



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Impoverishment - A Judgment from the Lord

"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land," 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

There has been much considering of the significance of the impact of the Covid-19 virus upon the nations by thoughtful and reflective Christians. The fact that here in Northern Ireland there have been at least 501 people, young, middle-aged and elderly, who have succumbed to this disease to date, is enough to cause any to ponder the circumstances which have overtaken us. In truth, when the final figure is revealed it is likely to be nearly double that of today's total of 501, indeed, even more!

Even as I was writing this, an email arrived from "The Belfast Newsletter" which stated: "We have some terribly sad news to bring you today. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has identified 61 additional COVID-19 related deaths as having occurred between May 9 to May 20 - this takes the death-toll to 664."

There has been a confusing divergence in the number of deaths as reported by NISRA and the data issued by the Department of Health here in Northern Ireland!

Why that should be, is one of those autocratic governmental mysteries!!

We repeat: the full toll of this plague has yet to be reckoned up!

Commerce

But there are many who seem to be more occupied with the commercial and economic consequences of Covid-19. There is much talk from Government circles of a careful balance between the need to get the nation back to productivity and profitability and the continued safeguarding of the population against the virus and the possibility of a second wave of infection.

For many the financial consequences of this outbreak are an annoying vexation and not directly connected to the plague. Indeed, there are many who believe Covid-19 need not disrupt the whole machinery of trading and money-making!

That is not so. In the light of the Bible, the economic fallout that has accompanied this pandemic is a direct and essential element of the purpose of God in sending the plague!

I have but to call as witnesses the 'merchants' of the earth who will be visited by the Lord in wrath when He moves against the kingdom of the Beast in the final confrontation of this age between God and those who live in rebellion against Him and His Christ.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate," Revelation 18:9-19.

Here, 'impoverishment' is seen as an essential part of the judgment of God upon those defying Him and His law.

Consider what is said in the text at the commencement of this article. "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people." Of the three elements of God's judgment, two would have had a direct economic impact upon the nation and they are mentioned first!

Proverbs 10:22 states: "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Economic success amongst a people who walk with God is a blessing from Him. The reverse of that is easily understood. Upon the disobedient the Lord will send circumstances which will make poor!

The response to God's judgments should be one of humility and submission. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you," 1 Peter 5:5-7.

Such has NOT been the reaction of the nations to this visitation of God's judgment. Just yesterday, I was speaking on the phone to a brother and he related a conversation he had with a next door neighbour over the hedge. The topic of Covid-19 and its consequences came up in the conversation. The brother to whom I spoke told me he stated that, "The nation is only reaping what it sowed!" The neighbour was astonished and demanded to know why he said that.

The response of the man to whom I speaking was simple and direct. "Since abortion was legalised in Great Britain, millions of unborn children have been murdered. The nation is but reaping what it sowed!" It was obvious that the neighbour had never for one moment, like millions of others, even given a thought to the matter of the aborting of millions of unborn babies or of the dreadful crime that it was in the eyes of God.

Perversions

How many other acts of wickedness by our nation may be added to that of abortion!

I believe that it should be carefully noted that this plague befell the nations in the wake of the almost universal embracing and legalising of sodomy, 'same-sex' marriages and the promoting and aiding by government agencies of related perversions such as 'transgenderism'!

Very few in the nation have seen this pandemic for what it is - a visitation of God's judgment upon a wicked and godless society!

Surely until that is recognised, addressed and repentance takes place, there can be no lifting of the judgment of God!

Give heed

Heed these words: "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land," Leviticus 26:1-6.

The chapter goes on to state: "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you," Leviticus 26:14-17.

The rest of the chapter should be closely studied and contemplated for there it is simply stated that continued defiance of God will be met by increasing judgments.

In short, these words to the nation of Israel, enable us to understand the direction and the downgrade of the peoples of the world as they have lived in defiance of God. Such defiance CANNOT succeed. There will be a reaping of utter disaster and eternal destruction.

"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.

Attitude

The attitude very evident amongst the political and industrial leaders and the populace in general is that of ignorance and blindness to the anger of God against the sins of which the nation has been long guilty. Out of this uncomprehending foolishness are born continued defiance and disobedience.

What is called for by God is stated in our text! "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Jonah

Yes, these words are addressed to the people of God, but the principle with regards the unbelieving world is the same!

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey," Jonah 3:1-3.

The Ninevites were not a people converted to faith in God! They were about to be visited by God's wrath because of their wicked abandoned lifestyle!

Yet, consider their response to the message of Jonah.

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah 3:4-9.

How wonderful for our nation it would be if we had leaders of the spirit of that king!

This is the right and proper response to the Word of God and it was used by the Lord Jesus to condemn the unbelief of the generation of Jews who crucified Him. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here," Matthew 12:41.

Might we not draw the same conclusion with regards to the ignorance and defiance of this generation of a people favoured with centuries of faithful gospel preaching?

I surely think so.

This is not a time for considering the economic and social inconveniences that have arisen as a result of this plague sent of the Lord. Rather, it is a time to heed the voice of God's judgment. "The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah 6:9. We should be like the Ninevites, and humble ourselves before the Lord and "turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."

Instead of doing what is right, this generation seems bent on repeating the gross and wicked folly of the Jewish nation of 2000 years ago! Hear Peter's words of condemnation addressed to the guilty Jews of his day. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts 2:22-23.

Today, that same defiant spirit is evident in our nation. Never was the gospel more despised! Never was the name of God more blasphemed! Never was the cause of God thought less of! Surely, "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame," Hebrews 6:6.

Death pangs

I say to Christians: We are witnessing nations in their death throes! This world long favoured with the mercy of God is running out of time, for mercy and patience are being removed. The Lord of mercy and patience is withdrawing from a world given over to apostasy and anti-christianity!

"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," Romans 1:21-25.

Christian, understand the times and seasons. There is a 'groaning' to be everywhere heard, understood and considered.

"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.

I say again, spiritual death throes are evident everywhere - in church and state, in palaces and humble abodes and in the physical creation all around.



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

This is a time for preachers of the Word of God to rightly understand it and address the times we are facing.

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8.

The battle of the ages draws near. It behoves the people of God to be in the right place and stand up for the right things.

The ancient cry of Moses was never more relevant than today!

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him," Exodus 32:26.

Well Christian! Where are you standing today?

Rev Ivan Foster (Rtd)

Friday, 22nd May 2020.