatile ministries to positively influence Jamaica and the world, i.e. to further God's Kingdom. To accomplish this CLF seeks to:

⁶ A revival is a supernatural work of God where the Holy Spirit regenerates many individuals and causes new levels of vitality in the churches.

- Promote orthodoxy and biblical obedience.
- Encourage unity, commitment, financial giving, and regular fellowship.
- Teach prayer as a lifestyle.
- Experience miracles and the gifts of the Spirit regularly.
- Conduct continuous evangelism to grow the Church.
- Foster and Support genuine, consistent, and Christ-centred living while expecting Jesus' return.
- Prophetically address social issues with the appropriate action.
- Facilitate ongoing training and development.

2.2.4 CLF's ministry context

CLF is located in St. Andrew, Jamaica. It is in very close proximity to two of Jamaica's largest universities (UWI Mona, and the University of Technology) with the Church adjoining the latter. Through several influential ministry leaders at CLF the church has been used to mobilise significant church activities throughout the whole of Jamaica; and the church seems to have a voice in the nation.

2.2.5 Summary

CLF emerged out of revival in secondary and tertiary institutions. It strives to be Biblical and thus affirms the work of the Triune God in repentance and salvation and prays and works for continuous spiritual and numerical growth. The majority of young and other adults that attend CLF are fairly mature in the Lord. CLF is positioned such that it can exercise a prophetic voice in the nation on God's heart for Jamaica. This background already provides some insight into possible reasons for the church holding its view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 (see below). Its commitment to the authority of Scripture will explain its belief in the relevance and authority of this verse for the church as it understands the verse to also apply to the church.

2.3 Methods used in the qualitative study

2.3.1 CLF's position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 presented by the elders

All four elders (also called pastors) at CLF were requested to present to me and each other what they considered the official church position on 2 Chronicles 7:14. This they did and then I compiled all the responses into one position and sent it to

them with a request to confirm if this would represent CLF's position on the passage. They agreed it did reflect what could be considered the official position of CLF. The following is how they presented it.

It is clear that this scripture in its context is referring to natural Israel specifically. The link between sin and what appears to be natural occurrences was actually God's judgment for their sin. However, this verse like many other scriptures can be applied to God's people wherever they are. It is thus considered relevant to Christians today throughout the world.

The current crisis in any country caused by, for instance, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, war, and social instability, must normally be discerned as an act of divine judgement; and when it is God's national (temporal) judgement it is a response to "serious" sin(s). However, God's judgement is usually intended to be redemptive, which means He wants it to bring the people to repentance. The specific sin(s) must be identified and acknowledged. Furthermore, God's people should lead the way in this process and related repentance and also call the nation to repentance. The church should act based on discernment of the situation regardless of the nation's response, and this will bring God's positive response of removing the judgment and bringing healing and blessing to the land and thus vindicating 2 Chronicles 7:14.

This intercessory role of the people of God of bringing the nation before God (any nation where we are present or near – *a la* Abraham and Sodom as in Genesis 18:16-33) is an imperative demand and essential to bring about authentic repentance. This will be followed by the Lord's forgiveness and then the healing (broadly understood) of the "land." There is a limit to the long-term "healing of the land" based on the fact that all creation awaits the redemption of the children of God (Romans 8:19-23).

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 was given by God at the dedication of Solomon's temple in answer to certain requests Solomon had made in his prayer of dedication. These requests were that when in the future during times of God's judgement prayer was offered at the temple that God would remove the famine or pestilence and resulting suffering. The dedication of the temple must have been an occasion of intense focus

on its role in the future well-being of the nation. If the people of God would humble themselves in prayer and supplication the Lord would be attentive to them, forgive them and heal their land.

However, the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer would not be limited to one time or locality. The record of it is read and thought of with an interest that is undiminished by the lapse of time. This is because "My people", those who are called by God's name, is applicable no matter what time and season and place. For instance, Jamaica contains the Christian Church, and so the church will pray for rain and good climatic conditions as 2 Chronicles 7:14 should also be applicable to the church in Jamaica. In the same way that the Israelites were called to pray and ask for repentance after the dedication of Solomon's temple, all Christians are also called to pray and ask for repentance in order to receive forgiveness and be exempted from God's wrath, both the church and the nation in which it is situated.

2.3.2 The interviews and questionnaire

2.3.2.1 Participants chosen by systematic sampling

The typical member at CLF is an adult, i.e. older than 21 years of age. CLF's members' list as at October 22, 2015, had 175 members⁷. Using this population and a sample of 10 members gave us a sampling interval of 17.5. We rounded it to 17. This meant that we needed to select a random number to begin with from the first seventeen members on the list and thereafter ever 17th number was extracted. A simple random sampling software (Research Randomizer) gave us the number 4 as our starting point after we entered in this information (see appendix 1).

Although at CLF we have 60 male and 115 female members, which worked out to 34% males and 66% females, we chose a sample with an equal number of males and females, i.e. 5 males and 5 females. We had to exclude one pastor whose name was extracted, because the elders'/pastors' position was to be separately obtained. We also had to continue extracting numbers even after generating ten numbers until we had the required number of males due to the disproportionate number of females to males.

⁷ CLF members' list was sent to me by one of CLF's administrative staff on October 22, 2015.

2.3.2.2 Information package

The Information Package gave the researcher's name, purpose of the study, how the members for participation were selected, a short description of the study, assurance of confidentiality, the potential benefits of the study, and contact details should respondents have questions or concerns that needed to be addressed.

2.3.2.3 Instruction package

The Instruction Package explained in detail the qualitative research to the ten who had agreed to participate in the research: a first interview, questionnaire, and second interview.

2.3.2.3.1 Interview 1: This was to get the respondents' initial views on

2 Chronicles 7:14

In this short session interview, before completing this questionnaire, the interviewees briefly gave their present views on 2 Chronicles 7:14.

2.3.2.3.2 Questionnaire: This probed more deeply the respondents' views on

2 Chronicles 7:14

The questionnaire, which included closed- and open-ended questions, was administered upon completion of the short session interview.

2.3.2.3.3 Interview 2: This was a semi-structured interview to probe still more

deeply certain aspects of the respondents' views on 2 Chronicles 7:14

The final interview was conducted to obtain even greater insight into their views of 2 Chronicles 7:14. The questions used resulted from the analysis of the questionnaire answers. They probed areas that clearly needed more clarity and thus added scientific value to the research.

2.4 Results of the research

In this research whenever I refer to respondents/interviewees I am talking about the ten or some of the ten members who underwent the short interview, answered a closed- and open-ended questionnaire, and then were interviewed using a set of questions that sought greater clarity on issues that emerged from the results of the short interview and questionnaire. When I refer to the elders' position I will state this

clearly. I am aware that in a sense the elders were also respondents, but I only asked them for their personal position without also putting them through answering the questionnaire and the second interview. Therefore my approach with both groups (the elders/pastors and the ten) was significantly different. What I received from the elders is still part of my qualitative research, but the focus with them was more to try to get an CLF's 'official' position on 2 Chronicles 7:14. I took their essentially identical views on the verse as the official position, especially as the elders all agreed that collectively it represented them. Moreover, this position would have been generally propagated by them in the Church and would thus most likely be perceived as the official view by the other members of the congregation.

2.4.1 CLF's position on 2 Chronicles 7:14

CLF elders believe the promise given in 2 Chronicles 7:14 referred to national Israel, but that it also applies to all believers and nations today. They believe it requires the people of God to genuinely repent which leads to forgiveness of sin and healing of the land (broadly understood). They also believe it may be adapted for the Church in Jamaica.

2.4.2 Results of the first interview requiring respondents' initial interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14

The answers fell into one of three categories: (i) The verse is applicable only to the people of Israel when a nation is in the land of Israel; (ii) it is applicable to the people of Israel when in the land of Israel and also to the church and the whole country where the church is situated (the application to the Christians and their country is what Christians would describe as having taken place, at least to some degree, in many revivals in church history, but would include substantial economic blessings); and (iii) it is applicable to the people of Israel when a nation is in the land of Israel and also to the church but not also to the rest of the country where the church is situated, i.e. the healing of the land would not benefit unbelievers refusing to repent.

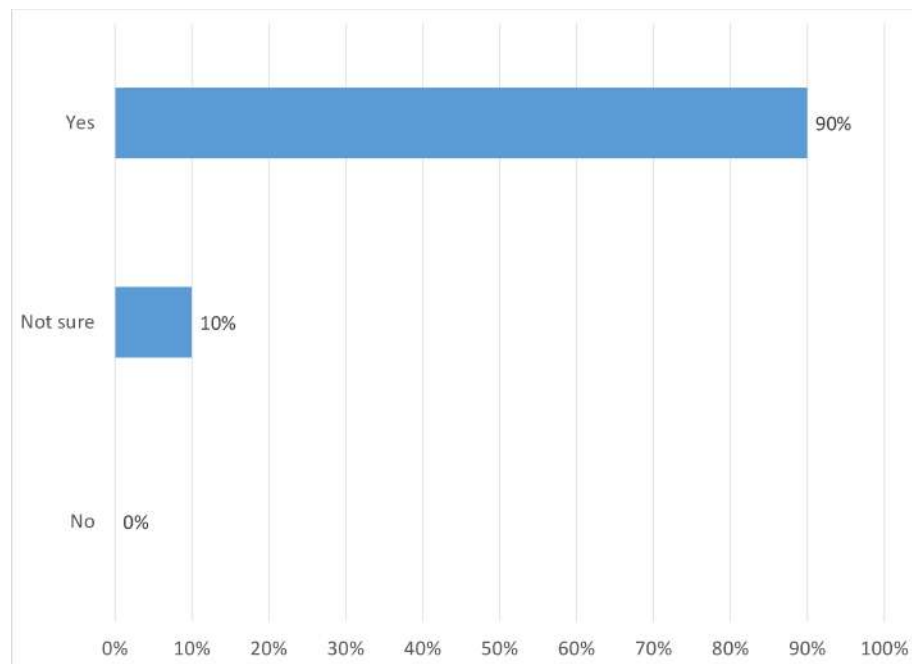
The majority of interviewees believed 2 Chronicles 7:14 applied to the third category. Most respondents applied it on a personal level. There were several ways that the healing of the land was interpreted. The majority of interviewees explained that it

entails agricultural benefits, while some persons' answers also had social, other economic and spiritual benefits, including spiritual revival.

2.4.3 Results of administration of the questionnaire

The questions in the questionnaire are listed below. The answers to each question are collated and summarised in graph format followed by some comment on the results.

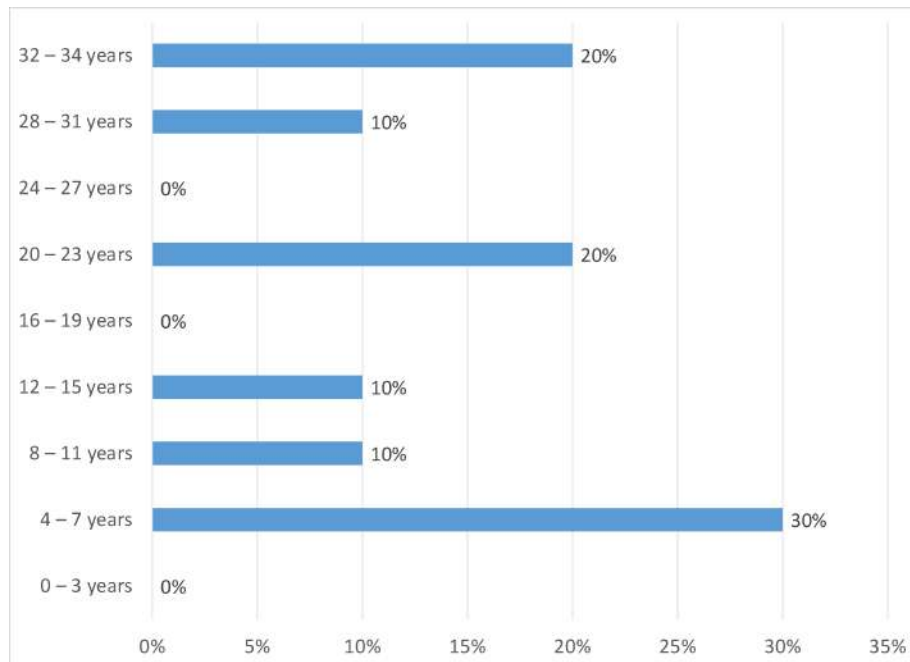
Question 1: Are you a member of Christian Life Fellowship?



Of the ten CLF members, nine (90%) answered “Yes” about the status of their membership. One person (10%) reported that she was “Not sure” of her membership, meaning that while she had not withdrawn her membership she has been only occasionally attending CLF for several years now.

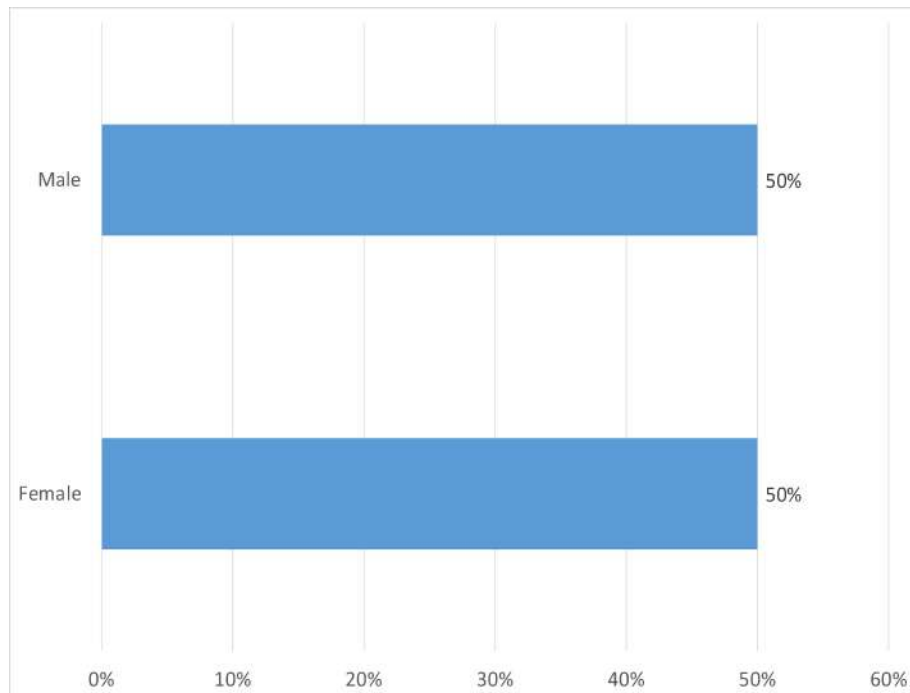
In the remaining graphs where the results are clear and unmistakable from the graph, I will not explain them. Only where I want to point out a result that is not so obvious or requires further comment or stressing will I make comment.

Question 2: How long have you been a member of Christian Life Fellowship Church?

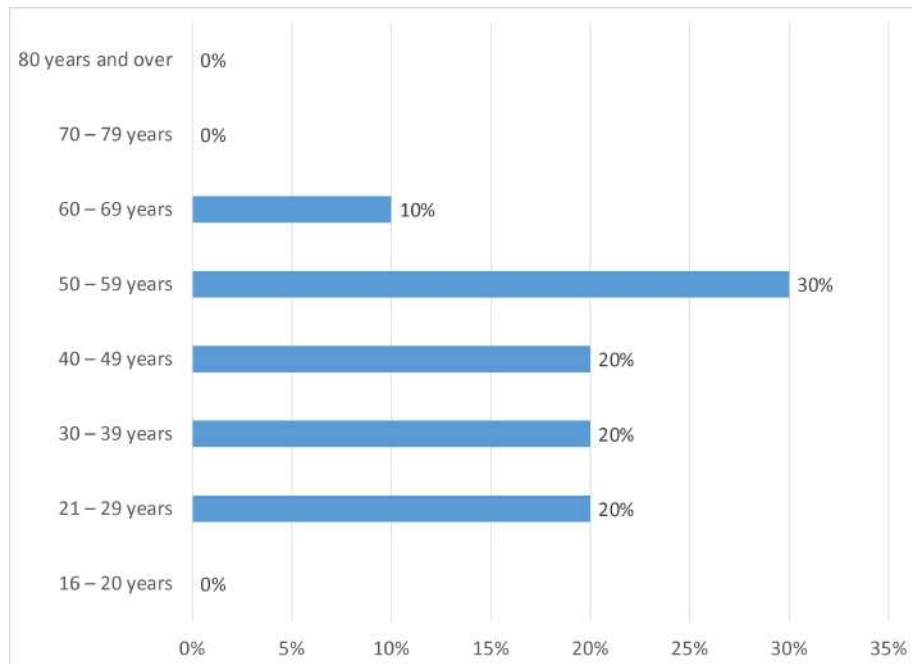


This chart shows that over 60% of the respondents have been attending CLF for more than a decade and that none of them had become members in the last 3 years.

Question 3: What is your gender?

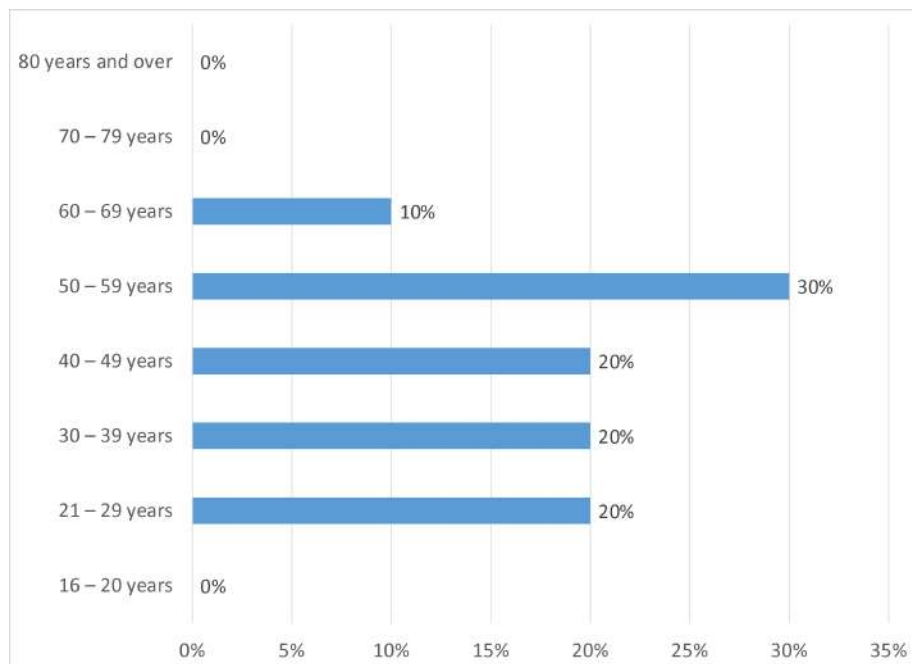


Question 4: What age range do you fall within?

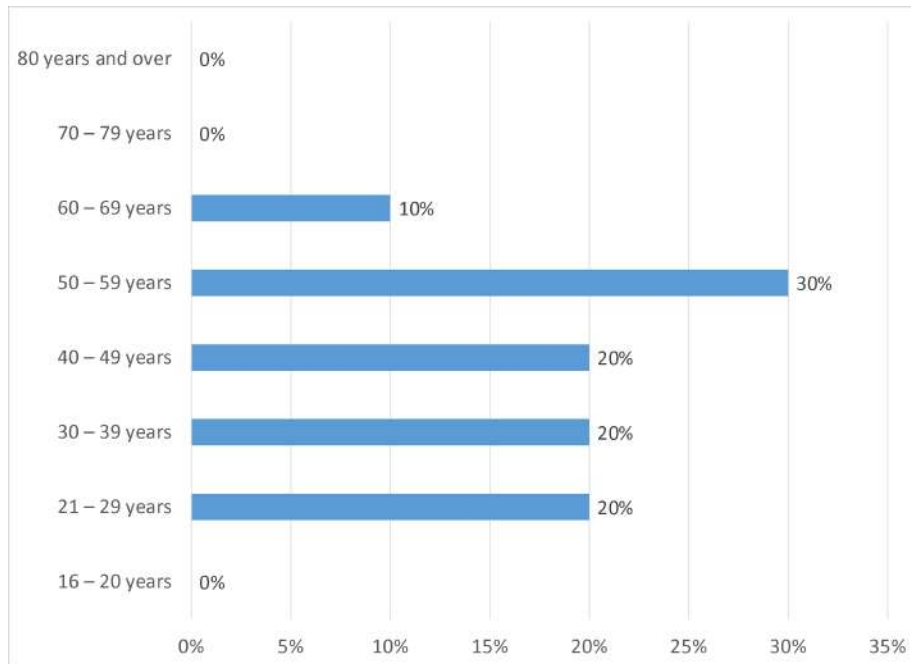


All respondents were adults, 60% were above 40 years, and 40% below.

Question 5: How often do you pray?

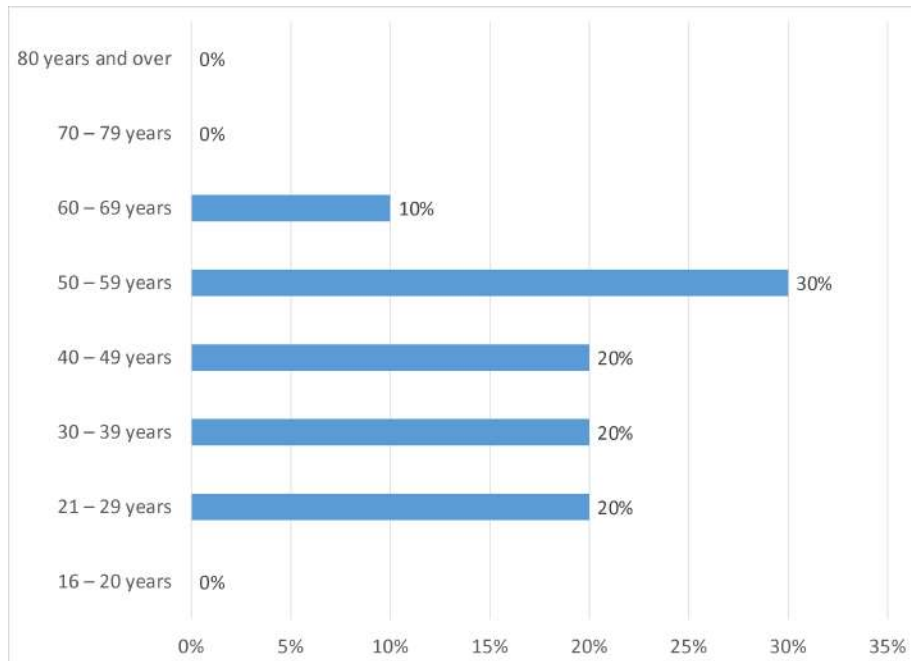


Question 6: When you desire God to act, which of the following do you agree with?

