



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Starting back!!

Below is an article I have just written on the changes the 'Coronavirus' has brought to our land. Just as I was finishing it, an email came in from a friend highlighting a recent report on the local BBC news site which I reproduce first as an introduction.

Coronavirus: Clarity sought on public transport masks move.

"Last Thursday, the executive announced a series of additional indicative dates for the easing of the lockdown, with hairdressers able to reopen from 6 July.



Arlene Foster at church

The first minister attended a service at St Macartin's Cathedral in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, on Monday.

She said it was "very important" that people continue "to observe social distancing and make sure that we keep people safe" but that it was also important "that people are able to come together and to witness".

"It has been incredibly difficult, particularly for those who have been mourning," she added.

The Very Reverend Kenneth Hall, who is Dean of Clogher and rector of the cathedral, said: "A lot of people do want to gather for worship, and today being St Peter's day, St Peter was the rock on which Christ built his church, and what better day to reopen." "

That last statement is a downright lie of the devil, spread abroad over the centuries by the popes and prelates of the Romish system.

Now this Church of Ireland deceiver seeks to propagate this deceit.

The Lord Jesus said: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Petros - a stone or fragment of rock), and upon this rock (Petra - a large mass of rock) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matthew 16:18.

The Greek word 'petros' is a noun but it is masculine gender whereas 'petra' is a feminine noun.

The Saviour could not have been referring to the same subject otherwise He would have used the same gender!

I met the 'Dean of the Cathedral' on one occasion in a home where there had been a sickness. When he saw me he exclaimed, "Oh, I did not know you would be here!" To which I replied, "Nor did I know that you would be here, otherwise I would have brought a protest placard!!"

"And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off," Ezra 3:11-13.

Our text recalls the mixed reaction to the opening of the rebuilt temple back in the days of Ezra, some 536 years before Christ's first advent. For some it was time of great joy but for others it brought memories of



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much better times! This coming Sabbath, there will be a returning to something near normality in the house of God following some fifteen weeks of shut doors and worshippers unable to gather in God's house, for fear of spreading the Covid-19 virus and the death that it often brought. However, some of us will have to wait a little longer for our release from the restrictions.

Foolishness

There were some foolish people who opposed such a course of action but 'social distancing' is God's method of avoiding the spread of physical maladies and also spiritual plagues.

"Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead," Numbers 5:2.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Changes

During the fifteen weeks since March 15th (our last public service in Kilskeery) there have been many changes throughout Northern Ireland and across the world. There have been unimagined happenings in the realm of public health, national economies, and also a bringing to the surface of attitudes regarding governmental authority, death and eternity and the Lord.

The Christian has always known that the heart of mankind is sinful and disobedient. However, we have also been aware that, and this is especially so here in Ulster with its gospel heritage background, that many, many years of Bible influence has produced a 'nominal' acknowledgment of God and His truth. This purported religious attitude has been wearing very thin in recent decades and that has been evidenced by the nation's casting aside of God's truth on matters of marriage, abortion, sodomy and other related perversions.

The recent pandemic has seen a growing defiance of the rule of God's Word amongst the people of the United Kingdom and further afield. Whereas, in previous times of emergency, the nation would have been more inclined to submit to regulations brought in by the government for the wellbeing of the populace, over the period of this crisis, we have seen an increasing defiance of regulations and people have simply sought after those inclinations and notions of their own heart and defied government rules. 'Social distancing' has been ignored as people have partied and gone on as their desires dictated! Here in Ulster, and here I credit our gospel heritage as having left its mark upon our society, there has been less of such defiance with the exception of Republican funerals and crowds gathering in support of the 'Black Lives Matter' protests. In truth, both those involved with the funerals and the protests are really of the same spirit! There was great common ground between both camps!

Flood

This defiance marks a breaking forth of a spirit which will not be brought under control again. Personally, I believe we are seeing "the enemy" coming in like a flood," (Isaiah 59:19), that flood of which Paul prophesied. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away," 2 Timothy 3:1-5.



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If I am correct, then this 'flood' will be followed by judgment. That is evident from a careful reading of Isaiah 59:20 and 2 Timothy 3:8-9. This is the final apostasy which will be met by the judgment of God as Christ returns to this earth.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day," 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

Lockdown

I do believe that the faithful remnant of gospel believers will find that that there have been changes in society which mean that the atmosphere we once knew, bad and all as we thought it to be, has greatly deteriorated. The spread of death amongst us did not work that which many might have expected it to accomplish! There was no humble recognising of God at work in judgment! There was no heightened sense of eternity! Rather, we saw unashamed crying out against the 'inconveniences' caused by the 'lockdown' regulations. Indeed, it is clear that the government chose to slacken the lockdowns for reasons put forward by commercial interests. Pubs were reopened because of the increasing demands by their patrons. It is stated in the press today that "Britons are expected to spend £210m in pubs when they reopen in England this weekend. Research predicts that more than a third of adults in the UK plan to visit a pub in the first week of trading after bars were closed in March due to the coronavirus outbreak." (Sky News.)

A cry of 'Hallelujah' was shamefully and blasphemously heard from those to whom the Prime Minister, Mr Boris Johnston was announcing the reopening of pubs!

