

Wednesday, 25th March 2020



During this period when we are unable to meet in the church building, we need to keep each other in our thoughts and prayers. Therefore, alongside the quarterly edition of *The Lantern*, - produced by Anne and Alex, - I'm introducing **THE CANDLESTICK**. This will hopefully only be for the short period we are apart. It is to encourage us to pray together and value our fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A SIMPLE THOUGHT OR TWO ...

We are living in interesting times! ... Why *is* God allowing the coronavirus to happen? Why doesn't He stop it? ... Are we entering the period Jesus spoke about two thousand years ago when He prophesied, "there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers [*various and many*] places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Mt. 24:7,8). Of course, there has always been famines and pestilences and earthquakes ... and in Biblical prophecy we have to be careful we don't see something which isn't there. However, when you correlate all the evidence of what is going on in our world, the comfort for God's people is that the coming of Christ cannot be far away!

One of the issues I find particularly interesting is the shut-down of great and powerful businesses. Here is how one commentator considers it ... "In three short months, just like He did with the plagues of Egypt, God has taken away everything we worship. God said, "you want to worship athletes, I will shut down the stadiums. You want to worship musicians, I will shut down Civic Centres. You want to worship actors, I will shut down theatres. You want to worship money, I will shut down the economy and collapse the stock market."

Do you think the commentator has a point? Consider this too ... God declares in His Word, **Ex. 20:8** Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: **10** But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: **11** For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. ... In the Christian week, Sunday is the 'sabbath', the Lord's Day. It is the day He specifically set aside when He rested after having completed the work of creation.

It was so special He expected His people, - the children of Israel, - to recognize it as set apart from all the other six days to worship Him. However, after a while, they began to fill up the day with activities which 'squeezed' Him out so that throughout the Old Testament one of the major reasons the children of Israel experienced so much oppression was because God judged them for not observing the Sabbath. For example, after Nehemiah and his people finished building the walls of Jerusalem, in the final chapter we learn how so many of them began to ignore the instruction God gave in the fourth commandment, **Neh. 13:15** In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. **16** There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. **17** Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? **18** Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

The Lord has stood and watched how His day has become increasingly *profaned*, desecrated. It has become no different to any other day of the week. It is not considered *His* day anymore, and it has been *stolen* from Him! ... And *now* they are closed ... not just on a Sunday, but on *every* day! (... Maybe the commentator *does* make a valid point!)

One of the greatest kings was Solomon, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote, **Prov. 14:34** Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people ... That is a word for our nation today?

On another occasion, Solomon was in the presence of the Lord again, and the Lord gave Him a wonderful promise which we, - in our day, - would do well to consider, **II Chron. 7:13** 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*; **14** *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.* ... That is something only God can do ... and remember this too, let's be much in prayer for the powers that be in our land for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1) ... **I Tim. 2:1** I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; **2** For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. **3** For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **4** Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

God is gracious. He is more gracious than we deserve for He is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). ... Indeed, we're living in interesting, - and exciting, - times as we look ahead to the coming of our Saviour. ... Keep safe, keep faithful, and keep praying, keep hopeful, and keep looking up!