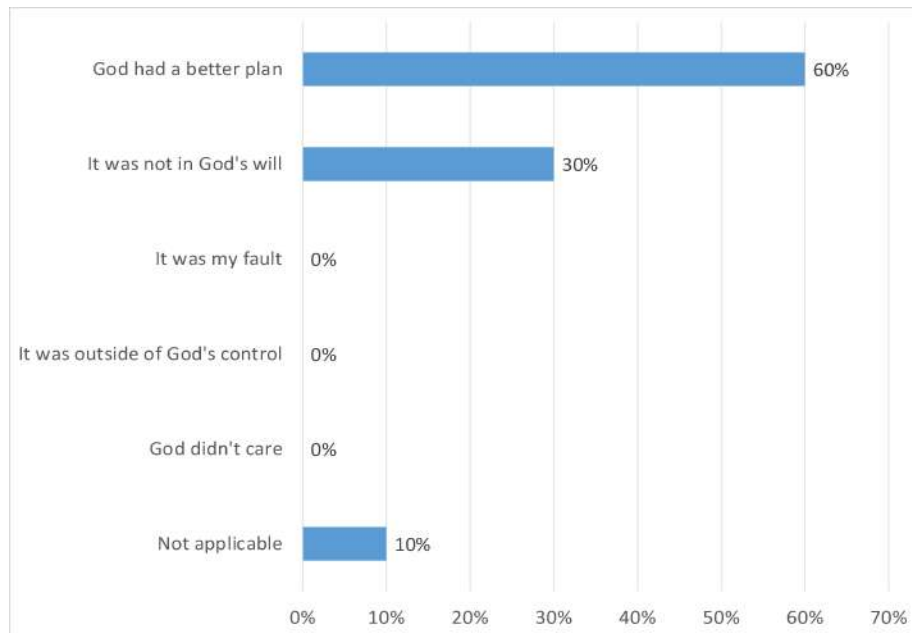


In “Other”, 20% had “God will act when I pray in accordance with His will”, while 10% believed “It depends upon God's grace”.

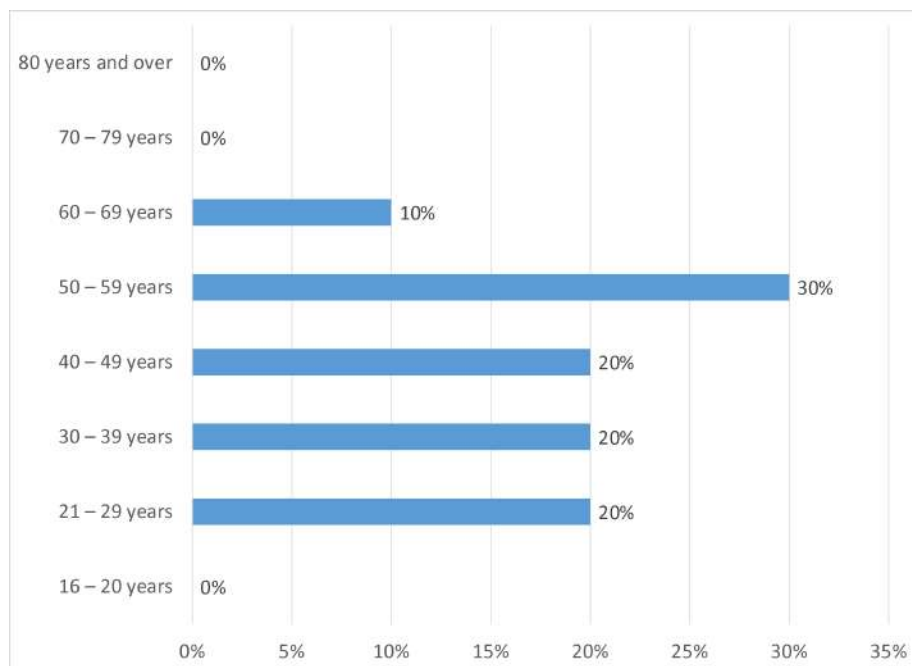
Question 7: Are your prayers answered?



Question 8: If your prayers are not always answered, what is the main reason for this? Choose one.

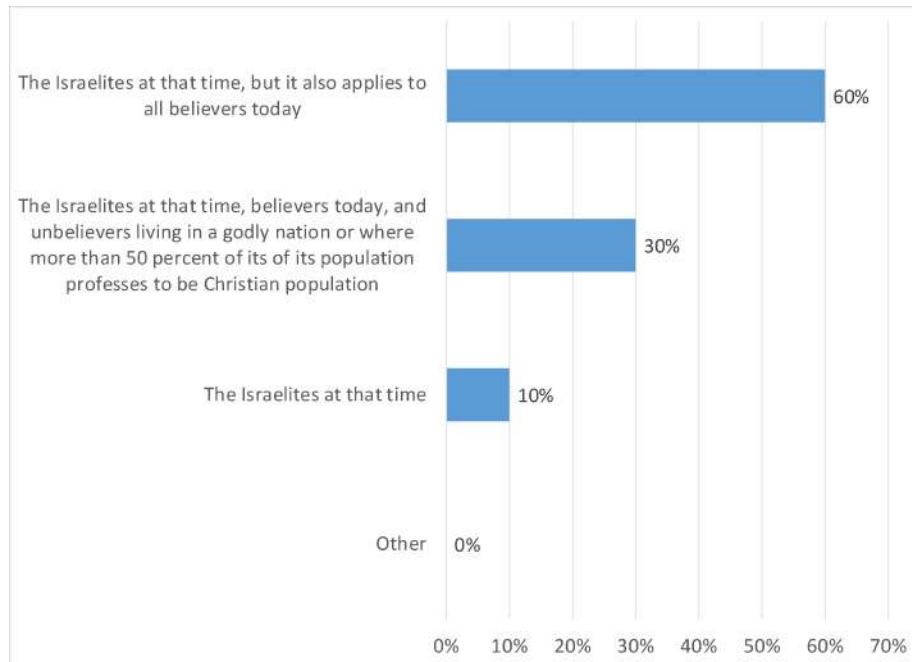


Question 9: Have you ever felt disappointed with God for not answering your prayers?

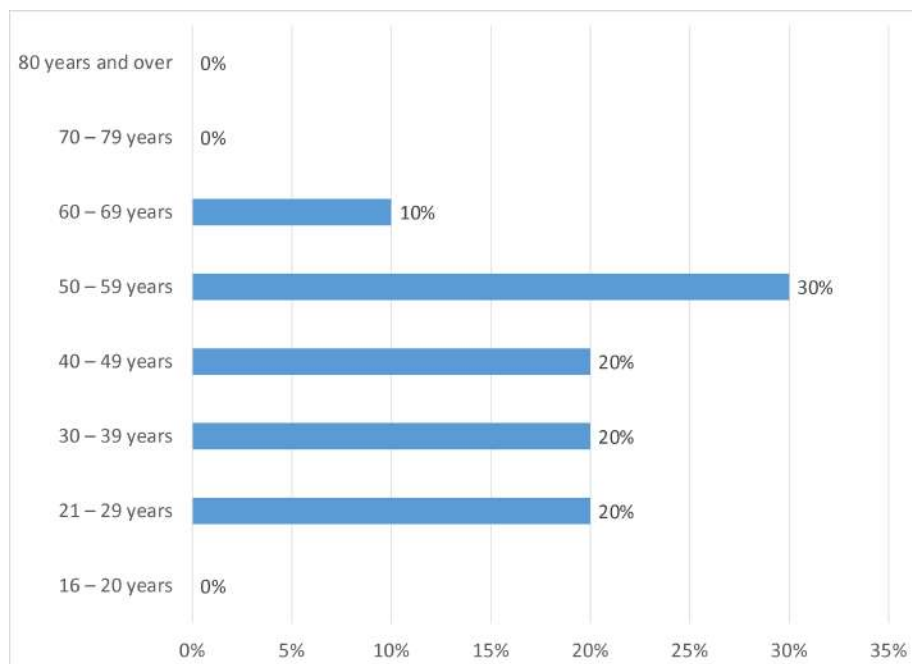


This chart indicates that 90% of respondents have felt disappointed with God because of unanswered prayer, while 10% answered “Never”.

Question 10: Who are the “my people” in 2 Chronicles 7:14?



Question 11: Who are those “who are called by God's Name” in 2 Chronicles 7:14?



Question 12: What does it mean for persons to “humble themselves”?

This led to responses such as repentance, submitting to God's authority, fasting, casting down pride, acknowledging one's wrongs, failures, and sins before God, and being undone before God.

Question 13: What does it mean for persons to “seek God's face”?

The answers included: prayer, searching and finding out what God feels and thinks; waiting on God; turning to God for guidance and direction; pursuing intimacy with God; examining and studying God's words to determine/discern God's will; meditating on God's laws and statutes; and actively and consistently find out what pleases God and do it.

Question 14: What does it mean for persons to “turn from their wicked ways”?

These answers covered: to repent of all sins committed knowingly and unknowingly and not returning to them; refrain from repeating sins; stop doing things (sinful practices) that displease/dishonour God; turn from self-centred ways; choose to live righteously; start doing the things God commands; and cease and desist from ungodly practices.

Question 15: Why will God now “hear from heaven”?

The answers included: that because they have met God's prerequisites/requirements; He is pleased; since we have followed God's instructions by praying, humbling themselves, seeking His Face, turning from sin and submitting to Him; because we are ready to listen; and God will hear, meaning he will respond favourably.

Question 16: Why is it important for God to “forgive the people's sins”?

These answers were the responses: to prevent/remove God's judgement and heal the broken relationship with Him; to show love since He doesn't want people to perish because of their sin; God's forgiveness of people's sin begins a healing process and leads them to prosper in many ways; so that the Lord will also save the people from destruction from all forms; without God's forgiveness of sin, His wrath remains on the people and the land; So they can be embraced by His loving-kindness; and so that God can heal the land.

Question 17: What do you believe healing the land refers to in 2 Chronicles 7:14?

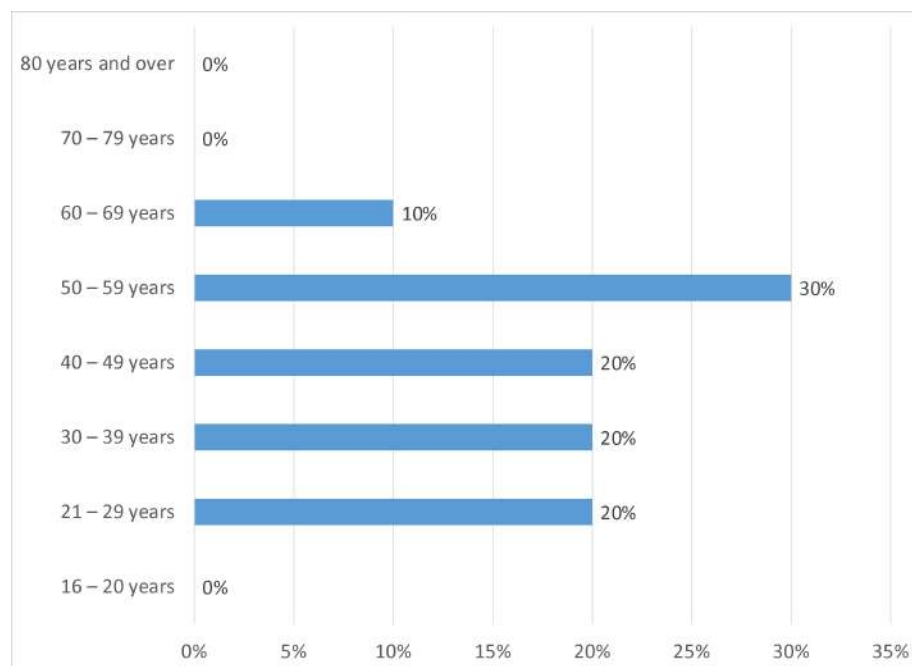
The following answers were given: sending rain, removing locusts, and pestilence; deliverance from killings, incest, and things that displease God; fruitfulness and productivity; God's intervention in the life of an individual or nation resolving serious

issues; the restoration of the land from plague or drought; the literal land will have no drought and there will be restoration of what the locusts destroyed; revival in a nation – a spiritual renewal; providing all that the land needs so that it can produce all the food that man and animal need; and prosperity of the land in yielding its produce as well as dwelling in the land in peace.

Question 18: Why is it important for God to “heal the land”?

The respondents’ answers covered the following: for the people's sake and God's desire/intentions to come to pass; so people can live peaceably, be happy, and experience loving lives; God gave us stewardship over the land and when we broke it He is the only one who can fix it; for peace and wholeness in the soul of an individual or nation; this is important as believers and non-believers alike will see and know that God does what He says He will do; He can turn around bad situations; without that the people will suffer; for the prosperity of the nation and welfare of its people; and because it is difficult to dwell in a land that is under a curse.

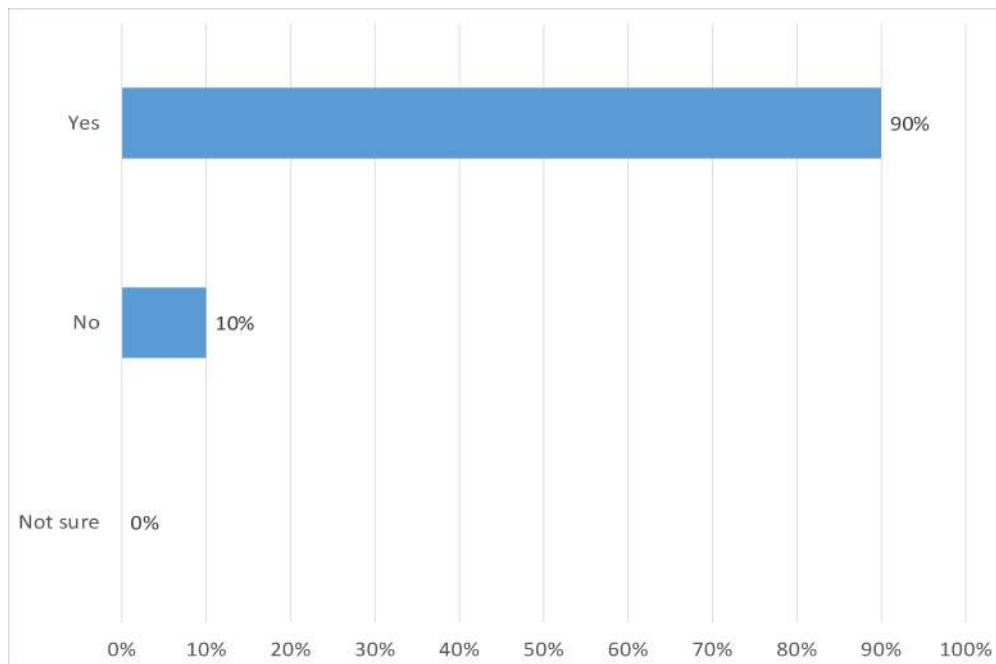
Question 19: Does fulfilling the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 guarantee forgiveness of sin and the healing of land?



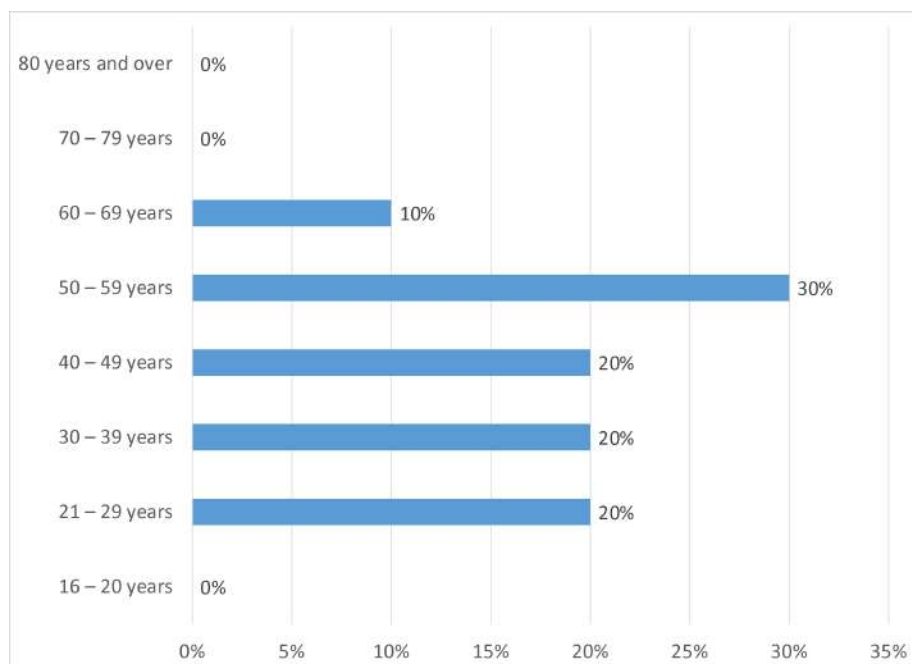
Question 20: Are there other instances in scripture where God requires persons to pray, humble themselves, seek God's face and turn from their wicked ways for certain blessings? If yes, have they influenced your interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and if so how?"

All respondents basically answered "Yes". One noted, "Samson and David sinned but repented and were restored". Another referenced "Isaiah 55:6-7, Acts 8:22, Psalm 51, Psalm 61:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14". Another recalled that "Nineveh's repentance in Jonah shows that a nation can fulfil the conditions and God will act according to His Word, even when the people are not His". Another indicated, "When Job prayed for His friends... shows our healing sometimes comes from allowing God to use us." One stated "I'm not sure if they have influenced my interpretation of this current scripture... God has shown/proven that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever". one said, "Yes, as there is a pattern of God's responses to His people". Another noted, "I believe so. I do not remember the exact passages". Another indicated "Luke 18:10-14 (this specific scripture expands on "humility")". One stated, "In a way it confirms God's consistency." Finally, another reported, "Not exactly in those terms 1 Timothy 2:1 encourages prayer to lead to a peaceable life. In 2 Kings 22:19 through a tender heart, humble heart, a curse and desolation was turned away."

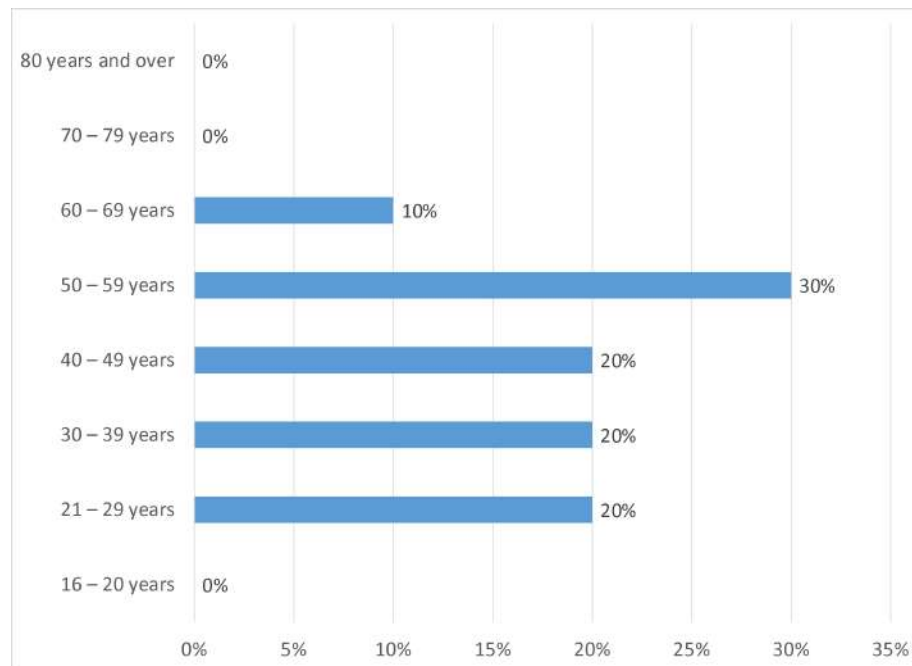
Question 21: Does this passage indicate that if today's believers in a nation pray, humble themselves, seek God's face, and turn from their wicked ways that God will forgive their sin and heal their land?



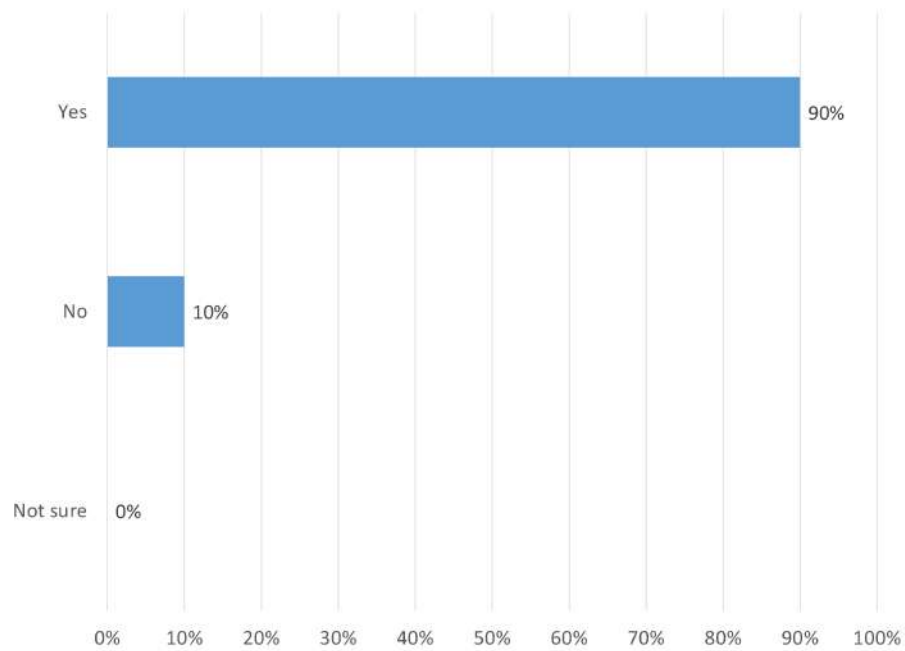
Question 22: Do all the promises God gave to national Israel apply to the Church today, including 2 Chronicles 7:14?



Question 23: Is there any particular land that God has promised the Church today?



Question 24: Does 2 Chronicles 7:14 apply to you personally?



2.4.4 Results of semi-structured interviews

Each part of the structured interview commenced with a launching question. The questions are listed here and the results summarised after the questions, with graphs also used in some cases.

Question 1: How would you define the word 'revival' in church history?

