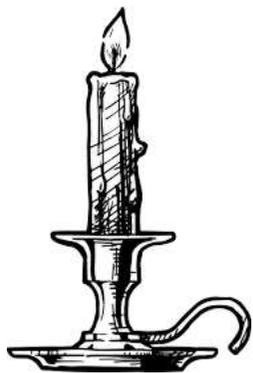


Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021



## THE CANDLESTICK

*I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. (II Tim. 1:12)*

During these desperate times there is nothing certain. Some of the school classes are recommencing, - is it the right decision, or is it premature? Recently, with over one thousand reported cases of the coronavirus each day in Scotland, and with sixty-plus deaths, and with over ninety people in intensive care, should we move towards 'normality', or should we wait a little longer? Who is right? Who do you listen to? What should you do?

The correct attitude to have is to be careful, and not to do anything to precipitate or endanger our present personal conditions. Yet, the question keeps coming back ... when is it all going to be over? When will we be permitted to get back out to engage in the regular activities which we previously took for granted?

It is a troubling observation that so much can change out of fear of something we can neither see nor touch. ... Will the coronavirus ever go away? What will take its place, and will it be even more severe, perhaps as Jesus spoke about in Mt 24:8, the beginning of sorrows.

Rather than add to any sense of despair, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a wonderful hope for in light of all that is going on around us, God is working. During times such as this, Jesus promises His people, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mt. 24:13). Or, as a Messianic Jewish translation renders it, "whosoever holds out to the end will be delivered".

Throughout the history of God's people in the Old Testament, we see how faithful He always was. He always kept His promises ... He brought them out of four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. He brought them through the forty years of the wilderness. He settled them in a land where their enemies were plentiful. He raised them up, despite many of those enemies trying to bring them down. He kept them through their seventy years of captivity in Babylon. He returned them to their land and their city ... and they rebuilt His house which had been destroyed. They raised again the great wall surrounding their beloved city ... All God had promised came to pass!

Then, for another four hundred years, - beginning at the close of Malachi's prophecy, - a dark and deafening silence descended upon the land and its people. There were no

authoritative expressions of hope. There was no "Thus saith the Lord". There were no Divinely-appointed prophets to direct God's people. ... It was one long period of silence from Heaven.

And yet, in the background, God had not forgotten Israel. His silence was a judgment on their dereliction of His commandments. They had wandered so far from Him, they had become strangers to His grace and His glory. What was happening in those days? ... One of Malachi's prophecies indicates how the people were perfectly at ease offering 'second-rate' sacrifices to God. It was too much bother for them to worship as He required, for they believed and *admitted*, Behold, what a weariness is it! (Mal. 1:13) ... "This is boring, mundane, tiresome ... But as God watched their indifference and lethargy, He decided He had had enough and He declared, **Mal. 1:12** ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

God is good though, for He could have 'let them go'. He could have finished with them, but He did not. Instead, four hundred years after Malachi, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born. With the Lord Jesus came God's continued mercy and grace for He had not given up on His people. ... And on the Day of Pentecost, the message of the Gospel was preached to them and great multitudes received Christ as the Messiah. And even though, - in the main, - the eyes of understanding for the Jewish people are presently veiled, there is coming a day when God *will* pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon *[Him]* whom they have pierced (Zech. 12:10). ... And all Israel *will* be saved for out of Zion will come the Deliverer, the Redeemer, Who shall turn away their ungodliness and sin (Rom. 11:26).

Someone has said, if you want to understand what God is doing, look at what He is doing for the people of Israel. He has blessed them more than any other nation throughout history, - as He promised to Abram He would (Gen. 12:1-3). And He promised, too, they would be a blessing to the nations ... and we are seeing it today, even in this present Covid pandemic.

Are you still wondering how it is all going to end up? Well, wonder no more for there is no excuse for God's people to doubt or fear ... not as long as God is on the throne! ... And that is how Paul was so able to confidently affirm, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.* ... What a privileged people we are to belong to the family of God! ...

**LOCAL NEWS UPDATE ...**

Nicola Sturgeon has announced Scotland's plan to ease restrictions, with places of worship set to open in early April if the previous stages pass without a hitch.

The First Minister announced on Tuesday [*yesterday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February*] that Scotland's handling of coronavirus is now "positive and promising" but that the situation is still "precarious".

Scotland is operating a 'Level' system, similar to England's Tier system, which details what is permitted in various different regions. The Scottish government's updated strategic framework aims to move back to a level system in the last week of April, when there will be a significant lifting of restrictions.

However, before that, other areas of society will loosen their restrictions at intervals of three weeks.

From 15th March, more students will return, and both outdoors non-contact sports and outdoor mixing will increase to 4 people.

Three weeks later, on 5th April, the government hopes to lift the 'stay at home' restriction, as well as the limits on gathering for communal worship.

In the government's guidance, it says: "When it is safe to do so we will work with the faith community to re-open places of worship in Level 4 areas on the restricted-numbers basis that was allowed before 8 January." [*Premier Christian News*]

I belong to the King; I'm a child of His love,  
I shall dwell in His palace so fair,  
For He tells of its bliss in yon Heaven above,  
And His children in splendour shall share.

*I belong to the King; I'm a child of His love,  
And He never forsaketh His own.  
He will call me some day to His palace above;  
I shall dwell by His glorified throne.*

I belong to the King, and He loves me I know,  
For His mercy and kindness so free  
Are unceasingly mine wheresoever I go,  
And my refuge unfailing is He.

I belong to the King, and His promise is sure:  
That we all shall be gathered at last  
In His kingdom above, by life's waters so pure,  
When this life with its trials is past.

**THE PRIORITY** I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (I Tim. 2:1,2).

**THE PROMISE** 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 (II Chron. 7:14).

**THE PROSPECT** Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10) ... Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus Rev. 22:20).