Nothing demonstrates the evil-mindedness which has emerged with this pandemic.

We should remember what we read in Revelation 16:10-11. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

The severest of judgments will not produce repentance amongst sinners. On innumerable times in the past amongst nations, God used such troubles to work repentance but judgment unattended by God's grace, will not produce a submission to God and an obedience of His Word.

That surely has been a feature of the public's response to the troubles that have come upon us here and throughout much of the world.

There have been no gatherings of people to pray. Church leaders certainly offered no word from the Bible on the matter. I have stated before that those who have recovered from the virus, when interviewed, never ever mentioned the mercy of God for delivering them from death. Doctors, nurses and the staff of the NHS, were all thanked BUT not the Lord. I do not think that would have been so in past generations!

Voice from the past

I was sent (it arrived just now) a quote from the 'Protestant Telegraph' of 1970. The editor was Dr Ian Paisley and the article was his. He lists points whereby 'peace' could be brought about in Ulster back then in dark days of IRA terrorism and murder. He drew them up when requested to do so by the 'Belfast Newsletter' which had a little earlier published '12 points for peace', drawn up by security force leaders.

Dr Paisley's points could well be applied to the needs of Ulster in the midst of this pandemic!

Paisley's Points for Peace

- Recognise before God that you are a lost sinner irrespective of what church, organisation or class of so-



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ciety you belong to. "All have sinned" and "there is none righteous" are the verdicts of God on the whole of the human race

- Acknowledge that Salvation is not in any Church Creed, sacrament, ordinance or ritual, whether Protestant, Romanist, Jewish or pagan, but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.
- Repent of your sins and confess them to God only.
- Be reconciled to God by receiving Christ as your own, and personal Saviour and by confessing Him before men.
- Spread amongst your neighbours the Gospel of reconciliation, for men can only be reconciled to one another when they are reconciled to God.
- Make the Scriptures your daily guide, and neglect not to pray and attend the House of God
- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind.
- Love thy neighbour as thyself. DO not leave him where the priest found and left him in the story of the Good Samaritan, "fallen amongst thieves" but strive to deliver him from the despoilers of both his body and soul (See Luke's Gospel Chapter 10)
- Set yourself against all falsehood, whether propagated by pulpits, press, police or parliament. True Christian love, the Scriptures teach us, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth. True peace cannot be bought at the expense of Truth.
- Obey the Proverb "Fear thou the Lord and the King (or Queen) and meddle not with them that are given to change (Prov 24.21).
- Maintain at all times the principles of civil and religious liberty.
- Use your influence with others to lead them to adhere to the above principles.

How far we have drifted from the thinking of 1970 when we consider that the DUP and the majority in Ulster have now embraced the very instigators of the terrorism of the 1970s as being legitimate and acceptable political leaders! There has been an embracing of "all falsehood, . . . propagated by pulpits, press, police and parliament" which Dr Paisley demanded we reject back 50 years ago!

Yes, it has become very obvious that a 'rubicon' has been crossed and I fear there will be no return to 'the old paths' Jeremiah 6:16.

1. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT MANY REOPENED EVANGELICAL PULPITS WILL PROCLAIM REVIVAL FOR THE FUTURE!

Now I believe in revival. But on the basis of God's Word I dare say that we may not expect that form of revival that former generations of believers have enjoyed if we are witnessing the breaking forth of those perilous times spoken of Paul in 2 Timothy 3. We have no more right to look for or expect revival if indeed the last great apostasy has broken out amongst us than did Noah have a right to look for revival in his day in the wake of the Lord saying: "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them," Genesis 6:7.

Just as Jeremiah could not speak of revival but repeat the Word of God to the nation of Judah, so it is with us. "When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered



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into the hand of the king of Babylon," Jeremiah 37:16-17. It was also the case with Ezekiel when God's Word that he had to proclaim to the captives of Judah was not one of revival, which was the message of the false prophets in Jerusalem who rejected God's warnings of judgment, but Ezekiel had to proclaim a message of certain judgment.

"Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD," Ezekiel 12:26-28.

There will come that generation which will see the warning of future judgment come to pass with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the sun's descent in the west heralds the approach of night, so we may tell that the day spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-10 is approaching. For the signs of its approach we are called upon to watch for by the Saviour. "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation (or nation) shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man," Luke 21:31-36.

2. REVIVAL, AS HAS BEEN EXPERIENCED IN FORMER TIMES, IS NOT ALWAYS GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE CARELESSNESS OF THE PROFESSING CHURCH!

How thankful we must be for the innumerable times God in mercy, restored His backsliding people! His promises to revive the penitent have been the very bedrock of the Church's comfort and strengthening in days of distress and failure. I love the words of Psalm 85.1. "LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." How often that has happened! In Psalm 80, three times the Psalmist cries for revival mercy. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." And, "Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." These are verses 3, 7 and 19.

Yes, wonderful times have followed the crying unto God of the repentant backslider. However, while that has resulted in the merciful restoration of the child of God to the peace and blessing that their backsliding robbed them of, it also restored their soul-winning power and multitudes were gathered to Christ by the restored revived people of God. Our history in Ulster substantiates that glorious truth.