The majority of respondents saw revival as a unique time of spiritual awakening of God's people in a particular area that is usually accompanied by a special outworking or increased activity of the Holy Spirit that also leads to significant numbers of conversions. The Holy Spirit comes in power and energises the Church.

Ricardo⁸ and Grace mentioned that in revival "repentance is critical", and Grace responded that it is "something that is outside of the ordinary". Keith described revival on an individual basis as a "spiritual experience that you go through in a process of bringing you into a new awareness in your relationship with the Lord or reactivating an old experience you had with the Lord which had been dormant for a period of time."

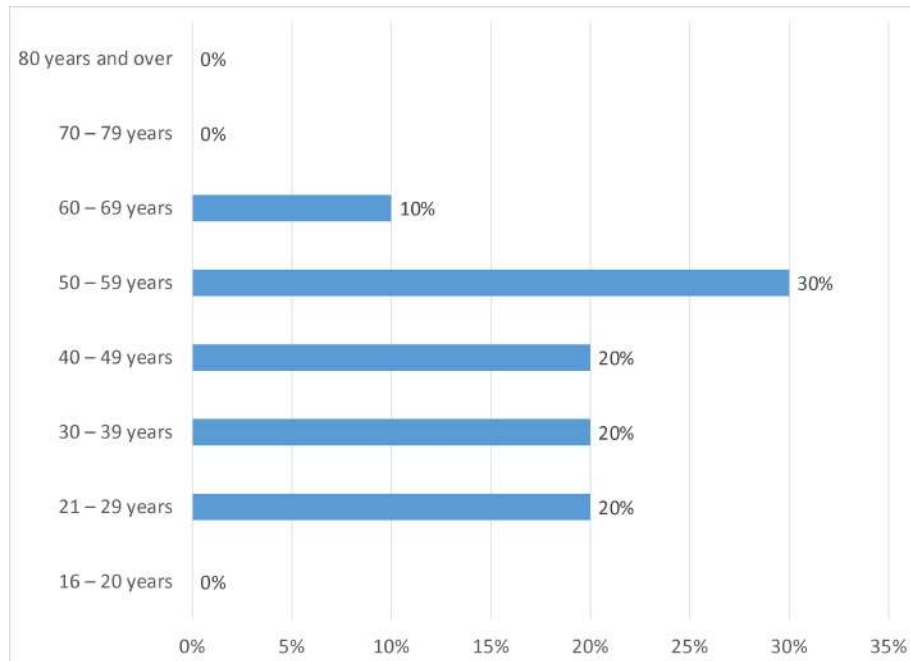
No one mentioned any economic or other material blessings flowing during the revival to either the Christians or the non-Christians in the area or country.

Question 2: From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred?

All answered "No" with most respondents stating that revivals tend to occur in localities and towns. Lisa though believes revivals will "definitely grow beyond a local group of people". Grace noted that "Fiji had a revival that was fairly widespread". Most respondents were unaware of revivals solving the economic problems of the nation where it occurred.

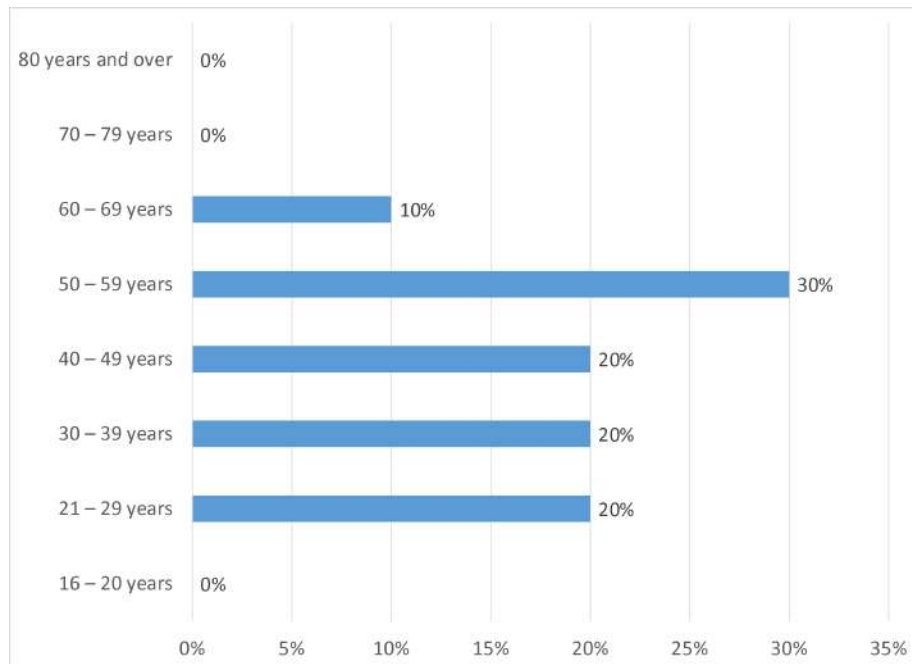
⁸ All names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents.

Question 3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?



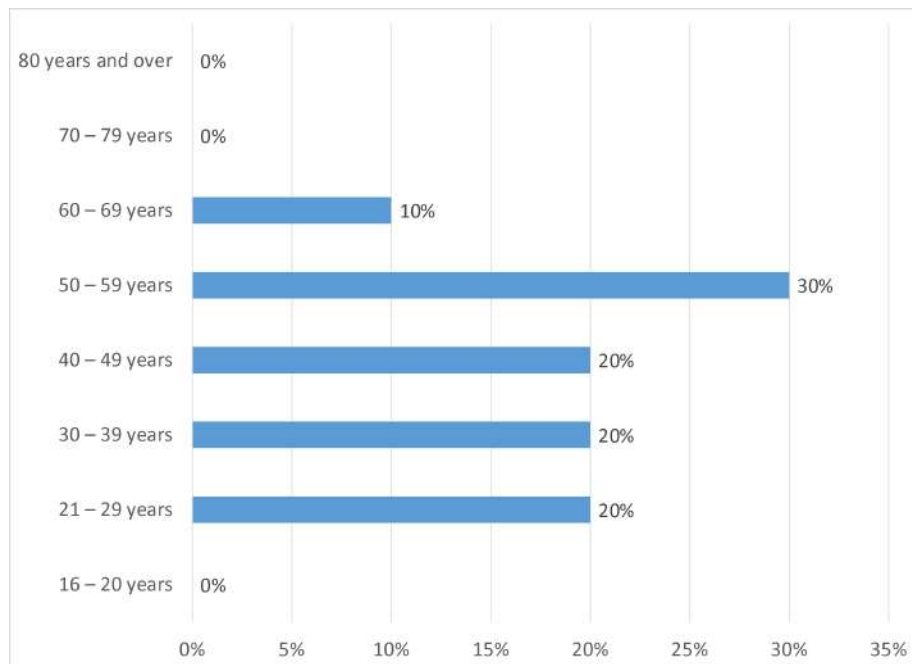
For the nine respondents who said yes, the basic idea was that “if there is a critical mass of people in the nation who turn to the Lord then it will likely result in both spiritual and physical benefits to the nation”. Pamela said no because the benefits will not apply to “persons who are not submitting to the Word of God, and really not pouring out themselves in prayer or calling on God.”

Question 4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?



The most reported answer was considering context, which contributed to 60% of the answers.

Question 5: What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?



Question 6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

The majority of persons answered, “If they received greater understanding of the context”. This was followed by, “If they received greater revelation to God's Word through the Holy Spirit, teachers/preachers/authority figure/learned people, and commentaries”. While Jerry and Keith also answered, “if they found their interpretation was contradictory they would change it”. However, Pamela noted that “she never changes her approach when interpreting different books of the Bible”. Keith said, “The Holy Spirit may bring new meaning to a text despite its context.” Simone stated that she “places greater emphasis on the level of detail or information in a book in comparison to others in arriving at an interpretation”. Lisa noted that “You can't use one criterion to understand the Bible; there are so many different principles and criteria that you have to apply to understand a book”.

Questions 7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

The majority reported answer was that “Our timing is not God's timing, and His timing is perfect”. This was followed by three additional responses: i) “Hebrews 11 shows that our faith/belief is grounded on believing God for what He has said no matter what the outcome is”; ii) an individual's faith may be strengthened or grow as a result of this; and iii) individuals' faith or beliefs may be refined and re-evaluated. Several reported “that they may really feel disappointed.” Pablo and Simone reported that “they don't believe anything negative can come out of this scenario”.

2.4.5 Summary of the all the data collected from the respondents

- All respondents were adults and CLF members for at least 4 years. The majority had been members for much longer. It would seem therefore that their views on 2 Chronicles 7:14 had been held for a long time.
- There were a variety of approaches to interpreting 2 Chronicles 7:14 concerning what healing of the land would mean today. Some were literal interpretations (grammatical-historical) and some non-literal

interpretations (allegorical or symbolic) that would also apply to non-agrarian societies and evangelical revivals (see below).

- The majority of respondents have a very active prayer life with an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in answering their prayers.
- Most respondents indicated that they have had unanswered prayers, with the majority of them trusting in God's judgement when this occurred.
- Almost all respondents have felt disappointed with God in the past because of unanswered prayer.
- The majority of respondents believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applied to Israelites at that time and to all believers today. Few thought unbelievers should also benefit from this promise today through the believers fulfilling the conditions.
- Most respondents had a good understanding of repentance, and that its exercise was the reason God would hear from heaven and heal the land.
- The majority of respondents believe fulfilling the conditions in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today brings agricultural benefits, while some thought of it as having spiritual, social, and economic benefits, but only to those who repent. They believe believers are integral in this process of repentance.
- Few respondents believed that all scriptures relating to Israel apply to the Church today, while others were not sure.
- One respondent believed that there is a particular land that God has promised Christians today, while four respondents were not sure.
- The majority of respondents believed 2 Chronicles 7:14 has personal application to their lives today.
- Revival is seen as an individual and corporate experience where the Holy Spirit works in a special or extraordinary way to re-energise believers and save many unbelievers resulting in major church growth. Repentance is also critical for revivals.
- Revivals are seen as mostly in towns and localities but can be widespread. However, persons believe if there are enough people the

impact of the revival can accrue to the nation as a whole through spiritual, agricultural, and other economic benefits.

- Most respondents believe context is important in interpreting scripture. They also rely on the Holy Spirit, teachers, preachers, and commentaries for guidance.
- A few noted that if a passage, for instance 2 Chronicles 7:14, is properly interpreted that there should not be any contradiction with it and its context or other passages. This position flows from CLF affirming the inerrancy of scripture and God's providence over His word.
- Several indicated that the Holy Spirit may give a fresh meaning on a text.
- Most respondents live by the New Covenant with the view that the Old Covenant is abolished. This they claim impacts upon how they interpret the scriptures.
- Most persons argued that not seeing revival after believing they had fulfilled the requirements of 2 Chronicles 7:14 may be due to God's timing. However, our beliefs in God's promises should be grounded on His trustworthiness. This situation may lead to despondency or re-evaluation or refining or strengthening of their faith.

2.5 Discussion of the results of the qualitative research

2.5.1 Comparison of individual responses

A summary of the elders/pastors' position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 is that it was a promise given to the nation of Israel but is applicable to the church today. This means that if the believers in a country fulfil the conditions in this verse, the whole land/country will benefit and thus unbelievers as well. However, the Church should also call the whole nation to repentance whether or not the leaders or the unbelievers respond positively. It would seem that if this happened the blessings on the nation would be even greater. The prescription and promise given in 2 Chronicles 7:14 are seen in other Old Testament passages as well.

Of the ten CLF members that participated in the study there seemed to be a high level of agreement in their understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14: 'my people', the areas of prayer, humility, seeking God's face, turning from wickedness, repentance, forgiveness and healing of the land that the verse addresses. Of note is that almost all took 2 Chronicles 7:14 as applying to the church in both a revival and material way. Most individuals' definition of revival would be more in keeping with the occurrences of the New Testament (e.g. regenerations and conversions in the book of Acts), while a few highlighted a resurgence/re-energising/bringing back to life of individual Christians, a congregation, or a wide section of the Church. The material blessings would be the removal of drought, famine or pestilence in an agrarian situation, but in other societies material blessings would come through their economic structures undergoing significant growth. Most respondents noted that 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a prescription that is not only contained in this verse.

So the elders and nine of the ten other respondents from CLF essentially agreed on the interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14. The common thread between the elders and nine respondents was that certainly if the whole nation repented (believers and unbelievers) the whole nation and whole country would experience God's abundant material blessing instead of his judgment.

2.5.2 Implications of the results

It could be claimed that the small sample size of the research group (the elders and ten other members) means that I cannot draw conclusions concerning the operative theology with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. Surely deducing conclusions from the responses of only fourteen out of 175 members would be unjustified and academically irresponsible.

However, it needs to be noted that I worked within the constraints of a mini-thesis project. Further, that I attempted to limit the deficiencies of a small research group by relying on random selection of my sample group. Also, the answers by the ten respondents were sufficiently diverse in their wording to suggest that they were not primed by the elders on how to answer. The concurrence of the views of the elders and respondents on 2 Chronicles 7:14 could also imply that their views are held widely at CLF. The agreement by the elders and their leadership role and key role in

the teaching ministry at CLF would imply the congregation is expected to follow their teaching, which the elders would see as in keeping with the background, theological position and vision of the church. Finally, as a Jamaican, an itinerant preacher in Jamaica, and a former full time missionary at two organisations in Jamaica (Youth With A Mission and Jamaica House of Prayer), I would say from my extensive observations that this is a popular view held by the Church in Jamaica and thus including CLF. Therefore I believe it is fair to conclude that the approach to 2 Chronicles 7:14 of most members at CLF would be consistent with that of the elders and nine of the ten respondents (with some difference on how the healing of the land would also be experienced by the unbelievers who refused to repent of their sin and believe in Christ).

A second implication is that 80% of the respondents said the Old/Mosaic Covenant is abolished by the inauguration of the new Covenant. This should have at least led them to being suspicious of applying 2 Chronicles 7:14 literally under the New Covenant. It is likely then that the answers to the questions probing what 'my people' means and linking it with New Testament Christians implied that in practice the elders and respondents had not worked out theologically the belief that the Old Covenant is abolished with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 which is so closely linked to the Old/Mosaic Covenant. Another observation is that this position takes little account of the fact that 2 Chronicles 7:14 was written to a whole nation that was the people of God, whereas today no such geographical nation of God's people exists today.

A third implication is that while having a general agreement on the systematic theological understanding of certain concepts in scripture is important, there seemed to be a lack of appreciation of the need to pay close attention to the context where this may affect the meaning of a concept (Osborne 2006:366-367; Alexander *et al* 2000:6-8). For instance, almost all of the respondents seemingly overlooked the specific context in 2 Chronicles 7:14. They jumped over it to applying God's promise of rewards (forgiveness of sin and healing of the land) to them. As a matter of fact, only one person focused more on the context (that had relevance to the theocratic kingdom of Israel) and thus used the acceptable exegetical approach that analyses the meaning intended for the original audience and also the analytical approach to

Biblical Theology⁹. Thus it was only this person that felt the promises of punishment or blessings wouldn't strictly apply to all believers today (with regards to any geographical location, i.e. land in any nation where there are believers). Everyone else, including the elders, applied a synthetic approach to Biblical Theology and thought it applied to God's people, his Church, today¹⁰. Notwithstanding that I think there is a place to attempt a synthetic approach, it should take proper account of the analytical approach and progressive revelation. 2 Chronicles 7:14 occurs in the Old Covenant context and this needs to be given more attention than CLF has given it. I concur with Osborne that *our* interpretation of scripture is not important but what the *original author* meant when he wrote it (1991:412-15) and whether it is still relevant in the New Covenant.

It is important to recognise that various individuals apply several different methodologies in their task of hermeneutics (Drumwright and Osborne 2009:333-345; Fuller 1988:865-871; Stuart 1992:683-687). While there are times when the different methodologies complement each other, there are times when two different methodologies are in stark contrast to each other and therefore either one is surely correct or they are both incorrect. For instance, in the research it was observed that generally a literal (grammatical-historical) approach was taken to 2 Chronicles 7:14 in its original context (it applied to the Israelite nation and the removal of the three-fold judgement on repentance of the nation) whereas it was also interpreted for today in a non-literal (allegorical or symbolic) way when applied to Christians – who would only constitute a very small minority of the population in the world and therefore certainly not the whole nation; and many Christians do not experience the same problems of drought, locusts, and pestilence that devastate the economy. In this example it would seem that both approaches cannot be correct.

Implication three shows that the historical-grammatical approach to interpreting the passage and biblical and systematic theology approaches have not been adequately followed by CLF, which would be expected of evangelicals. CLF has an approach to, or understanding of, 2 Chronicles 7:14 that is in keeping with the new interpretation

9 The analytical method attempts to understand individual biblical books with their own theological focus and progressive norms to learn and appreciate their distinctiveness (Osborne 2006:366-367).

10 The synthetic method seeks to build a united theological framework for Scripture as a whole. It recognises the diversity of Scripture even in the OT and NT but still seeks to amalgamate or bring them together in a faithful manner (Alexander, Rosner, Carson and Goldsworthy 2001:6).

of many evangelicals over the past sixty or so years that this verse is a prescription for national revival and healing of the land today (Murray 1998:9-10; Payne 1988:465; Taylor 2011:146,151-161). Since CLF's approach falls within the confines of modern evangelical theology, it would not view its praxis with reference to this verse as not being a fully biblically faithful operative theology.

A fifth interesting observation is that 90% of respondents have had disappointment with God because of unanswered prayer. Nevertheless, it came out in the semi-structured interviews, that when some fulfilled the conditions in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and did not experience the expected revival and the healing of the land they saw this as possibly good as it might be God fulfilling his purpose in their lives. Further, I am not sure the hardship persons at CLF had been through warranted this approach, although some persons may have grown in the process. Some therefore have a view of God's sovereignty that sometimes overrides his promises (certainly the timing of them indicated in the text). This and the answers to questions 5, 6, 7, 21, 22 and 24 would indicate that that there is a major contradiction between the extensive prayer volume with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 linked with their expectations of a positive answer and the actual limited results of their praying. Even though many claimed that this was due to the sovereignty of God, it must sow a deep feeling of confusion and disappointment in God. One can only be left to wonder how this must unsettle and even undermine their faith in God and the Scriptures.

A sixth implication is that members at CLF also apparently, to different degrees, equate evangelical revivals in church history with the forgiveness and the healing of the land. One should not discount or overlook how much of a role CLF's background of emerging out of a revival played in determining its theological reflection and doctrinal formulation with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Furthermore, as a member of CLF I know it is the desire of the elders and the older members to once again experience a revival like, or greater than, the former one. With this in mind, while pure objectivity is unattainable in theology and thus we are all influenced in some way by our experience, Scripture should be used to interpret scripture not people's experience *per se*.

The seventh and last implication is how easily Christians seem to fail to tie all Scripture in some sense back to Jesus Christ (Fuller 1988:871;

Drumwright and Osborne 2009:335). This was noted as the neither the ten respondents nor the elders demonstrated how 2 Chronicles 7:14 pointed to Jesus Christ, i.e. how it should be viewed from the New Covenant perspective, a covenant instituted by the incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. This is against the backdrop that Jesus on the road to Emmaus demonstrated to two of his disciples that the whole of the Old Testament revealed or spoke about him (Luke 24:27). Furthermore, Jesus told the Jews that the Scriptures which was the Old Testament at the time bore witness to him (John 5:39). Therefore it is based on this Christocentric understanding that believers should be able to some extent apply this passage to them today. Further, the implication of God's mission in the Abrahamic Covenant linked with the worldwide mission of God was not explored for its interpretive relevance for deciding how 2 Chronicles 7:14 relates to Christians.

2.6 Summary and conclusion

This mini-thesis is a practical theology thesis whose design is Browning's strategic practical theology (answering of four questions). This chapter dealt with his first question: *How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act?* The concrete situation covered in this mini-thesis is how CLF approaches 2 Chronicles 7:14. This chapter therefore recorded the nature, results and analysis of a qualitative study of the operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF that included a hermeneutical dimension. The main focus of the research was the elders and ten other members of CLF. The conclusion was that the research indicates what could be considered the official position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF and what would be held by the majority of the members. What emerged is that this interpretation of, and resulting response to, the verse needs further study as it doesn't appear to represent the most faithful operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Chapter 3 therefore seeks to establish and defend the normative position. The final goal of chapter 3 is to arrive at an operative theology, a theory of praxis, for CLF with reference to this verse. It is achieved through correlating the results of the descriptive research of the situation at CLF (chapter 2) and the normative view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 that emerge from chapter 3. Chapter 4 will be concerned with

developing a strategic plan to implement the new operative theology at CLF with reference to this verse.

CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPING AND DEFENDING A FAITHFUL OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide answers to Browning's second and third questions: *What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?* Chapter 2 presented the concrete situation, namely the operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. It demonstrated that the majority at CLF would view 2 Chronicles 7:14 as applying to the church today. It also showed that a minority would view the verse as also relevant to the unbelievers in a community or country where the believers live, especially if there were a significant number of believers.

This chapter develops and defends a vision of what the ideal praxis would look like with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF in its ministry context, i.e. one that will most faithfully reflect God's will. Since theory always determines praxis, this chapter first seeks a normative understanding of the verse for the church. It does this through a biblical exegesis of the verse and providing biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology (including Christocentric and missional), and non-theological perspectives on the verse. The outcome of this chapter is to arrive at and defend a theory of praxis regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. Chapter 4 tackles the communicative plan to effectively bring about such a praxis.

3.2 Towards a normative operative theology for 2 Chronicles 7:14

With the prevailing view of 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF being that it is applicable to the Church today, it must be made clear that this interpretation faces two challenges:

1. What did it mean to Old Testament Israelites to whom it was addressed?
2. What, if any, is its relevance to Christians?

To answer these two questions, I begin with an exegetical study (historical-grammatical method) of the passage. This is followed by more extensive biblical and systematic theology perspectives. Next is a revival perspective, then a church history perspective, and finally some non-theological perspectives. Final answers to these questions are drawn from all these perspectives.

3.2.1 Exegetical perspective on 2 Chronicles 7:14

Hicks (2001:295) notes that two weeks of Hebrew festivity had elapsed before the revelation from God to Solomon that included 2 Chronicles 7:14. Solomon had completed the building and dedication of the temple along with his own palace (2 Chronicles 7:11). During the night, God appeared to Solomon and stated to him, "I have heard your prayer" (v.12). Myers (1965:43) indicates that God's appearance shows His recognition and approval of Solomon's work and prayer. Barber (2004:45) suggests that this prayer of Solomon was central to the dedication service of the temple. Taylor's (2011:146) noting of this is captured in the table below and demonstrates that no less than seven similarities may be seen between Solomon's temple dedication prayer request in 2 Chronicles 6:18-40 and the answer that came in 2 Chronicles 7:13-15.

