

Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020



## THE CANDLESTICK

*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*

*(Ps. 137:4)*

How strange it was *not* to be at church on Easter Sunday! These are, indeed, extraordinary times. Who would have thought in 2020 we would not be able to visit our friends and family, or to gather in a place of worship to remember the resurrection of our Saviour?!

What is happening? What is 'going on'?! Are we approaching 'the last days'? ... Here's what *is* happening behind the scenes and despite the human fear and perceived uncertainty ... As God's people we are *confident* the Lord Jesus continues, - as the Scriptures say, - to uphold all things by the word of His power. He is seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven (Heb. 1:3), and He is 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 (Eph. 1:21). ... He is reigning from His Heavenly throne!

Since the beginning of the New Testament Church in Jerusalem, God's people have continuously suffered for their faith. Many of us recall the accounts of faithful believers such as Richard Wurmbrand and Brother Andrew in the countries behind the 'Iron Curtain'. Recently though, the persecution of Christians has become a worldwide phenomenon, on an unprecedented scale!

Of course, sometimes God uses persecution to separate the true believers from the false. For instance, in the Old Testament He took those who were 'at ease in Zion' and He exiled them to a foreign country to face hardship and uncertainty ... and that is the picture behind Psalm 137. It is a lament, a dirge, and it begins with tears for these people had been taken against their will to the idolatrous city of Babylon. They had to leave behind them in ruins their beloved city of Jerusalem. Its beautiful temple built by Solomon had been ransacked. Their fields were barren and unfruitful. Their houses and livelihoods were destroyed, and only the old and infirm remained in the conquered city. They had been a proud nation mightily blessed of God, but they had become a nation under His judgment because they had turned away from Him.

During those dark years in captivity, they were made to face the stark reality, and how they missed what they once had ... It is when you are taken away from all you have held dear, you realise how greatly you have been blessed of God. Sadly, that

was the state the Israelites were in, **Ps. 137:1** By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. **2** We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. **3** For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. **4** How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? ... Such an immensely tragic lament!

Demoralised, the Israelites had no hope left. Despondent, they had nothing to look forward to. Dejected, they had stopped singing the songs for which they were renowned ... and their musical instruments were hanging silently and listlessly on the branches of the Babylonian trees, out of tune and out of reach. ... And the idolaters mocked and taunted them to sing the songs about their God Who they, - the Babylonians, - believed their gods had defeated. They were for turning the hymns of Zion into entertainment, and *not* worship ... Besides, how could God's people sing enthusiastically the songs they used to sing in Jerusalem?! They had been brought down from the *glory* days in the temple to the *gory* days in travail. ... How could they sing the songs of Zion in such a godless land!

Notice, though, there is a change in this psalm as the 'we' becomes the 'I'. It is more personal now, **Ps. 137:5** If *I* forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. **6** If *I* do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if *I* prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. ... God was speaking personally into the heart of each individual believer ... and is that not the lesson for God's people today? ... Yes, God speaks to us as a church, and He *also* speaks to us *individually* for that is how He has saved and redeemed us. He has a purpose for each of us working together for the glory of His name in our fellowship. Otherwise we 'lose our song' and our 'instruments of praise' hang listlessly 'in the willows'.

There is no doubt we are living in desperate times, and there is similarly no doubt the ways of the ungodly will continue to lead our world into even *more* desperate times, as Paul cautioned Timothy, **II Tim. 3:1** This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. **2** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. For the Christian though, during such times we have the sure instruction from God's Word, **Ps. 146:3** Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help ... Where *do* you put your trust then? And the Lord answers, **Ps. 146:5** Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: **6** Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever... and therefore, **Ps. 60:12** Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

Have you started for Glory and Heaven?  
 Have you left this old world far behind?  
 In your heart is the Comforter dwelling?  
 Can you say, "Praise the Lord, He is mine?"  
 Have the ones who once walked on the highway  
 Gone back, and you seem all alone?  
 Keep your eyes on the prize, for the home in the skies,  
 God is still on the throne.

*God is still on the throne,  
 And He will remember His own;  
 Though trials may press us and burdens distress us,  
 He never will leave us alone;  
 God is still on the throne,  
 He never forsaketh His own;  
 His promise is true,  
 He will not forget you,  
 God is still on the throne.*

Burdened soul, is your heart growing weary  
 With the toil and the heat of the day?  
 Does it seem that your path is more thorny  
 As you journey along on life's way?  
 Go away, and in secret before Him,  
 Tell your grief to the Saviour alone;  
 He will lighten your care, for He still answers prayer,  
 God is still on the throne.

He is coming again, is the promise  
 To disciples when He went away;  
 In like manner as He has gone from you,  
 You will see Him returning some day; Does His tarrying  
 cause you to wonder,  
 Does it seem He's forgotten His own?  
 His promise is true, He is coming for you,  
***God is still on the throne!***