God's patience

But there have been times when backsliding has brought severe and terrible judgment upon the professing people of God. There is a time when God's patience ends toward a persistent, foolish people professing faith in Christ. As a disobedient child may escape for a time with warnings against their misbehaviour but there comes a time when the rod is applied (as it should be despite the rulings of God-defying governments) to the persistently disobedient child. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Hebrews 12:5-7.

Remnant

As I have stated, I believe in revival, even in the last days. But it will be a revival of God's faithful remnant only. There will not be the national impact as was the case on many occasions in the past. No, I believe it will be that reviving and stirring of true believers in the final days of this age in order to ready them for the return of Christ. Does not Matthew 25 and the parable of the 'Wise and Foolish Virgins' teach that very truth!



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"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut," Matthew 25:5-10.

The true believers will be revived and ready for Christ's return but TIME has run out for the unsaved mere professor!

YES, let us pray for this 'revival' but let us not entertain the notion that we will see the nation restored to ways of godliness and truth as happened before. If we are indeed entering upon the final stage of the world's defiance of God (and I believe we are) then as the Lord has done before and which is recorded in Romans 1:21-25, so He will do again.

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

False prophets

Such an event as is here referred to, was a foreshadowing of that "great and dreadful day of the LORD," Malachi 4:5. That day will be one of God giving up on the wilful defiance of men and the rejecting of His love and mercy.

I do think it is very wrong for a preacher to offer the hope of revival when the Bible says there is none! It is a work like that of the false prophets in Jeremiah's day.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow," Jeremiah 14:13-17.

3. THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR GOD'S SERVANTS TODAY RIGHTLY TO UNDERSTAND HIS WORD FOR TODAY!

Oh! How vital it is for God's servants to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," 2Timothy 2:15.

That preachers can misunderstand God's word regarding the last days and the return of the Lord, we have only to consider the various views there are amongst God's servants on this holy and ever so important matter! Sad it is to think that it is considered acceptable for such differing views to be tolerated. There is no tolerance toward false views of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, His Virgin birth, the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, to name just a few of the cardinal doctrines that are considered the very heart of the gospel record and which are the core of orthodoxy.



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Why should it be considered acceptable to have a plethora of views on the return of Christ? There is one truth on this subject set forth in God's Word and it is the duty of ministers especially to study to ascertain what that truth is and to teach it without fear or favour to God's flock.

The truth concerning the end times and the return of Christ was a central doctrine of Paul's teaching to his converts. Not for him the silly notion that such a subject is so complicated that it is NOT suitable for young converts. The idea of the matter being complicated has arisen as a result of men's invention of unbiblical notions and then an attitude of tolerance being adopted toward such notions.

Can we, or can we not know what God says on eschatology? If we cannot, then how do we know that we have the 'right end of the stick' on every other doctrine we hold dear?

The means by which I arrive at a right understanding of every other doctrine is the method I must employ to understand aright the truth of God set forth in the Bible regarding the return of Christ. Paul's words in Ephesians 1:17-23 would surely suggest that it is the Father's will that we be informed correctly on this vital subject.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

The Holy Ghost has been given to us that He might teach us 'all truth', not just truth with the exception of that related to the second advent!

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come," John 16:13. "Things to come", are these not the very things we need to know?!

Searching

So then the path of truth is that of humble, reverent, submissive, diligent study and searching of the Holy Scriptures, with an emphasis upon those Scriptures which all too many preachers believe and proudly boast, can be set aside and that most properly! Such a view is so obviously wrong and offensive to God's wisdom, that it need not be answered!

I have often pointed out that it was an ignorance of God's prophecy of Calvary and the first coming of Christ that led to the errors, confusion and distress and wretchedness of the disciples following the Saviour's crucifixion. I must stress that there is a need for many preachers to take heed to the Saviour's rebuke directed to the two on the road to Emmaus.

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself," Luke 24:25-27. Prophetic Scripture, like all Scripture, is all about Christ. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43.

It should be noted that as a result of the Saviour's rebuking of the two disciples and His showing them those 'things concerning himself', the disciples confessed: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:32.



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How many have missed out on the heart warming truths of God to be obtained from the prophetic Scriptures!

This generation

If ever there was a generation which needed to know what the Bible said about the second advent, surely it is this generation! That is a simple and obvious truth. Paul taught his people 2000 years ago. Ought not we to be similarly educated in these things? I think the answer is obvious.

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober," 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.

How was it Paul could say of the Thessalonians what cannot be said of many ministers today: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you"? The answer lies in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" Oh that it might be so again amongst those who will soon witness these very things come to pass.

Waiting Church

I might conclude by pointing out that as a result of the apostles teaching clearly the truths of the second advent, the apostolic church was one filled with a longing for Christ's return. Here are but a few verses showing that to be so.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," Romans 8:22-23.

"Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 1:6-7.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," Philipians 3:20.

"And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ," 2 Thessalonians 3:4-5.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Hebrews 9:28.

May the Lord awaken us all to greater watchfulness and longing for His return in glory and great power!

Rev. Ivan Foster (rtd)

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