	2 Chronicles 7	2 Chronicles 6
The heavens will be shut, and there will be no rain A locust plague will occur	v. 13	v. 26
	v. 13	v. 28
Pestilence will occur	v. 13	v. 28
Pray	v. 14	v. 38
Turn	v. 14	v. 38
"I will hear from heaven"	v. 14	v. 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33, 35, 39
I will "forgive"	v. 14	v. 21, 25, 30, 39

Japhet (1993:615) explains that drought, locust, and pestilence would have been three calamities with very negative implications for Israel's agriculturally based economy and that God was the one taking responsibility for the occurrence of these: 'When I shut up the heaven ... or command the locust ... or send pestilence.' These trying circumstances would give the people great impetus to forsake their evil and idolatrous practices as well as be reminiscent of God's curses on his people if they failed to uphold the covenant conditions specified in the Mosaic Covenant (cf. e.g. Deuteronomy 28:15,22-24,42). Thus, the condition of Israel's land indicated their level of spirituality – how faithful or not they were to God (Taylor 2011:147-148).

Payne (1988:462) believes the term 'My people' in 2 Chronicles 7:14 can be extended to 'all who call on the name of the LORD...' (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; Zephaniah 3:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Selman (1994:338) notes that 'those who are called by my name' in verse 14 speaks to ownership. Taylor (2011:149) acknowledges that Christians were redeemed by God (see 1 Corinthians. 6:20; 7:23) and thus may be considered His people in this sense. This all suggests that 'My people' in 2 Chronicles 7:14 can refer also to New Testament (NT) and post NT believers. Notwithstanding, Taylor (2011:149) disagrees with the view of applying this verse to Christians living today. His reason is that God's "house of sacrifice", the temple, in 2 Chronicles 7:12 was to be exclusively for God to receive worship from his people the Israelites, although proselytes were included. Moreover, Hill (2003:392-393) argues that the completion of the temple was the establishment of the Davidic covenant prophesied by Nathan (cf. 1 Chronicles 17:3), which instituted a national "house of prayer" for Israel. Also, the New Covenant implied the physical temple was redundant and would be destroyed making it impossible to respond to God's answer to Solomon's prayer today. But in answer to this view it could be claimed that the church is now God's temple and prayer and repentance by Christians today is therefore linked with God's temple, though not one of brick and mortar (1 Corinthians 3:16). Perhaps, since Christ's kingship is in the Davidic line (Isaiah 9:7), a king whose kingdom will never end, the kingly association with Solomon's prayer and answer could be applicable to Christians living under the rule of God's king as God's people, his special possession (1 Peter 2:9).

What can be said with confidence is that God responded to Solomon's prayer with promises to reward and punish the nation of Israel according to their level of obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Further, it was specific to Solomon's request that he prayed in the light of the presence of the temple (2 Chronicles 6:20,21,24-27,40). Thus, the original context cannot be overlooked. The implication of the New Covenant for interpreting 2 Chronicles 7:14 with reference to Christians is explored further later in this chapter.

3.2.2: Biblical and systematic theology perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14

3.2.2.1 Old Testament covenants and Israel

According to Pratt (2014:9-12) the word and concept of covenant is depicted throughout the entire Bible from God's first covenant with Adam (Genesis 2:16-17), then those with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21;17:9-14), Moses (Exodus 19-24), David (2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, **2 Chronicles 6:16**) and finally the New Covenant through Jesus Christ (Isaiah 42:6, Hebrews 12:24). Covenants involve rewards or blessings if the covenant stipulations were obeyed (Leviticus 26:1-13, Deuteronomy 28:1-14, **2 Chronicles 7:14**) and punishments or curses if disobeyed (Leviticus 26:14-39, Deuteronomy 28:15-68, **2 Chronicles 7:13**). God really wanted those He was in relationship with to enjoy His benevolence and mercy; however, when they rebelled, their rebellion was met with strict judgement (Pratt 2014:5-6).

The principle of covenant is the bedrock of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Therefore I will briefly survey covenant theology before I address Biblical covenants in a more extensive manner. Covenant Theology (CT) is most popularly taught in the Reformed Churches (Kline 2000:357-370; Golding 2004:121). In CT God has established the Covenant of Works (CW) and the Covenant of Grace (CG) with mankind. The Covenant of Redemption (CR) was made within the Godhead to govern the other two (note these three covenants are not spelt out in the Bible as actual covenants, but represent a well thought out theological construct [Jeon 1999:116]). In the CR the Godhead agreed that Jesus would die for mankind (Titus 1:1-3). Subsequently the CW was made with Adam and rewarded obedience with life and punished disobedience with death. Adam dishonoured the covenant, and thus the CG was made between God and all of mankind, who inherited Adam's sin based on

Romans 5:12-21. The CG rewarded eternal blessing for placing trust in Christ and obeying Scripture. Therefore it is thought to be the reason for all Biblical covenants, especially the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Davidic covenants. Nichols (2011:124-125) argues that CG is “unconditional, perpetual, immutable, inscrutable, and historical”.

I believe CT provides a basis for the Church completely superseding Israel¹¹, and because of this and a few other areas I do not affirm all aspects of CT. Covenant theologians would say they apply a typological method and not an allegorical approach (Goldsworthy 2000:77-78; Karlberg 1988:257-263). However, I am uncomfortable with how the typological approach seems to take some of the future prophecies concerning Israel as not being literal¹². Moreover, it does not adequately address the differences of the Mosaic covenant and Abrahamic covenant. However, Robertson (1980:59-61) and Golding (2004:155-156) would disagree and point that there is an underlying agreement between these two covenants despite their differences, and thus the reason why they fall under the CG. Similarly, I believe CT seems to downplay the discontinuity of the Old Covenant and New Covenant as evident in (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6-13) through it having the Mosaic covenant and New Covenant both falling under the CG (cf. Horton 2009:20-21).

2 Chronicles 7:14 is a portion of a message which God was communicating to King Solomon. We have noted that in the Old Testament God ruled his people (Israel) through covenants. Chronicles 7:12-22 refers to one such covenant made between God and King David and his offspring that was operational in Solomon's time (Townsend 1987:282). The Davidic covenant was basically a rehash or reminder of the Mosaic Covenant and specified the terms, including conditionalities Israel had to fulfil. God revealed to King Solomon the terms of the covenant as he was God's messenger and enforcer in a sense. The covenant specified: i) the who (Israel – God's people, that were associated with His name in verse 14); ii) the place where God was to be worshipped (at the temple – a place of sacrifice in verse 12); iii) the covenant blessing (the land receiving healing through God sending rain and taking away locusts and pestilence in verse 14); and, iv) the curses (drought, locusts, and pestilence in verse 13). However, some Christians, including the ones referred to above in sections 2.3.1 and 2.4.5 would see 2 Chronicles 7:14 applying to Christians

¹¹ This is further discussed on pp. 59-60.

¹² This is further addressed on pp. 60-61.

today, and would interpret the curses today in modern countries in wider terms than just agricultural destruction.

The Davidic Covenant was concerned with David's offspring being on the throne if they are faithful to God's ways and the Old Covenant (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17:11–14 and 2 Chronicles 6:16). It is also quite clear that the Abrahamic Covenant included a promise of land for Israel to live in as an independent nation under God's rule (Genesis 15:18–21). The Mosaic Covenant formalised the relationship of the nation of Israel under God's laws with covenant blessings and curses (Exodus 19-24). The Davidic Covenant ensured there would be a messianic king on the throne from David's lineage through God's faithfulness. When we get to Solomon's time we can clearly see how all three covenants interrelate. In that context the meaning of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is surely clear; it applies to Israel in the land under the Davidic king. This would predispose us to say that now that Israel is back in the land, 2 Chronicles 7:14 would apply to the present Israelite nation. However, how would the Israelites apply this? Is there a Davidic king reigning in Israel today? Would president Reuven Rivlin of Israel qualify? Moreover, where is the physical temple today? It is therefore difficult to see that the verse has relevance to the nation of Israel today even if it is claimed that the Old Covenant (OC) still operates. But we are now in a situation where the OC is no longer valid – it has been abrogated by the work of Jesus Christ (messianic king) that ushered in the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:13). I will address this in the next section as it must surely play a major role in interpreting the relevance of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church today.

3.2.2.2 The New Covenant and the Church

The term New Covenant (NC) occurs seven times in the NT (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 8:13; 9:15; 12:24 [ESV]). Jesus is the mediator of the NC (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24). Jesus' death at Calvary where his blood was shed ushered in the NC (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Thus, the OC has become obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

The Apostle Paul suggested that the Abrahamic covenant is being fulfilled in the NC where through Jesus (Abraham's seed) all the nations would be blessed

(Galatians 3:16,26-29). Clearly the NT focus is not on the geographical promised land¹³ but wherever the nations are found (see Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 17:26-27). Further, the attention is not on the land where Christians live throughout the world but on the people and the spiritual blessings in Christ (Romans 4:6,9; 15:29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 12:17; James 3:10; 1 Peter 3:9). Paul is indifferent to material blessings, being content even in great need (1 Timothy 6:6-11) – they are not necessarily seen as a blessing for faithfulness to the NC (Ayegboyin 2006:71; Golo 2013:382-383).

Dispensationalists and (Apostolic Premillennialists or Remnant theologians)¹⁴ believe it is wrong to take promises given to Abraham and the nation of Israel as being entirely for the Church today (Poythress 1994:118; Mathison 1995:17; Ryrie 1995:39; Wiens 2013:1-8; Parson 2015). Those who hold to dispensationalism or that described in the previous paragraph believe it requires allegorising scripture (or using a typological approach), and thus not using the plain or literal sense in which scripture should be used.

Christians (Jews and Gentiles) are awaiting the new Jerusalem on a new earth where there are no curses but only abundant blessings (Revelation 21 and 22). But this will only happen at the return of Christ. It seems the NC as it operates before the *Parousia* must govern the meaning of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for Christians during the church age. It is noteworthy though that there are other occasions in the OT where faithfulness to God will lead to material blessings (Genesis 47:27; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-30). Similarly, in the NT we note that abundant sowing facilitates reaping abundantly (2 Corinthians 9:6). Moreover, I believe that when righteousness 'exalts' or 'lifts up' a nation this could be expected to bring about material blessings through needing to spend less on countering lawlessness (Proverbs 14:34). However, at times faithfulness in service/ministry in the NT was also followed by suffering or persecution (Acts 14:8-19; 2 Timothy 3:12).

13 The promised land geographically is described in Exodus 23:31.

14 Remnant theology is supported by Parsons (2015). While Wiens (2013:1-8) from the International House of Prayer Northwest (IHOPNW) supported a similar view called Apostolic Premillennialism.

3.2.2.3 Christocentric and missional perspectives with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14

Christocentric and missional lenses are specific ways to approach biblical interpretation. They provide Christocentric and missional perspectives on a passage. They are recommended for facilitating textual and theological examination and comprehension (Smith 2013:29-30). I believe these two interpretive tools are particularly relevant to this mini-thesis as they may provide another method to gain further insight into the relevance of 2 Chronicles 7:14 today.

3.2.2.3.1 Christocentricity

Christocentricity views God's attributes, desires, and plans as being most clearly and fully exhibited in Christ's lifestyle, personhood, teaching and instructions (Peppler 2012:120-121). We see this lens used when Jesus interpreted the whole of the Old Testament for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as ultimately revealing or pointing to him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39). Therefore, while we do not see Jesus explicitly addressing this passage in the Bible, 2 Chronicles 7:14 may be interpreted in a Christocentric manner. In this section, we consider what it would mean to view this verse through the Christocentric lens. It also assumes that the revelation that came to the apostles came from Christ through the Holy Spirit and provided clarity on, and further understanding of, Jesus' Christocentric interpretation of the OT.

This mini-thesis examines a promise given by God in 2 Chronicles 7:14. The Apostle Paul stated that every promise of God finds fulfilment in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). With much of the discussion concerning 2 Chronicles 7:14 being about the type of "healing of the land" promised and the identity of "my people", I believe it is also important to realise that the Apostle Paul indicated that Christians (the children or people of God) have an inheritance along with Christ (Romans 8:17). Moreover, Paul encouraged the Church in Ephesus (and by extension all believers) to know with assurance that due to being in Christ they were blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). The author of Hebrews added that through the New Covenant, Jesus Christ fulfilled what had been prophesied in the Old Testament (Isaiah 42:6;

Hebrew 12:24), which included the promise of an eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

The “healing of the land” in 2 Chronicles 7:14 implies material blessings (see section 3.2.2.1). The blessings flowing from the gospel are described as spiritual and believers are not guaranteed material blessings before Christ’s second coming. In Revelation 21 and 22 the new heaven and earth (including the new Jerusalem) are described as appearing after Jesus’ return. This refers to the healing of the whole earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:12-13). At that time, there will be no more ill effects of sin, meaning no need, pain or death, being suffered by the perfected bride of Christ. In the Revelation chapters the new earth is portrayed in terms of great wealth and agricultural abundance (21:24,26; 22:1-2). In Revelation 21 it speaks about God and Christ being the temple in the new Jerusalem (v. 22). The description of the new Jerusalem is better taken as a description of the glory of the glorified church, but probably overlaps to bring out the material blessing of the new earth in terms of a restored but even greater Jerusalem.

Altogether, it would seem that the gospel that Christ proclaimed and made possible did not promise material blessings (‘healing of the land’) for Christians throughout the world if they were faithful to him (Ayegboyin 2006:71; Golo 2013:382-383). This would be fulfilled after the return of Christ at the end of this age (Revelation 21:24,26; 22:1-2). In fact, the record of the NT describes time of great material need in the Jerusalem Church (Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8). Further, even the apostle Paul suffered material need (Acts 18:3).

However, what about Christ’s miracles of healing and provision of food? Does this not suggest that it was his will for his people to be well and prosperous? It needs to be noted that his miracles are described as signs of his messianic ministry (John 2:11, 11:45, Matthew 12:23) and he promised his faithful followers would suffer hardship that would include material need (Matthew 10:38, cf. also Hebrew 10:32-34). I believe it is also important to point out that neither Jesus nor any of the New Testament writers explicitly indicated that Christians should apply to themselves all scriptural promises in the Old Testament intended for Israel. Further, teaching noted above about Christians inheriting a renewed earth (Romans 4:13-17) with perfected physical and spiritual blessings as the goal of God’s mission throughout

human history, does not support a literal interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for Christians in this life.

Using the Christocentric lens in the interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 does not seem to support the view that if Christians in a country fulfil the conditions of this passage that they, or they and the unbelievers, will experience material blessings.

3.2.2.3.2 Missional-centricity

The missional principle considers God's mission from two perspectives. The first is God's redemptive plan to purchase back individuals for Himself. The second is his renewing godly order in the earth and demonstrating the purposes of God and man (Smith 2013:109,117). God has been seeking to restore true relationship between humankind and Himself since Adam broke the first covenant condition. 2 Chronicles 7:14 shows this divine action where our benevolent God was seeking true worship and relationship from His people (Israel). Because the nation of Israel was regularly unfaithful to God, it was necessary for Him to remind them of the covenant conditions of their relationship. However, amid Israel's proneness to also follow other gods, God's mission remained resolute.

God's mission included the temple in 2 Chronicles 7:13-15 whose ministrations facilitated the right relationship with Him primarily through worship. While temples were vitally important in Israel's history, God was preparing a people who would eventually not be limited to worshipping him in a particular location (John 4:21,24). However, this does not justify us from overlooking the importance of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6 and 7. God was the one who emphasized that he would listen attentively to the prayers of the people that were offered to Him in the temple.

Now, the Apostle Paul and the author of Hebrews both contrasted the heavenly tabernacle and earthly tabernacle. They referred to what was "made with human hands" and what is "not of this creation" (2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11). Whereas, the priests needed to go repeatedly into the earthly tabernacle or "tent of meeting" to offer sacrifices for the people's sins, Christ the superior high priest went through the superior "greater and more perfect tent" and by his superior sacrifice of himself that could satisfy God's wrath once for all to guarantee everlasting redemption (Hebrews 9:1-13; 8:2). Therefore, God's primary missional goal is

focused on providing salvation from the guilt of sins (atonement and justification) rather than on his people accruing physical and material blessings in the land where believers reside today (Galatians 3:8-9,14,28-29). Moreover, the place that we see emphasis on in the New Testament is the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2) with the physical blessing upon the land occurring with the new heaven and earth based on Romans 8:19-23, Revelations 21:1-22:5 and Isaiah 65:7 (cf. Poythress 1994:122-123; Gentry and Wellum 2012:468-469).

God's mission in the world was clearly not restricted to the nation of Israel. However, in the OT phase of God's mission we see the blessings of being in fellowship with Him were both spiritual, as well as, physical and material. The NT broadens the focus of God's mission dramatically to the whole world with the emphasis on spiritual blessings and the future hope of a fully restored and renewed earth where both the spiritual, and the physical and material environment of God's people will be perfect and abundant. Since much of the OT prefigures the new Covenant to be inaugurated by Christ we would expect spiritual, physical, and material blessings in the New Covenant to be greater than in the Mosaic Covenant and the OT phase of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is confirmed in the NT but largely in two phases: the age between the two comings of Christ and then the introduction of the new heavens and earth. It seems that when 2 Chronicles 7:14 is interpreted through the missional lens it should be viewed by Christians as a foreshadow of how God was ultimately going to fulfil his mission in, and for, the world.

The above exegetical and systematic perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 therefore do not seem to lend support to the belief of the elders and the ten respondents at CLF regarding their operative theology concerning this verse. I turn now to other perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 to see what light they might throw on the relevance of the verse for Christians.

3.2.3 Revival perspectives and 2 Chronicles 7:14

In the semi-structured interview session 90% of respondents reported that revival should result from truly fulfilling 2 Chronicles 7:14. In the history of the Church a revival was generally viewed as a supernatural work of God where the Holy Spirit causes new levels of spiritual vitality in the churches in a local region in a short time

with unusually rapid conversion of many unbelievers (Murray 1998:17). The question must be asked if 2 Chronicles 7:14 can justify this interpretation today? A closer look at revivals throughout Church history follows to test the respondents' belief that when Christians fulfil the conditions of this passage, we can expect such revivals.

Revival is not a term that is found in the Bible (Murray 1998:4), but the concept of it is. Revivals may occur without any great human involvement to promote them (Murray 1998:67). A revival is a sovereign work of God (Piggin 1997-1998:162). Despite how much we want revival to occur we cannot make it come to pass (Armstrong 1992:11). Revivals are extraordinary, occasional, and unpredictable (Murray 1998:52). Notwithstanding, sometimes when believers would gather together and pray revivals would occur (Acts 1:14; 2; 4:23-31). Other times it occurred as persons were preaching wherein the Holy Spirit moved upon the preacher's words and saved those who were listening (Acts 11:24; 14:1). The Holy Spirit's work in revival is essential, while our human involvement is secondary. According to Murray (1998:11), two individuals preaching and interceding with equal intensity and passion may have two different results. For instance, Peter at Pentecost with three thousand being added (Acts 2:41) and Paul with a single convert - Lydia at Philippi (Acts 16:11-40). I believe a proper tension/balance between God's sovereignty and our human responsibility in revival is needed and portrayed throughout Scripture.

It needs to be asked, however, if the above concept of revival is relevant to the original context of 2 Chronicles 7:14. The 2 Chronicles 7:14 passage does not seem to require praying for a special work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the nation of Israel to cause repentance leading to nation-wide forgiveness of their sins (they are simply to turn back to God and the covenant stipulations) and then material prosperity. Furthermore, revivals in Church history tend not to have the economic healing of the land to the degree implied in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Further, the prophecy in the Old Testament of the promise of the Holy Spirit's extraordinary work was fulfilled in the New Testament (Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 39:29; Zechariah 12:10; John 7:39; John 16:7; Acts 2). But the fulfilment did not seem to be tied to economic blessings when repentance occurred and forgiveness was received from God (for instance, the fulfilment of the Joel passage on the Day of Pentecost was spiritual).

During times of rebellion against their God, Israel would be punished by God bringing material disaster. 2 Chronicles 7:14 called Israel to repent during these times and that when they responded positively their prayers to God would be answered – he would forgive and remove his judgement on the land for their unfaithfulness. Revivals, as noted above, customarily come rather in answer to the prayers of a few (not all) Christians in a country in times when the church is weak and worldly and by the sovereign timing of God and do not usually seem to have a great impact on the economy of the country. In the light of this then it is difficult to see how 2 Chronicles 7:14 could be interpreted as being relevant to praying for revivals. Thus, I strongly agree with Murray (1998:9-10,15) that 2 Chronicles 7:14 is not dealing with revival.

3.2.4 Church history perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14

Probably unknown to many of the respondents in the study is that while 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a popular passage today, it was not so in the past. As a matter of fact, the view that 2 Chronicles 7:14 promises national revival and sometimes also healing of the land (economic wellbeing) is a relatively new phenomenon.

My review of Philip Schaff's ten volume work on the Ante-Nicene Fathers and twenty-eight volume work on the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Series I and Series II) up until the eighth century revealed no mention of 2 Chronicles 7:14. I searched several commentaries, bible dictionaries, journals, and books, and only found information relating to this verse from the late 20th century and onwards. To name a few authors and their publication dates: J. Barton Payne, 1988:465; Sara Japhet, 1993:615; Martin J. Selman, 1994:338; Iain Murray, 1998:9-15; Andrew Hill, 2003:392-400; Cyril J. Barber, 2004:58; Mark R. Barnard, 2009:9; and Jonathan G. Taylor, 2011:147-161.

Based on these findings I believe the only possible reason that 2 Chronicles 7:14 could have been overlooked by so many believers and/or theologians in the past (from the first to mid twentieth century) is due to them taking it as literally being applicable to Solomon's time or the times of the kings and not necessarily applicable in their time.

While there is no doubt several factors that have influenced many in the modern-day Church to interpret 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a passage that provides a formula for national revival, here are four contributing factors:

(i) In 1956, Rev. Duncan Campbell in his book, 'The Price and Power of Revival', taught that sanctification, repentance, and consecration were needed to bring about revival (Campbell 1956:19-25; cf. Murray 1998:9-10).

(ii) Piggin (2012) refers to the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade in Melbourne where 2 Chronicles 7:14 was used as the basis to illustrate the requirements of revival. Graham was influenced by Dr. R.A. Torrey. Torrey's view was that a few right standing believers who were praying consistently would experience revival (Hutson 2000:22).

(iii) Kengor (2005:158) revealed that one of the favourite Bible verses of the former United States (US) President Ronald Reagan was 2 Chronicles 7:14. Kengor (2012) notes that in January 1981 at Ronald's inaugural ceremony he had his hand on that passage because of its significance to him. In Ronald's mother's Bible, which he used, beside this verse was her scribbles indicating that she thought it referred to national healing, which included spiritual restoration of the country to God. Reagan was bent on reviving America's spiritual status that had fallen drastically in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, by the time Ronald Reagan was being sworn in as the President of the US it seems that 2 Chronicles 7:14 had started to be used to promote national moral and spiritual healing (Kengor 2012). It is unlikely it would have played such a key role in his inauguration otherwise.

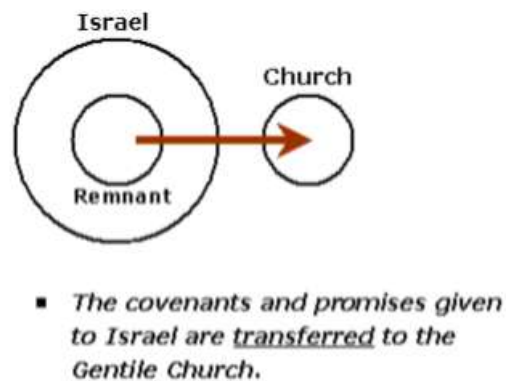
It is interesting to note that recent political groups with their own agenda have pursued 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a formula to guarantee economic prosperity and material wellbeing (Leslie and Leslie 2001; cf. Armstrong 2012:34). I suppose some believing citizens will want to align themselves with politicians who promise national moral revival and material prosperity, despite it being unfulfilled in the final outcome. I believe these politicians are taking this apparent biblical view that is held by some to garner more individuals' votes and financial support.

If 2 Chronicles 7:14 is claimed to be relevant to any country, does "my people" refer to all its citizens or only all Christians? It has already been argued above that God's

people in 2 Chronicles 7:14 applied to the whole nation. That certainly does not apply to any country today. But even if it is claimed it does apply to Christians, this would not mean if every Christian in any country was revived spiritually that the whole nation would experience material blessings.

(iv) Replacement Theology (RT) is another relevant development in church history. This section could have been put in the 3.2.2. RT takes the promises/covenants relevant to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament as applicable to the Church in the New Testament (Parsons 2015:12). This is because of the Church being the “new Israel”. RT uses allegorical and typological interpretive methods in its approach to scripture (see figure 1 below) (Goldsworthy 2000:77-78; Karlberg 1988:257-263; Kerns 2015:6-7; Parsons 2015:12). Adherents to RT would use scriptures such as the following to justify their beliefs (Grudem 1994:861-863): Ephesians 5:25; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 4:11-12, 16, 18; Romans 9:6-8, 25; 11:24; Galatians 3:29; Philippians 3:3; Ephesians 2:12-16, 19-20; 3:6; Hebrews 8:8-10; 1 Peter 2:4-10. Therefore, some would view the promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 to Israel as applying to the Church today.

Figure¹⁵: Replacement Theology



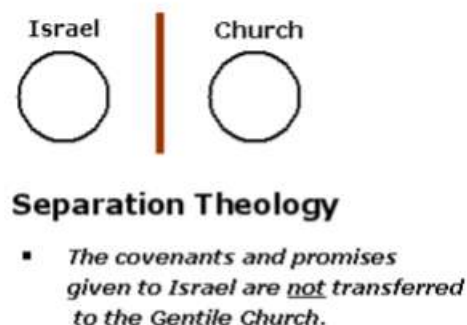
The relationship between the Church and Israel has eschatological implications, and I believe RT is generally supported (knowingly or unknowingly) by amillennialists, postmillennialists, and historic premillennialists due to their affirming of covenant theology (Swanson 2000, Benware 2006; Vlach 2011; Parsons 2015). I believe an

15 Figures 1, 2, and 3 were taken from Parson (2015:12-17).

RT approach is appropriate to most OT passages on covenant theology. However, there are a few passages such as Zechariah 12:10, Luke 13:31-35, Revelation 1:7, Zechariah 14:5-21, and Romans 11:12, 15, 23-26, 28-31 that appear not to support RT. This will be examined in the light of Separation Theology and Dispensational Theology.

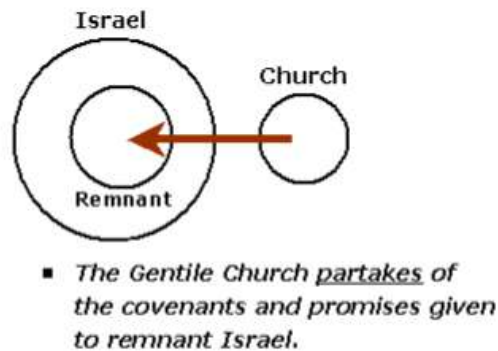
Separation Theology (ST) is a school of thought which says that the Church and Israel are separate and thus the promises/covenants are not transferable from Israel to the Church (see figure 2 below). In terms of eschatology, dispensational premillennialists (DP) would affirm ST by applying their grammatical-historical interpretive methodology (Poythress 1994:118; Mathison 1995:17; Ryrie 1995:39; Wiens 2013:1-8; Parsons 2015). I would say that ST and DP least explains the biblical data. However, since a few scriptural passages, including those I mentioned in the previous paragraph, appear to be exceptions to the general rule of RT, it needs to be demonstrated how they could be incorporated into a broader view of RT.

Figure 2: Separation Theology



Remnant Theology is a mixing of the two (RT & ST) where the Church does not fully replace nor is fully separate from Israel (see figure 3 below) (Parsons 2015:17; cf. Wiens 2013:1-8). I believe this best explains the biblical data given the two approaches and the nuances I see in Scripture. In eschatology, this would fall within the scope of premillennialism, and be mostly historic. I will use Romans 9 to 11 to illustrate.

Figure 3: Remnant Theology



First, in Romans 9:6-8 Paul makes a distinction between ethnic Israel (children of the flesh) and the Church (OT remnant and Christians, both who are the children of the Abrahamic promise – see figure 3). Second, Paul in Romans chapter 11 suggests that the 'wild olive shoots' (Gentile Christians) were grafted in 'among the others' (remnant Israel) on the olive tree (v. 17). Third, Paul explains about a futuristic work where ethnic Israelites or Jews will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). I believe this will happen at Jesus' return (Parsons 2015:20). Therefore, taking into consideration Paul's vine illustration and the other scriptural passages mentioned above as exceptions, I believe the biblical data is best understood as pointing to RT and at the end of the age its overlapping into ST (p.17).

Does this mean that RT supports applying 2 Chronicles 7:14 to the church today or the countries in which Christians who fulfil this verse reside? In the light of the above perspectives pointing against this interpretation, it would seem that a difference needs to be made between the true descendants of Abraham (those who share his faith) and the Jewish nation.

The following section looks at possible perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 from some non-theological sciences.

3.2.5 Non-theological perspectives with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14

3.2.5.1 Political science

Clearly political science seeks ways to promote a political system that guarantees maximum safety, personal wellbeing, and economic success that benefits all citizens

(Hix and Whiting 2012:2). Examples of political science would include the study of a democracy (pp. 30-35) and electoral systems (pp. 63-73). The understanding derived from these scientific studies would normally have implications for improving them and thus society as a whole. It can be argued that Christianity contributes to achieving these goals. Therefore, Christians in every country should seek to evangelise the unbelievers and build them up in the Christian faith. It could be postulated that if, in the light of 2 Chronicles 7:14, a nation was converted to Christ and committed to him the country could expect to experience a measure of material blessing if it is experiencing chronic material hardships (though not fully in this age). This would be because the standards of honesty, integrity, and hard work to the glory of God would mean a better political system and economy and less tax money spent on government departments like the police and justice departments (prisons and courts). This would certainly mean that the goals of political science would support the 2 Chronicles 7:14 vision. But this view would need to be tempered by the results of the exegetical systematic theology perspectives above.

3.2.5.2 Psychology

3.2.5.2.1 Psychology, repentance and forgiveness

Schimmel (2004:141-142) indicates that repentance has psychological benefits. He proposes that it is a good way to correct the wrongs committed to yourself, someone else, and your relationships. Through repentance one's moral status and worth can be restored, as well as both the transgressor's and the victim's anguish and agony alleviated. Repentance may also facilitate forgiveness and thus restoration between the transgressor and the victim. Schimmel's view on repentance leading to forgiveness is exactly what is described in 2 Chronicles 7:14. By their evil and idolatrous ways Israel offended God who was in a covenant relationship with them. This precipitated guilt, a broken relationship, and his judgment. Subsequently, through their repentance God would forgive them and heal Israel's land through rain and removal of the locust and pestilence. Schimmel refers to the psychological benefits of repentance and forgiveness which would be implied in 2 Chronicles 7:14; the major focus in this verse is the resultant removal of God's judgment on the land on which the livelihood of the Israelites depended. So Schimmel is indirectly confirming what is implied in 2 Chronicles 7:14, namely the personal blessings of

repentance and forgiveness followed by material blessing. This is because reconciled people enjoying better psychological health would be likely to positively impact their economic position, and possibly to a lesser degree that of their country.

3.2.5.2.2 Psychology, expectation, and challenges

Pargament and Hahn (1986) observed that a religious mindset and frame of reference may provide individuals with effective discernment and tools when dealing with life's challenges while still allowing them a level of control and justice in their lives. Spilka, Shaver and Kirkpatrick (1985) note that there are many different social influences, such as upbringing and education, which have bearing on whether the cause of events is seen to be of a natural or religious nature. Nevertheless, the acceptance of a religious or non-religious intellection still is contingent on the amount of knowledge the individual has about the particular circumstance. So, a religious worldview would not replace the role of practical wisdom in handling life's struggles and hardships successfully. Koenig (2004:1195) noted that there is generally an "overall positive association between religiosity, mental health, and physical health". Accordingly, I believe that prayers for healing of the land, including for better health, can play a part in bringing about positive results. Murray (1998:52) is of the opinion that individual healings would be seldom. This raises concern when patients pray for healing confidently expecting it and it does not happen. Surely they will likely question God's motives or abilities and struggle spiritually. These "spiritual struggles can create stress and impair health outcomes" (Koenig 2004:1196). .

Dr. Michael Yapko (1997) in the 'The Art of Avoiding Depression' noted the fast pace in which we operate today – we expect everything to be done rapidly – and the negative psychological results. One example is that we expect the process of building satisfying deep relationships to happen quickly and can get offended when there is a delay in achieving the desired result and perpetuate a psychologically damaging relationship. I believe this weakness in today's world with its emphasis on instant or rapid success can cause disappointment with God if we feel we are doing what is required to facilitate a good relationship with God, e.g. a revival (regional or national), and not seeing it happen. This would especially be the case if 2 Chronicles 7:14 is applied by Christians with expectations of the whole nation being healed spiritually and financially.

Yapko (1997) believes one of the most critical skills to possess is the ability to discern and endure ambiguity. In many situations, there are numerous variables at work and a range of possibilities and so there may, or may not be, a single correct action. Life can be full of ambiguity. Thus, it is how individuals respond to this ambiguity that may lead to depression. If they interpret it negatively, then depression can follow. As a result, critical thinking is important for dealing with depression. It is the ability to analyse the evidence and properly evaluate the validity of one's beliefs, and to distinguish between things that one does or does not have control/responsibility over. People in situations tend to underestimate or overestimate the ambiguities. If they believe they have no part to play in the process, they don't even attempt to try. If there are complementary solutions needed they might try only one. Both these approaches can precipitate depression. There is a strong correlation between the guilt one experiences and one's level of discernment; the greater the discernment the less guilt with our expectations and decisions.

The evidence in sections 3.2-3.4 points to 2 Chronicles 7 not being applicable to Christians today in the same way it applied in ancient Israel. Such an understanding (discernment) would prevent the kind of problems Yapko mentions, namely disappointment with God, possible deception, and discouragement, which could all cause depression. Several of the respondents in the qualitative research presented in chapter 2 did include disappointment and depression as a possible outcome of not seeing national revival coming to pass after faithfully and fervently believing and meeting the conditions in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Yapko's position thus provides support for Christians at CLF noting the above combined insights on how Christians ought to approach 2 Chronicles 7:14. Now, in positive psychology it is recognised that a person's faith, hope, and work may be used to safeguard him/her from mental illness (Seligman 2002:5). Certainly this would be implied in Christianity where these values are presented as important and therefore clearly for our good. But this approach must surely be balanced by an understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 relevant to the New Covenant that I have argued is a more faithful interpretation of this verse.

The position that has emerged in this chapter does not entail limiting God's role in producing revivals; nor does it imply we must not pray for the conversion of unbelievers in our country and for God to help the country bring about justice and

seek the best ways to build the economy. Christians should still exercise their faith, pray, preach, teach, evangelise, and believe God for miraculous interventions like revivals (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 10:27). However, if it is not realised they should not get disheartened (God knows best and his ways are above our ways).

3.2.6 Conclusion about the normative view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 for any Church

The exegetical study of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the survey of the Old Testament biblical covenants (specifically the Mosaic and Davidic covenants) provided guidance for interpreting 2 Chronicles 7:14. The temple and the activities that occurred in the context of the verse played an integral role in Chronicles as well as the Davidic Covenant (and its close association with the Mosaic Covenant). God's promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 was tied to the Davidic Covenant and the temple rooted in the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 25-27,30). Repentance by God's people, the Israelites, was required when they broke the Mosaic Covenant that brought God's judgment on the land. Repentance would eliminate the judgment and bring healing to the land so that all economic and material needs were met again. It would seem then that 2 Chronicles 7:14 would only be relevant to the nation of Israel today if they had a restored temple and became a theocratic country under the Old Covenant (but see the next paragraph).

However, I believe the view that it would apply to national Israel today can only be decided from a Church perspective under the New Covenant established by Christ. Note that Jesus referred to Himself as the temple and that the church is described as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is because the Old Covenant is fulfilled in the New Covenant. Under the New Covenant the focus is on individual Christians anywhere in the world and the spiritual blessings we have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14). The fullness of all healing (spiritual, physical and the earth) comes at the resurrection and in the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21 and 22). There is clearly place in this age to bring all material needs to God, but God's answer will not necessarily meet those needs or those of the whole country where the repentant and interceding Christians live.

The missional perspective of the Bible in the light of the Abrahamic Covenant was significantly broadened and guaranteed its ultimate fulfilment through the inauguration of the New Covenant by Jesus Christ. This will be completely realised at Jesus' second coming (Alexander *et al* 2000:664). This again shows that God's great concern for his people today is to share in his mission to spread the gospel (evangelism) as he builds his kingdom (p. 668). Material prosperity is not in focus.

Furthermore, it was noted that revival as experienced in the NT and throughout Church history is not the same as the answer anticipated when Christians in a country fulfil 2 Chronicles 7:14. The results of revival are focused on the Christians' spiritual re-vitalisation and then the conversion of great numbers of unbelievers in record time and not on economic recovery of either the Christians or the country. In

It can be theorised that one's political environment would improve (have less crime, dishonesty, and indolence and create a positive economic climate) today if there was true nation-wide repentance and godly living as called for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 (even without the benefits of there being "healing of the land"). Some of these improvements in the political landscape for the nation of Wales occurred after the 1904 revival (Towns and Porter 2000:30). This was despite Wales not being preceded by nation-wide repentance. In psychology, repentance and forgiveness offer a solution to wrongdoing and debilitating resultant guilt in the offender and crippling, vindictive, smouldering anger in the offended, respectively. This is because they lead to restoration and better emotional and physical health, which may enable greater productivity (Schimmel 2004:141-142). Moreover, psychological research indicates that a certain religious mindset coupled with the expectation of challenges, hardship, and uncertainty that eventually comes to everyone in life - if they live long enough - may help discernment and reduce depression. Clearly political theory and psychology demonstrate the value of all who will apply 2 Chronicles 7:14.

The clear message of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church today is to pursue humility before God, pray, seek God, and repent from known sin. This will always be God's will. Further, there are many verses that encourage the believer that God will provide his needs, even abundantly (Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:25-33; John 10:10). But the major focus in the New Testament is to grow in our understanding and experience of all the spiritual blessings we have through being united to Christ by faith and the rest

of our inheritance after the return of Christ. It is further to evangelise the nations. This is where the situation is so different from the nation of Israel where all embraced, at least formally, God's covenant standards. In spreading the gospel throughout the world, opposition is encountered, even devastating and destructive persecution. Thus Christians can be living godly lives and still suffer deprivation. The great calling for Christians in any country is to pray for the leaders so that the government of the country will be for the good of all its citizens (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Certainly, a country that upholds and seeks to live by biblical principles of morality can expect God to bless the country (Proverbs 14:24a; cf. the judgements of God on the Assyrians [Isaiah 10:5-19; 14:24-27] and Babylonians [Isaiah 13:1-14:23; Zechariah 2:9-12] and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for evil and injustice (Genesis 19) .

In summary, any church today should see fulfilling the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 as most important and that they may expect rewards/blessings. They will, however, not necessarily always involve material abundance for the Christians or the whole nation in which the Christians are domiciled as was promised the nation of Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

3.3 Implications for an operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF

The research in chapter 2 focused on the elders and the ten other respondents at CLF. It demonstrated that for them the operative theology with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF, or a significant majority, is as follows: when Christians fulfil the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and call the nation to repentance there will be renewed spiritual life among the Christians and multiple new conversions locally or even nationally with economic and other blessings for the whole country.

When the various perspectives in chapter 3 (exegetical, biblical, historical, systematic theology, and non-theological) are brought together, this approach to 2 Chronicles 7:14 by CLF does not represent the most faithful operative theology regarding this verse. For instance, it must be noted that there was no mention by the elders and the other ten respondents that no theocracy exists today comparable to Israel in the Old Testament before the destruction of the Northern Kingdom or the

exile from the Southern Kingdom. Also, this would seem to strengthen the case that if God required all persons in the nation of Israel to repent in the Old Testament context to escape God's judgment, why would he only require some, i.e. the Church, to do so today for the healing of the land?

One of the more serious deficiencies with reference to the overall view of 2 Chronicles 7:14 held by the elders and the other ten respondents is a failure to adequately address how the abolishment of the Mosaic Covenant linked to the verse should impact their view. This deficiency must be addressed in the operative theology with reference to this verse at CLF.

The deficiencies are also significantly in the area of hermeneutics, which in turn has influenced their beliefs and practices with reference to this verse. For instance, most of the respondents completing the questionnaire section went straight away into interpreting verse 14 of 2 Chronicles 7 even though I had asked them to first read verses 11 to 22 of the chapter, the context, before filling out the questionnaire.

It seemed that they totally overlooked the immediate context with regards to:

- (i) verse 13: Most lacked understanding of it by failing to see or allow for the fact that the healing of the land in verse 14 referred to the removal of drought, locust, and pestilence sent from God as judgement.
- (ii) verses 19 to 22: Not one participant, including the elders, referred to God's clear instructions that if they disobeyed he would pluck them (the Israelites) from the land and the temple. Since, almost all participants believe God's promise (particularly of rewards to do with healing the land) is applicable today, why wouldn't all the punishments apply as well? This should include the Christians (and supposedly the unbelievers in a country) being exiled to another country when God judges the Christians (and supposedly the whole nation) for unrighteousness and thus unfaithfulness to God. This is very interesting as all respondents demonstrated some knowledge of the covenants in the Old Testament, especially the curses. Concerning 2 Chronicles 7:14, they referred to God's displeasure with sin and disobedience that led to judgement, yet what emerged was their insistence on focusing more on the rewards of

obedience, i.e. forgiveness of sin and healing of the land, and not on the punishment for disobedience and unfaithfulness to their covenant-making God.

- (iii) chapter 6: Not one respondent read 2 Chronicles 6, i.e. the previous chapter to examine Solomon's prayer in greater detail. This is in spite of the fact that in 2 Chronicles 7:12 God told Solomon he had heard in his prayer and gave his promise to Israel based on it.

The true significance of 2 Chronicles for CLF is to have a Christ-centred missional agenda through being salt and light in the world. This will include displaying compassion for the physical needs of people, campaigning for a just society, living prayerful and godly lives. Such a mission stands the greatest chance of influencing the country morally and economically. This is because the gospel when fully appropriated surely provides the best basis for a moral, safe, successful and prosperous society and country. Perhaps the greatest significance of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church is that if the believers are truly faithful to the gospel, which includes being Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, and missional, they can trust God to provide their individual material needs (cf. also Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19). This paragraph highlights another area that will need more attention in the new operative theology with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.

Another implication emerging from the study of CLF was that of a few respondents' over-reliance on the teachers and elders. This would need to be addressed. This was observed where they noted that they would apply 2 Chronicles 7:14 today due to authoritative persons in their midst suggesting or teaching that it is presently applicable to the church; and this even though the leaders themselves have not done their own in-depth study of the passage in its immediate and wider context and in the context of the New Covenant. The authority of Scripture must be ranked over all human authorities/leaders in the Church. So, while God uses leaders to teach us, one's personal study of scripture is also important and should be encouraged (2 Timothy 2:2,15; Acts 17:11; 1 John 2:27).

The issues raised in 3.3 will need to shape the contours of the strategic plan in chapter 4 to effectively bring about a more biblically faithful operative theology regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.

3.4 Defence of the proposed operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF

This short section presents a defence of the position argued above regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14. It is presented in four points.

(i) Since evangelicals view Scripture as uniquely inspired of God, though reflecting the human input, 2 Chronicles 7:14 needs to be responded to appropriately based on its relevance, if any, for the church today. This has been done in this chapter.

(ii) The critical interpretive process used in this chapter has provided different theological perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 that when combined provide a more faithful operative theology with reference to this verse for any church today.

(iii) Any social science or political science perspective on a country would seek wholesome inward and inter-personal relationships and a healthy society that would guarantee the greatest chance of material success. Further, that this vision would go hand in hand with moral and spiritual values and thus these would need to be propagated. Kourie and Kretzchmar (2000:13) notes that spirituality 'effects change at the cognitive, volitional, and affective levels of the person' and 'at all levels of social, economic, and political life'. In the modern and postmodern world societies, the spiritual is being viewed as important. But it is a more secular spirituality (Light 2012:38-39). Christianity takes a loving righteous creator God seriously and so it would position the search for a prosperous society in morals and spirituality related to him. The original context of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and its parallel in the NT is that Israel needed to live a truly spiritual life that honoured God's righteousness and love. This alone would guarantee inner peace, psychological health and God's blessings (spiritual and material). Clearly from human, social and political science theories the operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 can be defended.

(iv) This mini-thesis did not allow for an exhaustive study of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and related material. It, however, provides an initial challenge to CLF regarding its praxis

with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14. The operative theology which I am putting forward will need after implementation to be assessed, both the theology behind it and the praxis itself that is designed specifically for CLF, to see if the position is most faithful to the will and purposes of God in CLF's context. This revision process of the praxis-theory-praxis approach should never end as we will never achieve perfection in this fallen world where conditions and trends are not static. Finally, since there has not have been extensive research and academic work on this particular passage, my hope is that in the next few years there will be other researchers motivated by my work to work more in-depth on the matter.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter answered Browning's second and third questions in his practical theology paradigm used for this mini-thesis: *What should be our praxis in this concrete situation? How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?* It provided the answer to what the operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 should be at CLF. It also defended the position arrived.

The chapter began with an exegetical study of 2 Chronicles 7:14, where it was shown that by taking the context of 2 Chronicles 6 and 7 into account that a literal or revival application to Christians today and even their countries cannot be easily supported.

This was followed by looking on an overview of relevant biblical and systematic theology, revival, church history, and two non-theological sciences' perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14. The picture that emerged pointed to the need for caution in interpreting the meaning of the verse in its original context for the nation of Israel as applying to believers today. The weight of evidence does not support a literal application of removal of God's judgement for sin and bestowing of his abundant blessings, especially material, on the country in which Christians apply the verse.

The implications of CLF's beliefs were discussed in the light of the findings of this chapter. Its operative theology does not seem to be the most faithful approach with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14. This was seen through the deficiencies in hermeneutics, over-reliance on teachers instead of the scriptures, and failure to

recognise the different contexts (original and today's, especially regarding the Old and New Covenants). Subsequently, a brief defence of the proposed praxis for CLF was presented.

This chapter culminated in an operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 that is more faithful to the meaning and implications of this verse for Christians. This chapter has reflected the middle phase, the theory phase, of Browning's praxis-theory-praxis paradigm of practical theology. It moved from the descriptive phase of the current situation (covered in chapter 2 of this mini-thesis) to the normative phase that results in a more biblically and rationally sound theory of praxis. The final praxis stage is covered in chapter 4 which is similar to the pragmatic phase (Osmer 2008:175-218), which provides a strategic plan to transform the current praxis into line with the new theory of praxis.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN TO ACHIEVE A BIBLICALLY FAITHFUL OPERATIVE THEOLOGY REGARDING 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 AT CLF

4.1 Introduction

The last stage of Browning's 'model' for practical theology (last question) has been reached: *What means, strategies, and rhetoric should we use in this concrete situation?* In this mini-thesis the concrete situation is the current operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. Chapter 2 demonstrated that it is that this verse is taken to apply to not only the nation of Israel but also to the Church. Chapters 2 and 3, especially when compared, revealed that there are deficiencies in this understanding of this verse with unjustified expectations and potential or actual disappointments with God and the Scriptures. The church is certainly called to fulfil the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 in times of backsliding. However, the New Testament seems to indicate that God will not always respond with spiritual or spiritual and material blessings when 2 Chronicles 7:14 is fulfilled – for the Christians or the whole nation in which the Christians are domiciled.

Chapter 4 is concerned with presenting a strategic plan ('means, strategies, and rhetoric') to improve the operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. The previous chapter dealt with the normative theory of praxis for CLF. This chapter is thus taken up with showing how this preferred theory of praxis can be successfully instituted at CLF. This chapter includes a communicative dimension and a structural dimension to achieve the desired operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles at CLF. It builds on the results of the dialogue between the findings of chapter 2 (the current operative theology) and the normative operative theology (developed in chapter 3 from a systematic study).

Chapter 4 develops the necessary plan to achieve the improved praxis. This involves two stages: (i) effective communication of the new operative theology to gain wide acceptance of it, and (ii) a strategic plan to implement the new operative

theology. As I reflect on the number of members of CLF who have over the years relied on this passage as a means of achieving, even forcing, revival in Jamaica (often with economic blessings), I believe swift implementation of new praxis should be pursued.

As an evangelical church it is natural that CLF would want to faithfully reflect God's will concerning how the church should handle 2 Chronicles 7:14. However, the firm commitment to the position discovered through the qualitative research thought to be biblical, means that the church, especially its leaders, would need to be persuaded of the normative position that resulted from the study presented in chapter 3. This indicates how important a communicative plan necessary to gain acceptance of the new praxis will be. Further, this would need to be followed up by an effective strategic plan to show how the new praxis can be implemented. Chapter 4 tackles these two matters.

4.2 Communicative plan for gaining acceptance of the new praxis of 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF

It is absolutely essential that the following three groups at CLF be approached with communicative wisdom and in this order with the reasons for and details of the proposed new operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14: (i) the elders/pastors; (ii) the other leaders (deacons, caucus members, etc.); and, (iii) the rest of the congregation. Technically speaking the elders are leaders. However, for the purpose of this section there are benefits in making this distinction. It also seems most beneficial to communicate to each group in this particular order as it honours their relative levels of authority in the church, and thus adhering to this order the new praxis stands a better chance of being sympathetically considered by all three groups. Bypassing established authority structures would merely antagonise the first two groups and lead to potential division in the church. Gaining the buy-in of the elders/pastors and other leaders would ensure that the other congregational members, or the majority of them, would be more easily persuaded of the need for change.

4.2.1 Convincing the elders at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis

If the four pastors at CLF are not convinced, then rejection of the new praxis is certain. Considering that this praxis is significantly different from what exists now at CLF, there will need to be open and in-depth dialogue within the group of elders with regard to the new praxis. It would be important for me to encourage open-mindedness on their part to a view substantially at odds with their well-established and cherished position. Our dialogue will therefore need to take place in a context of mutual respect and a desire to be faithful to God's will (this is not about me imposing my views on the Church or the CLF elders simply sticking to Church tradition just for the sake of doing so). I believe this exercise will be beneficial as there is wisdom in individuals coming together and discussing matters (Proverbs 11:14). This rallying together, and many times if necessary, will determine the success of the project that is being undertaken (Proverbs 15:22). In this context maintaining a healthy reverential fear for God and his word and a proper vision of faithful pastoral care of the flock is wise (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Acts 20:27-28; 1 Peter 5:2-4). However, it will be important to continually be in prayer to the Lord over this whole process (Luke 18:1).

With the busy schedule of the elders that I have observed over the last decade it may be difficult for them to sit down and read this mini-thesis in its entirety to learn how I came to this position. However, as a member of the Church, I could appeal to the elders to seriously consider my research on 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a means for them to faithfully with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 shepherd God's people. I would more likely ask to meet with them collectively where I would give a summary of the data, findings, conclusions and implications (through a handout or visual presentation form) resulting from this mini-thesis. It might be necessary to guide them through the process, including the theological implications of the current praxis (pointing to its shortcomings), before even considering the new one.

After the presentation I would ask for their feedback, but not before. This approach would reduce the overall time for the presentation and to allow the elders to gain a good understanding of the reasons for the new praxis before they begin offering their comments. If this cannot be done in one sitting, I believe a strategy to create greater

understanding might be to have them read a chapter or two before our meetings. Now if any are unable to be present I would have a video completed with the summary information and send it to them and later correspond/follow-up with them through email discussions. After the presentation and appropriate discussion (whether in one or more sessions) I would certainly encourage them, if not done so, to read the mini-thesis. Unless they are persuaded that my proposed new praxis is biblical they will not embrace it, and thus it would be important for them to hear from me and read the thesis where my case is most fully made. It seems that depending upon which medium works best will determine the time period and the number of discussions that will occur until all elders are fully aware of this research. It needs to be stated that I would expect that this process of engagement with the elders would lead to possibly even greater clarity on a valid interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church today. In these meetings, as Habermas suggested, there would need to be four rational conditions in the communication process to foster mutual understanding and movement towards an agreed upon change: (i) comprehensibility (using language that is understandable to everyone); (ii) truth (discussing thoughts, notions, and concepts that are seen as possessing concrete existence); (iii) trustworthiness (seeking to be genuine, transparent and open); and, (iv) legitimacy (doing activities in conformity to quasi-universal values and norms) (cited in Bukart 2007:250). Heitink (1999:102,125,132-140) relied on the work of Habermas as his communicative theory is best suited to finding an ethical and effective way through dialogue and negotiation to improve situations.

4.2.2 Convincing the other leaders at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis

After my communication with the elders (meetings, e-mail discussions, and so forth), I believe they will need to play a key role in helping the other leaders understand the shortcomings of the present praxis. One of the qualities that elders/pastors must possess is the ability to teach and communicate truth (2 Timothy 2:15, Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 3:2). This phase of the communicative plan is essential before an open-mindedness to embracing a new praxis can be expected. The other leaders are more likely to be persuaded of the need for change with regards to the operative theology for 2 Chronicles 7:14 if the elders rather than I seek their cooperation.

Again, each of the phases under 4.2.2 will be conducted in the light of ethical dialogue recommended by Habermas (cf. Bukart 2007:249-254).

4.2.2.1 Reflecting on the current situation and the need for change with the other leaders

The elders would firstly need to meet with the other leaders to discuss the shortcomings of the present understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14. This process would benefit from formal, informal, individual, and collective discussion. One of the reasons for a less than faithful application of 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF is the lack of exegetical and theological skills and precision. Thus this inadequacy in the way elders and other leaders go about studying, learning, and communicating biblical truth would need attention.

There will need to be a level of humility and Christlikeness to permit constructive criticism of praxis with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF, including those areas where it was not ideal and has created unnecessary problems. Further, the motivations and intentions of everyone should seek to be as objective as possible and to more faithfully accord the praxis to biblical data. Without this approach any critique of the current praxis will be resisted.

4.2.2.2 Communicating the new praxis of 2 Chronicles 7:14 to the other leaders

Once there is an appreciation of the concerns about the current praxis, there should be openness in the other leaders to a new one. The same approach in the discussions as in section (a) should be followed. The elders and I would probably need to come together and prepare for the other leaders a more rudimentary curriculum than this thesis on 2 Chronicles 7:14 to inform and gain acceptance of the new praxis.

4.2.3 Convincing the congregation at CLF on the need for the change of the current praxis

Finally, if this is accepted by these leaders, then the outcome of meetings with the elders and the other leaders would subsequently be communicated to the rest of the congregation. The shortcomings of present praxis and need to change and adopt the new praxis would be highlighted in this communication. It is important to recognise,

as Osmer (2008:197) stated, that “Change initiatives are likely to remain on the margins of a Congregation unless leaders convince others of the need for change and empower them to shape this process”. Thus, the elders and other leaders’ participation in owning the vision and following through on entrenching it in the church will be critical. Change is not readily welcome by many.

Osmer (2008:178) describes these three forms of servant leadership that I believe would all be critical in successfully facilitating the process of changing to the new praxis: (i) task competence leadership (executing tasks excellently in an organisation), (ii) transactional leadership (being influential in trade-offs/compromise with others), and (iii) transforming leadership (leading that brings change). These leadership styles would be appropriate when the elders work with the other leaders in phases (a) and (b).

In the process of communicating the need for the new praxis of 2 Chronicles 7:14, it would be wise to use sermons, Bible studies, prayer meetings, discipleship training academy meetings, cell group meetings, Deborah women’s group meetings, *kairos* men’s group meetings, young adults’ meeting, teen-time meetings, youth meetings, and all other meetings and appropriate literature.

4.3 The strategic implementation plan

To prevent resorting back to a less than faithful view on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and other passages, it will not be enough to simply go through the communicative phase described in 4.2. To sustain the new praxis and avoid praxes that do not reflect sound interpretation and theological understanding, more is required. Thus the strategic plan will include the communicative plan but go beyond that.

The strategy for successfully achieving and maintaining the new praxis with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 will entail achieving short, medium, and long term goals. The overriding principle will be that orthodoxy (right beliefs/teaching) will lead to orthopraxis (right practices) and orthopathos (right feelings) (Woodbridge 2010:1-6). Pratt (2012:23) notes, “we can become so preoccupied with putting our beliefs into a logical system that we ignore other dimensions of Christian living, especially orthopraxis, conforming our behaviors to the will of God and orthopathos, conforming our emotions to the will of God”.

A more biblical understanding of the relevance of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church is not the end of the matter. Even the normative view argued in this thesis on this verse does not imply that the cognitive grasp of this verse is the only issue. The verse will always call God's people to pursue a life of holiness and fervent worship and service of God. It should also lead to joyful feelings as the person fulfilling this verse can expect God's care and blessing, not always material and national, but certainly holistically in the age to come.

Six goals to achieve orthodoxy need to be pursued:

- (i) Hermeneutics and exegesis training
- (ii) Biblical theology training
- (iii) Historical theology training
- (iv) Christocentric and missional perspectives training
- (v) Systematic theology and Integrated theology training
- (vi) Expository and Christ-centred preaching and sermon and Bible study preparation training

While training in the six above areas is ultimately geared towards all members of CLF, it will firstly require training the pastors/elders, teachers, and preachers (PTPs). This is because their role in communicating and sustaining the new praxis in the whole church is vital and hence the importance of their proper preparation. Only as all these leaders are trained in the six areas will the rest of the congregation be effectively taught. It is only as the leaders demonstrate in their lives the six areas will the members have proper examples to follow. After the communicative stage the focus thus shifts to the PTPs. Some of this training would have taken place in the communicative plan.

The complete training and the training of future PTPs necessitates a strategic plan comprising short term, medium term and long term goals, timelines, and those responsible for their achievement. This type of training for the PTPs can be obtained by them all agreeing to attend a seminar, read relevant literature, and inviting a qualified teacher to conduct the training. After each training session there would be an expectation that this new knowledge (orthodoxy) would be converted into

orthopraxis and orthopathos in the PTPs' lives. This process through the three stages in the PTPs would be important if they are in turn to train by teaching and example the new praxis to the rest of the church.

In the life of a Church it is understandable that these six areas are being given different degrees of attention on a regular basis. It will be necessary, though, for a more deliberate and collective approach to achieve the various goals relevant to changing the operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14. They should impact all areas of the church's structures and ministries (sermons, worship, prayer, songs, confessions, creeds, Bible studies, etc.).

4.3.1 Short term goals (Year 1)

The intent would be to accomplish the short term goals within a one year period.

Goal 1: Carrying out the communicative plan as described in 4.2 (Year 1 – first half)

While this would be based on my thesis at appropriate levels to the different groups, the six areas mentioned above will receive some attention. The first six months of Year 1 would entail using Chapters 2 and 3 of this mini-thesis to produce a new position at CLF on 2 Chronicles 7:14. Within this time the PTPs at CLF could also review how they usually go about determining orthodoxy and use these new skills in the study to finalise the new operative theology with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF. During the second half of the year I would suggest specific systematic training in the first of the seven areas. I believe it would take about six months for each of the six areas to be properly covered.

Goal 2: Hermeneutics and exegesis training (Year 1 – second half)

1. *Context* - There is a need for PTPs at CLF to pay more attention to context when handling the scriptures, and in turn teach the rest of the congregation to do the same (Drumwright and Osborne 2009:341; Osborne 1991:412-15). In a meeting, e.g. a Bible study or cell group, training would show the importance for someone leading to always encourage others to read a whole book or chapter. If time does not permit, at least the few verses before and after the particular passage should be carefully read as they will normally indicate its proper context.

2. *Literary styles* – Training needs to demonstrate that understanding the literary style may also give PTPs insight concerning a Biblical author’s intent in a particular passage (Stuart 1992:683). I believe PTPs training should include seeking to interpret scripture in a historical and literal manner first; however, if the genre of a text is not consistent with a historical and literal interpretation, for example, poetry or wisdom literature, then PTPs should choose a methodology which is appropriate (Fuller 1988:865). These literary styles need to be skilfully and properly applied when interpreting scripture and this should be communicated to the rest of CLF members.

4.3.2 Medium term goals (Years 2 and 3)

These goals would be implemented once the short term goals have been attained. Using a similar time estimate of six months training per area, it would take two years to complete the remaining five areas (Biblical theology training, historical theology training, Christocentric and missional perspectives training, and systematic theology training).

Goal 3: Biblical theology training (Year 2 – first half)

- (a) *Methodology* – This deals with the importance of reading in one sitting whole books and letters to get the overall picture being conveyed by the writer (Smith 2013:137). It could also include studying the writings of one writer, e.g., Peter’s letters or the Johannine literature. This puts the expositor on more solid ground as he/she has a better understanding of the theology of the writer. A simple approach of PTPs after undergoing Biblical theology training would be to encourage all their Bible study and cell groups to read whole books and letters in one sitting.
- (b) *Themes* – Training in the major theological themes in Scripture will assist PTPs in understanding and interpreting a text better and thus prevent eisegesis. For example, a study on covenants, a major theological theme throughout Scripture, would prove beneficial to the PTPs and other members of CLF (see Pratt 2014 lessons two and three). Furthermore, the outcome of studying covenants, including those exhibited in Chronicles, should

demonstrate how believers today – who are under the New Covenant - may apply Old Testament stories and situations, including 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Goal 4: Historical theology training (Year 2 – second half)

- (a) *Orthodoxy* - In the training process, PTPs should gain awareness of the benefits of historical theology in assisting the Church to differentiate between orthodoxy and heresy. Moreover, the study of historical theology helps facilitate sound doctrines and development of good theological positions (Allison 2011: 24–29).

- (b) *Did a particular teaching occur in church history* – A survey of church history will reveal if a current-day teaching is novel or not. If it is, this would strongly suggest that the teaching is suspect. It was shown above that from the early Church fathers up until the middle 20th century the Church did not interpret 2 Chronicles 7:14 as referring to the way to bring about national spiritual revival or such revival and material prosperity for all Christians or the whole nation. The verse was interpreted in a grammatical-historical and literal manner, namely as applying to the nation of Israel. The value for checking church history to see if a particular teaching was found before is clearly helpful in assessing a novel teaching today. This would need to be taught by PTPs to the rest of congregation as well.

Goal 5: Christocentric and missional perspectives training (Year 3 – first half)

PTPs' training should inform them to always seek to make all preaching, teaching, and Biblical interpretations Christ-centred and missional. This is because the Old Testament prepares the way for Christ and thus points to him, and the New Testament is all about the outworking of God's eternal purposes for the world through the incarnation of Christ and his ministry. All things ultimately are by him and for him; and through his redemptive work he restores mankind to a good standing with Himself and will eventually effect the believers' glorification and existence in a new world (Smith 2013:29-30). In this thesis it is shown that the Christocentric and missional perspectives were somewhat lacking on the part of all the elders and respondents when explaining how 2 Chronicles 7:14 may be applied today. These

perspectives or these lenses for interpreting Scripture must be taught and modelled to the rest of the congregation.

Goal 6: Systematic and integrated theology training (Year 3 – second half)

I believe PTPs may be trained to conduct a detailed systematic and integrated theological examination of any subject. The process is as follows and in this order: isolating a problem or proposition; exegesis; biblical theology; historical theology; systematic theology; and finally, practical theology. This pathway or approach leads to a solution to the problem or otherwise confirms the proposition. I propose four ways I think systematic and integrated theology training may be usefully applied in CLF's context. These four areas could be addressed in sermons, Bible study meetings, cell group meetings, and other group meetings.

- (a) *Exegesis* - Training PTPs would demonstrate how systematic theology may positively impact exegesis. Here are some examples relevant to CLF. (i) It will help counter the trend of a tradition that innocently overstates certain biblical truths at the expense of other truths, i.e., it will encourage fresh sound exegetical study of key passages. (ii) It will also challenge the church tradition that purposely embraces an interpretive methodology for all the canonical books that other believers may find questionable, e.g. Covenant theology, and force them back to proper exegesis of key passages. (iii) Theologians that accept only certain areas of Scripture or focus only on particular areas will be forced to appropriately broaden their theological horizon which will include the thorough exegesis of other relevant passages (Naselli 2011:264-266). The relevance of these three aspects can be seen in the CLF context as the following three areas illustrate. I have observed how stressing the exercise of human responsibility (repentance) in 2 Chronicles 7:14 may have been overstated at the expense of God's sovereignty. People affirming replacement theology have out rightly ignored the context of Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Many believers overlook passages that refer to God's election and predestination. I believe that if in these cases a thorough systematic theology study had been conducted, the position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF would have avoided the weaknesses exposed in this thesis.

- (b) *Contemporary environment* – Systematic theology training for the PTPs would lead them to seeking to critically think about how they could address and solve problems in their contemporary environment (Naselli 2011:266). This mini-thesis is one such example where I am seeking to provide a solution to unhealthy expectations and crushing disappointment resulting from inadequate exegetical and systematic theological knowledge with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14.
- (c) *Truth* – Training in systematic theology and integrated theology has a way to remind PTPs that God's truth is found in and outside Scripture – in special infallible revelation and natural/general revelation in the created order (Smith 2013:120). It is clear that God's special revelation is capable of giving insight to many topics, while God's general revelation is more restricted (Naselli 2011:255). As such, PTPs must see the logic in examining God's special revelation as outlined in the Bible before considering God's general revelation as evidenced in the sciences (human, social, and natural). Although the sciences can point us in the direction of truth, PTPs must give more importance to scripture due to its divine inspiration and absolute authority.
- (d) *Apologetic interaction* - Lewis and Demarest (1996:26) believe systematic theology relies on the Bible and its interactions with the human, natural, and social sciences. However, there the philosophical underpinnings of much of modern science does not harmonise with the biblical worldview. Lewis and Demarest therefore state the importance making a defence of the theory we postulate against other opposing theological, philosophical, scientific, and religious studies, etc. I believe this may be quite intensive, but will create credibility for the theological theory or model we propose. PTPs should be trained to see the benefits of this, and how to relay this to the other church members.

4.3.3 Long term goals (Year 4 and onwards)

Plans to achieve these goals are to be implemented after the medium goals have been achieved.

Goal 7: Expository and Christ-centred preaching and sermon and Bible study

preparation training (Year 4 – first half)

- (a) *Homiletics training* - CLF needs PTPs that would be more intentional in improving their preaching. There is not much emphasis on homiletic training.
- (b) *Sermon preparation* - At times not enough preparation is done by PTPs for their sermons.
- (c) *Philosophy* - There have been a few occasions where PTPs did not sufficiently prepare. This was because they were waiting on direction from the Lord, which according to them came at the last minute. In my opinion this is somewhat misguided and a lack of appreciation that all scripture is profitable, especially if properly expounded.
- (d) *Expository preaching* - There is also not enough emphasis on expository preaching today. Far too many of the sermons at CLF are topical. This tends to mean less attention to the verses than expository preaching would require. The result is that some preaching does not seem to be faithful to the text but more the preacher's viewpoint.
- (e) *Christ-centred preaching* – PTPs should recognise that all preaching must eventually speak to the person and work of Christ and the implications for the believers and God's mission which climaxes as described in the final highpoint chapters of the Book of Revelation. Scripture now requires interpretation with God's purposes and plans now fully revealed through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has answered the fourth question in Browning's strategic practical theology approach: *What means, strategies, and rhetoric should we use in this concrete situation?* The concrete situation was the concern that at CLF the operative theology regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14 is not the most biblically faithful one. This chapter therefore developed a suitable communication plan to give the more faithful theory of praxis that emerged in chapter 3 a maximum chance of acceptance at CLF.

This was followed by the construction of a strategic plan for implementing the new praxis so that it will be firmly and lastingly established in the church. This new situation will not only ensure a more biblically faithful operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF, but also help achieve the same in other areas of Scripture.

The strategic plan is undergirded by six pillars. For an evangelical church like CLF, faithful exegesis of Scripture is considered the key to a faithful operative theology. Thus the six areas that support and realise the new praxis with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF centre on exegesis of Scripture and the other major areas of theology that build on the sound exegesis of both the Scriptures and our context in the world and relevant extra-biblical knowledge.

The communicative plan takes fully into account that the extensive nature of the change will require the full support of the elders, other leaders, and other members (at least the majority) at CLF. The strategic plan necessitates the training of PTPs in the crucial six areas and the thorough preparation of the other members in the need for and nature of the new praxis. Thus the successful implementation and sustaining of the new operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 (and other passages) will involve tweaking all the church ministries.

This chapter brings the Browning design for practical theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 to an end. His approach starts with understanding the present concrete situation. This activity was conducted in chapter 2. It then moves onto deciding what theory of praxis should operate in the concrete situation, which was covered in chapter 3. His third question provides a defence of the new praxis, which was also covered in chapter 3. The final question answers how the concrete situation can be changed to bring about the desired praxis, which has been covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 A review of the objectives

In chapter one (the introduction) I stated that the research question was the following: *What is the most faithful interpretation and application of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF – the operative theology with regard to this verse at CLF – and how can its acceptance and implementation at CLF be achieved?* Therefore the primary objective of this study was to formulate a theologically-informed strategic plan to ensure that the praxis of CLF with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 is faithful to God.

There were three secondary objectives, with a chapter being devoted to each that assisted in achieving the primary objective. Thus the main goal was broken down into three smaller ones:

1. *Interpret the operative theology of CLF with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14.* This objective, namely the qualitative aspect of the study, was achieved in chapter 2.
2. *Determine and defend a faithful operative theology with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF.* This objective, namely the normative position and its defence, was achieved in chapter 3.
3. *Develop a strategic plan for introducing a faithful operative theology with respect to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.* This objective, namely the practical aspect of the study, was achieved in chapter 4.

5.2 Tracing the argument

Browning's approach to theology contributed to the design of this mini-thesis. The framework of this study was built on the basis of his strategic practical theology (his fourth movement that draws on his other three movements), which is structured around the answering of four consecutive questions:

1. How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?
2. What should be our praxis in this concrete situation?

3. How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?
4. What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?

By answering the four questions in relation to my topic at CLF I achieved my secondary goals and therefore the primary one. This praxis-theory-praxis approach that was adopted for my mini-thesis is presently being used by many practical theologians. It is particularly effective in reflecting theologically on any area of the church's life and ministry and responding practically, especially where the situation is causing concern.

As a member of CLF this study was prompted by CLF's position on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and my belief that it was not biblically faithful. It was clear that I firstly had to gain a proper and informed understanding, including contributory factors (both theological and otherwise), of the 'concrete' situation. It was also necessary to critically establish what the normative response to this situation should be and defend it by defending its underlying norms. Finally there had to be a comparison and correlation of the results of these stages (the descriptive and the normative) to achieve the best strategic plan to improve the operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. Browning's strategic practical theology with its four questions afforded me the ideal design for my study to achieve my primary objective.

To answer Browning's first question in his strategic practical theology approach an qualitative study was conducted. It included an interview of the elders, then with reference to ten other members of the church an initial interview, followed by a questionnaire, and finally a second interview to gain further clarity where required. The data and responses were then summarised, analysed and interpreted. Consequently I achieved a better understanding of, and reasons for, the operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF.

A textual and theological (biblical, historical, and systematic) study of 2 Chronicles 7:14 was then conducted to answer Browning's second question. Some relevant perspectives from non-theological sources were also considered. Thus the

normative view was achieved, the view that I felt should prevail at CLF with its, and my, total commitment to the authority of the Scriptures in the life of the Christian and the church. The results of the normative task were then brought into dialogue and correlation with the current operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF that was established when answering Browning's first question. The outcome of this interaction was a new operative theology for CLF that is more faithful to 2 Chronicles 7:14 from a New Covenant perspective. The defence of this operative theology with reference to this verse was made in the light of CLF's belief in the final authority of Scripture; some support was also found in certain non-theological scientific fields. Thus Browning's third question was also answered.

Finally Browning's fourth question was answered. This had to do with how to achieve the more biblical operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. This was attained by designing a strategic plan. The plan includes (i) a communicative strategy to gain acceptance of the new operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14, and (ii) a strategy to ensure its implementation.

The communicative dimension is to convince the elders/pastors, teachers, and preachers (PTPs) and then through them the other leaders and finally the congregation of the need for a new operative theology. The former would entail the PTPs using Chapters 2 and 3 of this mini-thesis and finalising the new operative theology with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 for CLF. Persuading the congregation would be achieved through the role or influence of the PTPs' in the preaching, Bible studies, prayer meetings, discipleship training academy meetings, cell group meetings, Deborah women's group meetings, *kairos* men's group meetings, young adults' meeting, teen-time meetings, youth meetings, and all other meetings and appropriate literature.

The strategy for the successful long term implementation of the new operative theology in regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 is undergirded by six pillars:

- (i) Hermeneutics and exegesis training
- (ii) Biblical theology training
- (iii) Historical theology training
- (iv) Christocentric and missional perspectives training

- (v) Systematic theology and Integrated theology training
- (vi) Expository and Christ-centred preaching and sermon and Bible study preparation training

The plan entails a three year programme. The first six months is devoted to gaining acceptance of the new operative theology at CLF with regards to 2 Chronicles 7:14 as noted above and fine-tuning it if necessary. The next two-and-a-half years will involve a carefully structured programme of training for the pastors, teachers, and preachers in the above areas six pillars or areas. This is because their role in consolidating the new operative theology praxis in the whole church is vital and hence the importance of their proper preparation for this task.

Altogether the six areas above will support and help realise and sustain the new praxis with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14 at CLF. This is because they centre on exegesis of Scripture and the other major areas of theology that build on the sound exegesis of the Scriptures.

5.3 Summary of the findings

The main identifiable problem with CLF's current praxis regarding 2 Chronicles 7:14 is in the area of hermeneutics. This fact emerged in chapters 2 and 3.

Since this mini-thesis was structured around the four questions in Browning's strategic practical theology, it is appropriate to summarise the findings of this study with reference to the answers to the four questions.

Question 1: How do we understand the concrete situation in which we must act?

With reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14, the respondents agreed that the verse also applied to the church. Though there were slight variations in understanding this verse with reference to its relevance to the church, they held, bar one, that meeting the conditions of repentance and prayer meant God would heal the land where they lived. Again there was not unanimity on exactly what this healing would entail. Many felt it would lead to revival in the evangelical tradition of revivals (more personal application). However, most seemed to believe that material blessings (good crops and possibly even other blessings to the economy) would also come to the believers

and unbelievers who repent and turn to Christ. Some even felt the whole land would be healed thus benefitting the whole nation.

Few respondents believed that all scriptures relating to Israel apply to the Church today, while others were not sure. Most respondents stated that they live by the New Covenant with the view that the Old Covenant is abolished. It is likely then that the answers to the questions probing what 'my people' means and linking it with New Testament Christians implied that in practice the elders and respondents had not worked out theologically the implications of the abolishment of the Old Covenant to which 2 Chronicles 7:14 is so closely linked. Most persons argued that not seeing revival after believing they had fulfilled the requirements of 2 Chronicles 7:14 may be due to God's timing and possibly lead to the refining or strengthening of their faith. But this view that the verse applies to the church could lead to despondency when fulfilling the verse's conditions does not lead to the expected results which has been CLF's experience. Further, their experience seems to contradict their strong belief that meeting the conditions of this verse would bring immediate results. Surely our beliefs in God's promises should be grounded on his trustworthiness.

Questions 2 and 3: What should be our praxis in this concrete situation, and how do we critically defend the norms of it?

To answer question 1, relevant biblical and systematic theology, revival, church history, and two non-theological sciences' perspectives on 2 Chronicles 7:14 were analysed. The theological and historical perspectives indicated the need for caution in interpreting a verse given to national Israel under the Old Covenant as applicable to believers today living under the New Covenant. It is certainly a very recent interpretation in church history. The weight of evidence does not support a literal application of removal of God's judgement for sin and bestowing of his abundant blessings, especially material, on a country in which believers apply the verse. Thus CLF's operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14 does not seem to be the most faithful biblical approach. The deficiencies leading to CLF's views are in hermeneutics, over-reliance on teachers instead of the Scriptures, and failure to recognise the different contexts (original and today's, especially regarding that of the Old and New Covenants). A brief defence of the newly proposed praxis for CLF was also completed.

The New Testament shows that the spiritual qualities called for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 by God's people when wayward are clearly relevant for the church: pursue humility before God, pray, seek God, and repent from known sin. These will always be God's will. Further, there are many verses not only in the Old Testament but also the New Testament that encourage the believer that God will provide his needs, even abundantly at times. But the major focus in the New Testament is to grow in our understanding and experience of all the spiritual blessings we have through being united to Christ by faith and the rest of our inheritance after the return of Christ.

One of the church's primary purpose is to evangelise the nations. Yet, in the midst of this persecution and poverty can be expected. Notwithstanding, a nation can certainly expect God's blessings if they seek to uphold and live by biblical principles of morality.

The final conclusion about 2 Chronicles 7:14 was that any church today should see fulfilling the conditions spelt out in this verse as most important when the church has backslidden and that they may expect God's rewards/blessings and not his disfavour when they obey it. However, it does not always involve material abundance for the Christians or the whole nation in which the Christians reside as was promised the nation of Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Question 4: What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?

The answer to this question was that a strategic plan was required to gain acceptance and the implementation of the new operative theology with reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14. The first part included convincing the pastors at CLF first, then the other leaders, and finally the rest of the congregation of the need for changing the current praxis to the new one. The second part included not only the more biblical understanding of 2 Chronicles 7:14 for the church, but a programme spread over two-and-half years of training for the pastors, teachers, and preachers in the following areas to achieve orthodoxy with regard to Scripture in general: (i) hermeneutics and exegesis training, (ii) biblical theology training, (iii) historical theology training, (iv) Christocentric and missional perspectives training, (v) systematic theology and integrated theology training, and (vi) expository and

Christ-centred preaching and sermon and Bible study preparation training. After each training session there would be an expectation that the new operative theology and this deeper ability to attain orthodoxy in all areas of Scripture would reach the congregation in its various programmes and ministries.

5.4 Limitations of this research and future research

I am not aware of any research in the field of Christians holding to the modern interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14, as at CLF, and the adverse effects that it may have on them. As I reflect on this mini-thesis I recognise my exegesis of the passage involves how you believe the relationship of the Church and Israel exists today, thus my mixed view (Remnant theology) which incorporates both a typological approach (Covenant theology) and historical-grammatical approach (Separation theology) can be seen as problematic. Additionally, I recognise that some of the positions that I have outlined stemming from my research may be seen as a generalisation (although, I sought to back them up with scripture and research).

They also to some degree no doubt reflect my previous and the church's stance on this passage. Moreover, my past experience as a full-time missionary at the Jamaica House of Prayer for four years, and as part of the evangelical community in Jamaica (namely, Kingston, St. Andrew and St. James) for the last two decades, impacted my assumptions and presuppositions, and thus the objectivity of my work can be challenged. I also recognise that other researchers could more likely outline several weaknesses in my research, including the suitability of all the questions or lack of them, analysis and findings in my qualitative research, etc. Finally, I also believe that because of my study being a mini-thesis, my research into 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the challenges of exegesis were somewhat limited. Therefore there is need for ongoing study and thus I hope that others will pursue further research into my research question of what is a biblical faithful operative theology with regard to 2 Chronicles 7:14?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Randomizer

The screenshot shows the Research Randomizer website interface. The background is a dark teal color. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and the text "RESEARCH RANDOMIZER" on the left, and "RANDOMIZE TUTORIAL LINKS ABOUT" on the right. The main content area contains several configuration options:

- "How many sets of numbers do you want to generate?" with a text input field containing "1" and a "Help" link below it.
- "How many numbers per set?" with a text input field containing "1" and a "Help" link below it.
- "Number range (e.g., 1-50)" with two text input fields: the first contains "1" and the second contains "17", with a "Help" link below the second field.
- "Do you wish each number in a set to remain unique?" with a dropdown menu set to "Yes" and a "Help" link below it.
- "Do you wish to sort the numbers that are generated?" with a dropdown menu set to "No" and a "Help" link below it.

The screenshot shows the Research Randomizer website interface with a "RESULTS" modal window open. The background is a dark teal color. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and the text "RESEARCH RANDOMIZER" on the left, and "RANDOMIZE TUTORIAL LINKS ABOUT" on the right. The "RESULTS" modal window is white and contains the following information:

- Buttons for "PRINT", "DOWNLOAD", and "CLOSE" at the top right.
- "1 Set of 1 Unique Number"
- "Range: From 1 to 17"
- "Set #1"
- The number "4" displayed below "Set #1".
- A "Please note:" section at the bottom with the following text: "By using this service, you agree to abide by the SPN User Policy and to hold Research Randomizer and its staff harmless in the event that you experience a problem with the program or its results. Although every effort has been made to develop a useful means of generating random numbers, Research Randomizer and its staff do not guarantee the quality or randomness of numbers generated. Any use to which these numbers are put remains the sole responsibility of the user who generated them."

Below the modal window, a "RANDOMIZE NOW!" button is visible on the background page.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Researcher: Sheldon Campbell

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Questionnaire on 2 Chronicles 7:14

All information you provide is strictly confidential. This is for research purposes and your name will not be mentioned. It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete these questions.

Before completing this questionnaire, could you briefly tell the person administering the questionnaire what your present views are on 2 Chronicles 7:14, which says, “**if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land**”? This needs to be recorded. May the interviewer have your permission to record this? Yes/No.

Please either circle your answer or write it in the space provided.

Part A – Personal Details & Member Information

1. Are you a member of Christian Life Fellowship Church?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2. If a member, how long have you been one at Christian Life Fellowship Church?

- 0 – 3 years
- 4 – 7 years
- 8 – 11 years
- 12 – 15 years
- 16 – 19 years
- 20 – 23 years
- 24 – 27 years
- 28 – 31 years
- 32 – 34 years

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

4. What age range do you fall within?

- 16 – 20 years
- 21 – 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 – 59 years
- 60 – 69 years
- 70 – 79 years
- 80 years and over

Part B – Prayer

Please be as honest as possible for the sake of the research.

5. How often do you pray?

- Several times daily
- Once daily
- A few times weekly
- Once weekly
- A few times monthly
- Never

6. When you desire God to act, which of the following do you agree with?

- God will act when I pray fervently.
- God will not always act when I pray fervently.
- Other (please explain)

7. Are your prayers answered?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

8. If your prayers are not always answered, what is the main reason for this?

Choose one.

- God didn't care
- It was outside of God's control
- It was my fault
- It was not in God's will
- God had a better plan
- Not applicable

9. Have you ever felt disappointed with God for not answering your prayers?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Part C – My People and Called By God's Name

Parts C to H are focused specifically on 2 Chronicles 7:14. In order to assist you in completing the remaining portion of the questionnaire, a Bible will be provided. Please read the context of the verse, namely 2 Chronicles 7:11-22, for a better understanding of the verse, and read any other verses that might be relevant, before filling in the rest of the questionnaire.

10. Who are the “my people” in 2 Chronicles 7:14?

- The Israelites at that time
- All believers today
- The Israelites at that time, but it also applies to all believers today
- The Israelites at that time, but it also applies to all believers and unbelievers living in any nation that is governed by godly principles or where more than 50 percent of its population professes to be Christian
- Other (please explain)

11. Who are those “who are called by God's Name” in 2 Chronicles 7:14?

- The Israelites at that time
- All believers today
- The Israelites at that time, but it also applies to all believers today
- The Israelites at that time, but it also applies to all believers and unbelievers living in any nation that is governed by godly principles or where more than 50 percent of its population professes to be Christian today
- Other (please explain)

Part D – Repentance

12. What does it mean for persons to “humble themselves”?

13. What does it mean for persons to “seek God's face”?

14. What does it mean for persons to “turn from their wicked ways”?

Part E – Hearing and Forgiving

15. Why will God now “hear from heaven”?
16. Why is it important for God to “forgive the people's sins”?

Part F – Healing the Land

17. What do you believe healing the land refers to in 2 Chronicles 7:14?
18. Why is it important for God to “heal the land”?

Part G – The Conditions

19. Does fulfilling the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 guarantee forgiveness of sin and the healing of land?
 - Yes
 - Not sure
 - No

20. Are there other instances in scripture where God requires persons to pray, humble themselves, seek God's face and turn from their wicked ways for certain blessings? If yes, have they influenced your interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and if so how?

Part H – Application

21. Does this passage indicate that if today's **believers** in a nation pray, humble themselves, seek God's face, and turn from their wicked ways that God will forgive their sin and heal their land?
 - Yes
 - Not sure
 - No
22. Do all the promises God gave to national Israel apply to the Church today, including 2 Chronicles 7:14?
 - Yes
 - Not sure
 - No

23. Is there any particular land that God has promised the Church today?

- Yes
- Not sure
- No

24. Does 2 Chronicles 7:14 apply to you personally?

- Yes
- Not sure
- No

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Appendix 3: Interview 1

All names are fictitious.

“Ricardo”

The Lord was speaking to His people – to people who knew the Lord personally – but for whatever reason they had started to neglect their relationship with Lord and become proud. They had not been seeking the Lord, but more seeking what they could accomplish or obtain for themselves. If they would turn away from that type of thinking and wickedness, then the Lord would intervene and forgive their sin and positively affect their circumstances. In terms of 'healing their land', I don't know if God is necessarily speaking generally towards the nation as a whole, but I believe it may be applied personally. Therefore, I feel the Lord is saying I will intervene, whether its on an individual, national, or international level.

“Pamela”

The Lord requires that we understand that we are His people. We represent Christ and belong to Him. We are to be light in the darkness, despite of what is happening to us, including the darts that the enemy throws at us. If we pray for our land to be healed or ourselves, based on what is happening God will show up. Even if we don't pray, God will show up anyway. The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. When we are His, God will answer, but even if we are not His...the goodness of the Lord will lead one to repentance. When we pray and we are not even His, God still wants people to know that He loves them and cares and have their best interest at heart, but God doesn't want them to take Him for granted (whether they are serving Him or not). God knows that we are suppose to have a certain attitude towards Him, including those around us that should bring Him honour, glory, and praise. If we obey God's Word such as humbling ourselves before Him, even though some persons might be treating us wrongfully, God's Word says, “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord”. He will work on our behalf, and nation. He wants us to turn from our wicked ways, which is habits, attitudes, and behaviours which displeases Him.

“Grace”

My views are that there is almost a formula if you do this, then this is the result. And so it makes me wonder in what ways we aren't we doing the humbling, praying, seeking, turning from wickedness in order to to reap the benefits of what this scripture is saying. I know the scripture is true, and so the problem is not in God's unwillingness to fulfil this promise for our nation, but in our unwillingness to fulfil our part to see it happen.

“Luke”

This is a popular passage that is quoted just about everywhere. There are times when I believe some of the interpretation or understanding of the passage may vary from person to person. One of the interesting things that I have noticed over the years is that there is a tendency for some people to take little parts of bible verses and use it to strengthen their argument that they are putting forward. I am one of the persons who try at all times to take the Bible at face value. It may sound a little bit naive or childish, but I find a lot of satisfaction and peace within when I do that. I do listen to people when they try to interpret and tell me more about it being for a different time or/and another dispensation and things like that, and I don't have a problem with that, simply because I believe the Word of God, i.e. the Bible is so powerful. The same passage could apply before, during, and after Jesus came, while it may be used for those of us who are waiting for Jesus to come back. I do not limit the power of God or Word of God, and so I don't have a problem when people try to explain passages for a different time. I do have a problem though when they tell me that it is not for this time because I do not know what evidence they have for that.

The passage for me is straightforward...it talks about “my people” which is God's people. “Called by my name” so they know God and call on God. “Pray and seek the face of God” which is the teaching of the Bible. “Turn from their wicked ways” they have gone astray and God desires that they turn back to Him. It sounds almost like repentance recognising that you are not doing the right things in the sight of God and that you will need to forsake those ungodly ways, and the passage says you will cry out to God and that God will hear and forgive. Whatever consequences that have come out of their sinful/ ungodly ways He will heal all of it. And I think it is true for the period of 2 Chronicles and I think that it is true for today, because that is the teaching of Jesus that if you repent, come to God and ask for forgiveness He will forgive you and He will make things new, right, and straight.

“Simone”

As people of God we should ensure that we cast down pride and live a life of humility. We must always seek God on all the decisions that we need to take in life. Therefore, we need to pray to Him. If we know that we are doing sinful things we need to repent of these things and turn to God, and then do the things the Lord wants us and admonish us to do us in scripture. Once we try to live this righteous life, a life that pursues Christ then we will most definitely hear from the Lord. Taken in the context of a nation such as our country Jamaica if we as a people constantly seek the Lord and seek His wisdom in the decisions of the nation then the Lord will heal our land of all of the atrocities we are experiencing now, so this is a very powerful scripture. It is one which also should be used as a part of the road map to a fruitful and fulfilling life in Christ.

“Pablo”

We tend to be individualistic, wanting our own way, defining what we do as correct in our own sight, and I think what God is asking us to do is to submit unto Him and unto His Spirit and seek Him for His ways and that He in return will carry out His mandate in our lives and in our surroundings.

“Alexandria”

Repentance comes to mind. The importance of repenting of the past and seeking God for the welfare of the country. Despite where you may be God will hear and be able to turn around the situation in your community and country.

“Jerry”

It's a very popular scripture that people use in terms of speaking about praying for the nation and turning away from wickedness that would result in healing. I think it is a scripture that we can see as one where we can get the principle from the scripture, that is, if people are seeking the Lord and as a nation turn away from sin then yes there is benefits from that righteousness, but I don't think we should take this as a literal promise from God based on the context, which was really the Lord speaking to Solomon and by extension the people of Israel at the time in the context of what He would do for them if it is that they were to act in this way.

“Lisa”

“humble themselves”, I remember the “parable of the Publican and the Pharisee” which whole challenge was about pride. Humility is more than not sinning it is a certain heart position before God. Even in brokenness there can be pride. Humility is determined by God. Its a spirit of being undone before a holy God. We can be our own enemy, excluding the devil and hinder our growth in the Lord. Its coming to grips with our own inadequacies to even live by God standards, so you cry out in prayer, for mercy, really seeking God because you really realise that in this journey you can't make it without God. You trust Him and turn away from your wicked way, including your carnality and run to the foot of the cross. God is a very merciful God He does not always withhold His presence from you and then He comes and sups with you ...“then I'll hear from heaven” and His presence comes and so engulfs your life within that moment that you get caught up in who He is and in His lovingkindness and there is a freedom (that truth shall set you free) that you experience that you know your “sins are forgiven”. When it says “heal their land”... I spoke about it in a personal manner, but there is also a nation that is involved in this, a group of people and so when Israel in the Bible turned to God in a certain way, broken and undone His Spirit comes and brings healing. If we as Christians should really live the way we should live before the Lord Jamaica would be turned upside down and so I think as a nation it applies to a nation and then revival “healing the land” would come.

“Keith”

This passage comes out of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. It's really a passage that speaks to God's view on what He really wants, Solomon had built a magnificent temple and in the eyes of the people that was what the dwelling place of God looked like. The purpose of the temple and the mind of the God is revealed both in Solomon's prayer and the response of the Lord. In spite of that it comes as one of the most popular passages of scripture, when there has been judgement that has come in diverse forms, whatever form that judgement has come, if the people turn back to God and repent and return to the Lord then there is promise of restoration and renewal. This promise is predicated on the people's repentance, prayers, seeking the face of God, which is a little more than just praying. It actually speaks to something that you have to do because when you seek, you are really looking, there is a deliberate effort on your part, searching for something so it takes an effort, study, commitment, and persistence. My view is that there is a responsibility on your part that is more than offering a prayer in the days of Solomon where it would be a sacrifice, in our day a deliberate looking, searching, counselling, asking questions, looking for ways to right your ways where you have gone wrong. I do believe this passage transcends both Old and New Testament, because the principles I believe are also reflected in the New Testament.

Appendix 4: Interview 2

All names are fictitious.

“Pamela”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ’s first coming until now?

A large amount of persons coming to know the Lord.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

No, in terms of financial wise. While some churches may have experienced rapid growth, it has not been in all.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

No, because persons are not submitting to the Word of God, and really not pouring out themselves to prayer and the call of God on their lives.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

I do not give it much thought as I generally apply all scripture to the Church today.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

I treat the Old Covenant and New Covenant in basically the same way.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

When I read different books in the bible I use the same approach. I don't change my approach.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

They will really feel disappointed, but the important thing is for them to continue to seek God's face. Remember our timing is not His timing. God's timing is perfect.

“Pablo”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

The advent of the Holy Spirit in power and in a sense the Church is lit a fire. It is really a tremendous move of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

I don't know of revival taking place on a national level. I know there has been renewals in localities and within fellowships. I am not very familiar with Church history, but I know of the Azusa Street revival and the revival in Ireland. I have also heard about renewals occurring in towns, which has brought about drastic changes.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

This question hinges on prayer and unity. I believe this is very probable, although I don't have any example of this being achieved.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

I believe that all scripture can be applied to the church. I don't believe this in a legalistic way or as a formula that you have to adhere to, but I believe the principles of God's Word from the Old Testament is applicable today and follows through to the New Testament.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

I believe that the Old Covenant is very relevant because God established a people by which the whole world will be blessed and how He dealt with those people gave us an understanding of God Himself. You get a sense of God's heart and how He calls us as a people and individuals. We are not under an Old Covenant in terms of the legalism and law, but we in the New Covenant have relationship with God which He wanted throughout all scripture, including the New Testament.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

My interpretation of scripture is sometimes progressive. So a teacher of the Word of God may aid me in this respect. Furthermore, my obedience to God allows me to gain greater access to the revelation of God. I don't believe we abide by some type

of formula in terms of how we read the Word of God. I would think that it has more to do with relationship and knowing the heart of God and where God is coming from, so the interpretation would come from basically the Holy Spirit leading us into the scripture. I believe it hinges on where we are at in our walk with God.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

From experience of somebody who has waited on the Lord for some things and not seen it come to pass, I have to go back to Hebrews 11 that our faith/ belief is grounded on believing God for what He said no matter what the outcome is. When it does not happen in the period of time that we are waiting on God for, that does not mean that God has put it on the back burner. God moves in His time. For instance, God may give you a blessing, and your expectation is that you would receive that blessing and in your lifetime, but it occurs after that.

If a man seeks God, I don't believe anything negative can come out of it or if he has an expectation of faith because there are people I know who have believe God in some very difficult circumstances and sometimes their expectation are not fulfilled, but sometimes what it does is to build their own faith.

“Grace”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival is a major change within the Church with a harvest of a lot of people. It is a specific definable movement of the Holy Spirit where repentance is critical. It is something different, something major, quantifiable, something that is outside of the ordinary.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

No. However, they are cases like Fiji, but for sure they can be limited to a people group or an area.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

Yes.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

I look at when the scripture was written, to who it was written, which law it was a part of, and then I think of about whether it was a literal requirement of the Church or if in Christ coming and dying and freeing us if that part has been fulfilled or if it is a more spiritual requirement. Which law was in, and whether it has a physical requirement.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

I see the Old Covenant meaning Mosaic law (being out), and the New Covenant/Messianic (being in). The Mosaic law has been fulfilled in Christ. Davidic - Jesus came and He is on David's throne therefore God's covenant with David has been fulfilled. The things that God wrote specifically to the Israelites when He brought them out of Egypt and Moses' writings were the law. I don't think that there is a physical requirement for me to keep the Mosaic law.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

I would so if i) I find a seemingly contradictory scriptural interpretation, ii) by submitting to an authority figure, and, iii) yielding to the Holy Spirit.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

I am thinking about a couple people. I have not seen their faith waned, but it became more refined. Because holding on to hope and I have seen it grown. Its not just the case of I did this and so this must be the result. I have seen them re-evaluate who's in control and acknowledge that their prayers have not fallen on deaf ears and that their prayers not been null and void but that the Lord is still bringing it to pass. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:6). They continue to hold on to the belief that this scripture is true, and that the Lord will bring it to pass. There may have been periods where their faith may have seemed to be deflated, but now it is strengthened, or refined, as I still where they still believe.

"Alexandria"

1. How would you define the word "revival" in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

As a large amount of people in particular place, that accept the Lord around the same time or an increasing activity of the Holy Spirit.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

No

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

Yes

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

Reading what was happening before, or around that time, using other resources in terms of understanding the context, and then from there I should be able to translate or relate it to what is happening now.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

Jesus has fulfilled the requirements that was in the Old Testament (or Old Covenant). The law shows us or point us to the reason why we need Jesus (in the New Covenant).

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

By receiving greater understanding of the type of writing, for instance, if it is something which is historical and they are stating genealogy and that sort of thing you would have a different mindset versus if it is now more metaphorical or poetic. Where it is not meant to be taken literally, then it is not to be taken literally. Understanding what type of writing, whose is it for, what was happening at the time, each book may change depending on how you look on the context and content.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

It could make them question in terms of is this literally true? Is this the right way to go about it. It all depends I guess where they are, it could do nothing at all, as they could realise that God does all things in His timing. They may not see it now or in their lifetime, but depending where they are in the relationship with God, they may feel confident it will happen in the next generation. It may strengthen some and for others it may have a negative impact on their faith based on where they are and their understanding on how God works and is.

“Jerry”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival is a unique time of spiritual awakening of people in a particular area that is usually accompanied by a special outworking of the Holy Spirit and the result is people being saved in numbers.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

Not at all.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

I believe that is something that would necessarily follow as with a revival would impact the whole country. However, I do not believe this scripture speaks to revival.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

Looking on the historical context of the scripture to see if it was something specifically spoken about Israel or another nation or person versus something that has a more universal application to the church I guess I look at the context of what was going on and in the preceding verses, chapters, and so on.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

The New Covenant represents the fulfilment of many things that were spoken of in the Old Covenant. I see the Old Covenant as foreshadowing the things that were to come. As such, in the New Covenant we have God truly intended covenant one written on people hearts not just laws in terms of legal dictates. I see the New Covenant as a more perfect fulfilment of what God really wants for us.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

If I was to get additional understanding of the text, based off of reading or more historical information or greater insight through the original/source language I guess that would influence how I would reinterpret the text.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

I could imagine that persons could possibly become disillusioned with not seeing the fulfilment of the promises as they interpret it in 2 Chronicles 7:14. It can have a negative impact on them if in fact that believe that they are doing everything they are suppose to be doing, but not seeing the results. The positive is that they may have to reinterpret it. It will cause them to dig deeper in the scriptures. If in terms of finding a way to reinterpret the scriptures because if they are not seeing it fulfilled that hopefully they would realise that their understanding of it is lacking or in need of reinterpretation.

“Luke”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival – is a period in which you have an outpouring of God's grace on a population that leads to a great number of conversion of people to the message of Jesus Christ, that is, they get saved.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

Based on my understanding of revival in the past, and what I know of it. No I don't see it as a nationwide thing. It definitely goes beyond a local group of people though. For economic and so forth I do not have enough evidence.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

Yes, I could see where one could extend it that if you had a large number of people turning to God and being saved that it could be viewed as a revival similar to the type of blessing promised as in 2 Chronicles 7:14. So when you look on it in that perspective, I would say yes it is possible, but I wouldn't go much further than that.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

Based on the teaching from my local church I have started to interpret Old Testament teachings scriptures in light of Jesus Christ. So I rely on the teaching of Jesus, the teachings of the apostles as outlined in the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament teachings and I would leave it at that.

This is an area of debate for many Christians. Notwithstanding, I believe the Bible, pray, and try to keep an open mind while waiting on God's timing to bring His understanding to me. However, not everything in the Bible applies to me.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

The Old Covenant – is a promise or contract between God and the Jews at the time. Now with the coming of Jesus Christ and as He has said He is the New Covenant. Therefore I do not live my life based on the Old Covenant I base it on what Jesus had said (Jesus' teaching) and the belief in Jesus. Because it is a New Covenant and it is for now, if it was necessary for me to live by the Old Covenant then I would not have a new one.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

A book like Songs of Solomon which I don't read often requires me to understand the writers' intent and so that I can better appreciate the message what the writer was trying to portray. Here it is where more learned people in the Church to guide people in the Church like me through books like Songs of Solomon helps. But for me whether I understand the intent of the writer in the Songs of Solomon or not in the end it does not affect my salvation. Therefore I do not lose sleep over it. You come to a book like Proverbs, which is full of wisdom. I think the book of Proverbs has teaching that affects me today. So I read it and I memorise it, and I put it in practice I implement a lot of it because I think wisdom is wisdom whether it is 2000 AD or 2000 BC. And that is how I do the two. The New Testament has showed that a lot of the historical writing is for our benefit for us to have a better understanding and to know more about the God our creator. It is important because we are living beings, we have questions, we have feelings and God in His wisdom has set out and left for us some of these historical facts so that we can be reminded of what has happened yesterday, so that they can help us for today.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

We have to look at the bigger picture, rather than looking at things and managing our expectations. I believe that the promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is true, however to what extent and to what degree it happens is another matter. Also, to what extent that individuals are really positioning themselves to the letter t in the passage is something that I don't know, I can only talk for myself. Moreover, I believe there is nothing impossible with God, so if God has made a promise and we hold up our part of it, I believe God will hold up His part.

I don't have a conflict when I don't see what I am expecting at the time I think it should happen, as I'm reminded again that I need to be patient. At the end of the day 2 Chronicles 7:14 has life for more than just me. In other words, I can see the passage working out in my life as an individual and don't see it working out in the entire nation. So it would have proven the passage right, and I am less to wonder

because I don't know if other people around me were in my position of faith and belief that they would probably be seeing it too, but I am careful because I do not know all the facts impacting their lives. God could be working out the same passage in an individual basis in a particular area of their life. So in other words I'm careful not to watch what is happening to other individuals but to continue to pray for revival and to pray for what I'm enjoying to be given to others, while I give God thanks for what I'm enjoying.

The passage has individual implementation and reward, but it has a nationwide one. The Old Testament may help us here where there are historic events of God's promises that take a long time in man's life to come true. So we are praying for revival, we are expecting revival, revival is coming, but we don't see it tomorrow, or next month however that doesn't mean it is not coming, but it is going to take some patience on our part.

“Ricardo”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

It involves people repenting and making themselves right with the Lord. They do the things God requires. It may be widespread.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

I do not have much knowledge of them, but I think it is possible.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

Yes, it is possible.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

I look on the context. Who said what and to who it was said.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

The Old Covenant is important as it make persons appreciate the New Covenant. Jesus' work was the true fulfilment of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was a foreshadow of the things to come in the New Covenant.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

Reading and listening to different positions on a particular verse by authoritative persons, commentaries, etc. Running things by friends. Looking on the context.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

It might lead to disappointment. However it could encourage some persons that God is patient and longsuffering and does not work in our timing.

“Keith”

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival – is a spiritual experience that you go through in a process of bringing you into a new awareness in your relationship with the Lord or reactivating an old experience you had with the Lord which had been dormant for a period of time.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

No, I don't think it come across always as a national revival. There has been periods of time when people in the nation are experiencing what can be termed revival in terms of the re-establishing of their relationship with God. More often than not, it has been limited to specific localities.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

If there is a critical mass of people in the nation who turn to the Lord then that will result in both spiritual and physical benefits to the nation.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

I don't see the Old Testament and New Testament as two separate scriptures. I know they were written in two separate dispensations, but I don't see them as different per se. I see them as the Word of God. For instance, Jesus said to the Jews, “you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39). I believe all scriptures ultimately point to the Lord Jesus Christ whether Old Testament or New Testament. I believe Jesus is the central focus and so one of my cardinal rule of interpretation of scripture, especially from the Old Testament is to look at that particular scripture as to how that scripture point to Christ. I always look and cross reference Old Testament and look at fulfilment in the New Testament. We have a classic example of Paul picking an

Old Testament and looking at in the present event of New Testament. The event with Sarah and Hagar and he uses that scriptures as an allegory between the struggle between spirit and the flesh, and between law and grace. Even though we could look on that scripture and really not give it that interpretation, but I believe it was done by the Spirit. Once it doesn't contradict I will look on it in relationship to Christ.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

I believe the Old Testament is really a shadow of the New Testament. The New Testament being the substance. It is an exact replica of the substance. Its just that you are seeing the substance through the light that falls on the shadow. So that is the relationship. Before Jesus Christ came everything process, law, all pointed to Him as so they saw things in shadows, but in the New Testament we saw the reality of things that was spoken of in the Old Testament.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

Firstly, once there is not a fundamental doctrinal error. For example, Songs of Solomon where people interpret it as Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride, while some people would say this was not what Solomon had in mind, and that it was just a poetic book. I'm not dogmatic about either ways, however, I believe that in every scripture there is something that points to Christ.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit can use that book to bring you into a newness or understanding that you absolutely didn't have any idea about for that particular point in time. It does not take away from the context or circumstances under which they book was written, but in terms of the application of that particular book to you in the 21st century, and how the Spirit of the Lord chooses to use that book to bring you into an understanding and relationship with Lord I think varies enormously.

There are times when we are using our experiences with the Spirit of the Lord and might make doctrine out of it and then onlookers say but you are making a doctrine of it but within the context when this particular book was written it was not even like that. How did Paul get that interpretation from the Sarah and Hagar domestic issue? However, the Spirit of Lord brought out an interpretation in the New Testament which is completely different than how we would look on it. The Spirit of the Lord may take scriptures with particular incidents and contexts like 2 Chronicles 7:14 and give it completely new meaning. This continues today you may take up any particular scripture and may see something that you have never seen before. The scripture is complete, perfect, and sealed, but understanding and interpretation continues and it is relevant to us as it is applied today. The Holy Spirit can take any scripture and make it applicable to you and your situation today, although they the context has nothing to do with you.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

I think the first question they would probably have to ask themselves is if they have truly believed or fulfilled what what 2 Chronicles 7:14 says. I believe God and His Word does not lie. If we actually fulfil the Word of God we will reap the benefits of what the Word of God say. Many times we think we have fulfilled the Word of God requirements and we have not. Secondly, if indeed we have fulfilled it, then we have to wait on the Lord to fulfil His part of the Word. If we do what 2 Chronicles 7:14 says whether personally or nationally we will see the result which He says that will happen. How the Lord blesses me might be different than my perspective.

Simone

1. How would you define the word “revival” in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival is something that has been re-energised or taken to another level. In this particular scenario the word of the Lord or the gospel take root somewhere and causes a resurgence of the gospel of Jesus Christ in some particular place where people are spiritually filled and it just like a new level that the gospel is taken too.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

No.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

Yes, I think it would.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

A scripture like 2 Chronicles 7:14 is applicable for any time, because of the context. It is relevant now. Even in looking at the Church, or the Country, or the leadership in the country. Any context you want to put it in I think it applies.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

In the Old Covenant, back then every thing was through the priests and the elders. Under the New Covenant based on the fact that God sent His only begotten son (Jesus Christ) who came, lived, died, and after 3 days was risen and is now seated

at the right hand of the Father we have a hope of eternal. We have free access, in other words, access to God 24-7. It gives everyone modern day now a victorious life. To live with the joy of knowing that there is something better coming. To not have to go through a third party. To live in society today the only relevant covenant is the New Covenant.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

The only factors that affect me, is the level of detail of the particular book. Because when you read some books of the bible they are clearly a part of the story which was not told. For instance, there is a particular book in the New Testament that gives the greatest account of Jesus' crucifixion. So there are less gaps in that book. For me, it does not lend itself so much to your imagination. Thus it is an easier read when there is a wholesome story. You put more credence on the level of detail.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

I don't think that it should have any impact on our faith in God, specifically because we can see the Lord's hand of God all around, in so many ways the miracles that occur on a regular basis, despite the fact that others may not know of them, but when people testify in church or when people share their testimony that is how we know some of the things the Lord is doing in individual lives, including your life, relatives, and friends.

If there is no revival, it is because the Lord has given us choice. People are stubborn and may be they explain away things that happen since they have no explanation for it. For example, in the operating theatre miracles occur, but persons can't bring themselves to say it was the Lord's doing. One has nothing to do with the other. If people heed and listen and accept the evidence which is clearly before them then we will have the revival. That would not affect my faith personally. I am using what the Lord has done in my life, family, and friends, too.

Lisa

1. How would you define the word "revival" in church history, i.e. the development of the Church from Jesus Christ's first coming until now?

Revival is similar to what happened in Acts where persons became empowered with the Holy Spirit in such a way that they have radical transformation. They became so infused by the Holy Spirit that they were no longer intimidated by the secular world and thus they were sold out for God.

2. From your understanding of revivals in church history, have they all been widespread throughout the nation in which they occurred, i.e. renewing of the church

nationwide, rapid numerical growth of the church nationwide, and solving of all economic problems facing the nation?

From what I have read, I haven't heard about anything economically happening, but I have heard about change lives and changed attitudes. Even though the economics may remain basically the same, people's attitudes, values, and disposition have been so transformed that the secular don't matter as they become more God centred and kingdom oriented.

3. Do you believe the fulfilment by the nationwide church of the requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 today should result in a revival that positively impacts the whole country?

I do believe that can happen.

4. How do you normally go about interpreting an Old Testament scripture in order to decide if it applies to the Church throughout church history?

There are things in the Old Testament that are not applicable to the Church today, such as, sacrificing animals for your sin, because Jesus became that perfect sacrifice. And yet, Jesus was also in the Old Testament as there were prophecies that focused on helping us to understand His ministry, role, and impact on the Church. So in other words, the most of the Old Testament is still applicable in today's world. Many of the disciples didn't have the New Testament, but they had the Old Testament, that is, the Torah which guided them about who God is. So for me the Old Testament is not done away, but the New Testament it is a continuation, and you understand the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament.

5. What is the relationship between the Old Covenant and New Covenant today, and how does that impact upon how you interpret the scriptures?

Yes, I do believe that the Old Testament is still relevant and I think most of it is relevant, because the truth is, if we understand what the sacrifices did the lamb and all of that then we will understand what Jesus did. So getting rid of the Old Testament...Jesus said He never came to replace it, but to fulfil it. Just focusing on the New Testament you are at a disadvantage, because the Old Testament helps us to appreciate what the New Testament is expanding on.

6. What factor(s) do you think would influence you to change your approach to interpreting a particular book or passage of the Bible?

Context is very important, because it helps you to understand like the gospel of Matthew was written to a very different audience from probably Luke. And so, because of that Matthew would refer to some concepts that are closely related to the Jewish faith.

The author would be one and who the author is writing for. Because they were all Jews, but Matthew focused on writing to the Jews, while Luke.... Paul writing to

Gentiles, so he had created a lot of confusion for me. I am still trying to decipher Paul. One of them was the Sabbath. I don't think Jesus was saying that we should not observe a Sabbath, I think the Sabbath was from creation. It was before Christ connected the two, God selected the two. When Paul put that spoke in it. It makes it open, yet in Isaiah we see God admonishing persons who hold the Sabbath to hold the Sabbath holy. Paul kinda mess with people brains, Christians using Paul's letter throw out the baby with the bathtub. Even though they came at Christ about the Sabbath, it was how man responded to Sabbath that Jesus had a problem with and the hypocrisy, but Jesus himself was not against the Sabbath. Paul kinda brought in a laissez faire attitude to the Sabbath.

You can't use one criterion to understand the Bible there are so many different principles and criteria that you have to apply to understand a book. I guess Paul was very specific to gentiles and because the gentiles did not understand certain things he did not want it to be a burden on them to prevent them from coming into taking Christ, so he kinda liberated them to the core system, so we have used Paul to throw out what is important. There is Gordon MacDonald, who wrote "Ordering Your Private World". He speaks about the importance of the principle of the Sabbath, so Christians can get deeper in the Lord. Because we have thrown out the principles we have become very superficial we think we must live with God every time all the time, but we don't set aside a time for personal understanding of the Word today.

7. Consider Christians who believe 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies today and have fervently striven to meet its requirements but have not seen any revival come to pass. What impact could, or does, this have on their faith in God?

Abraham had faith in God and in God's prophecies and he never lived to see some of it come through. So our faith has to be in God and not in results. It is dangerous to judge/build our relationship on God based on results it has to be faith. We have to believe even after God will do what He has to do. The Bible tells us that in His timing He makes all things beautiful (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

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