

IN GREAT ANTICIPATION!

Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [*is*] a reproach to any people.

I've said it before, and I believe it needs to be repeated often ... "We are living in interesting days". I was very encouraged with the interest you have shown in our recent series "God's Plan for the Nations", and continue to show concerning Christ's second coming. I know there are some Christians who don't see anything particularly compelling about this subject ... and I must admit I find it difficult to understand why they aren't studying it more, particularly in these days! Indeed, the Bible teaches us very clearly that it has a strong influence on our daily Christian walk, I Jn. 3:1 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³ And *every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

That is the promise ... and that is the purpose that should engender our excitement concerning Christ's return! Yes, I am very aware of the different views concerning the return of Christ and how they can arouse controversy ... but if you are looking forward to that glorious day with great expectation and anticipation it will have the effect upon you that you will be working to keep yourself in readiness for His appearing. How important that is, especially in these days when the world is pursuing, - at breakneck speed, - its agenda that has no place for God.

Now, we are not so naïve as to 'cuddle up' in some kind of idyllic and sentimental tower looking back on the so-called 'good old days' ... and ignore the dire straits our nation is in today. We are not 'closing our eyes' to the godlessness that is the real reality that seems to be smothering the true Church of Christ and the witness of genuine born-again believers.

We realise, of course, and we accept completely that since the fall of Adam and Eve there has never been a time when this earth and its people have not been burdened with and under sin. Sin has polluted and contaminated every generation. The sins that are so prevalent today ... many of them were present since almost the beginning, and have been developing in various forms since then. They have been practised over and over again until they have reached the new depths of depravity we see in our communities today.

As far as the human heart is concerned, sin has increasingly become an accomplished lifestyle practised by every kind of people, - rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, - in ever-decreasing forms of toxic acceptability!

At the commencement of our study, rather than point out the obvious corrupt and miscreant pursuits of former days ... and despite the devil being hard at work ... let's consider first of all the place God has enjoyed in our country.

The Bible, - long before we attempted to couch it into the familiarity of common parlance, - was taught in Sunday Schools that were packed full of children. Some of you can remember a number of classes that used to meet in this hall and in some of the other rooms. The Sunday Schools were thriving. The children were learning stories and memory verses from the Bible. They were learning the catechism. Their minds were being filled with God's requirements from a young age and they were being taught and prepared by Godly men and women for the experiences that would lie ahead.

As a consequence, they were growing up with these sound Scriptural principles and they were making well-considered decisions, based on their learning in God's house and in the Christian homes. They were entering into relationships on sound Biblical bases, and marrying, and having children and bringing them up the way they were taught. It produced good societies ... not always perfect, but they knew the difference between right and wrong and they tried to live correctly and in accordance with how they had been taught by the Word of God.

People looked out for each other. They knew their neighbours on both sides of their street ... and throughout the community ... And when anyone needed help, it wasn't long before it was there. On a Sunday morning, - whether it was hail, rain or sunshine, - the whole family would make their way to church. They wouldn't have been at the shops, or washing their cars.

Now, I know everything in the garden wasn't rosy. Times were hard, - there weren't the hand-outs and benefits there are today. If you didn't work, you didn't get paid and you had to live according to your means. There were no credit cards, and no people trying to sell you all kinds of things you neither needed nor could afford. ... The man used to come round once a week, and you would give him a few shillings to put towards your savings. What you had you owned, and you learned to be content with it.

You had respect for the law. Schools were places you went to learn in ... And at the centre of just about everything was a respect and a reverence for God. People went to church ... and we have got to say, many of them went to church to be seen ... but at least they went to church and they would have heard God's Word being read and expounded. And yes, *many* people went to church to hear God's Word being faithfully preached and they sought to live the following week in keeping with what they had heard on the Sunday ... and society was stronger because God was given His place. He was given His place in the home ... around the family altar.

Marriage was "until death us do part". That's what we learned from our parents. Children honoured their father and their mother. The Lord's Day was kept different and special from all the rest.

What effect did this have? Well, I believe God blessed our nation and He gave us victory in times of world conflict. It is said that the sun never set on the British Empire. From these small islands there went out such an incredible influence across the world. Business and commerce and trade of all kinds from these shores enriched the globe. Where Britain ruled, there was prosperity. ... And throughout its empire and commonwealth, men and women were called of God to bring the message of the Gospel to heathen people. When you think of the missionaries that went out from Scotland, - Robert Moffatt, Mary Slessor, David Livingstone, and many others, - ... in almost every corner of the world the Word of God was taught and preached humbly, and the Holy Spirit blessed the endeavours of His people. Souls were saved across the world. Paganism and unbelief were uprooted and Christ was exalted in the forests and jungles of Africa and South America ... and in the islands as far away as the Pacific Ocean. (Fiji national anthem, tune of "I'm living on the mountain, underneath a cloudless sky ... I'm dwelling in Beulah land".)

What was it that our nation knew that brought such tremendous blessing? King Solomon gives us the answer, [Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation](#). Such is the blessing God affords the nation and people where His Name is revered and His Word respected and His laws upheld. That was the foundation of the conquests and the great stature of Britain ... and that was how God made it *great*. ... [Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation](#).

In our lifetimes though, we have seen a change that no one could have foreseen ... even fifty years ago. Nowadays children are born into homes where there is no stability and no respect. One or even both parents are missing ... and maybe a grandparent is bringing the children up. ...

The family concept has suffered disastrously. In many situations children are being used as fodder in attempts to squeeze financially as much out of the system as possible. Official figures have recently suggested that approximately one in six families with children are headed by a married mother and father.

And, of course, the concept of marriage has changed and is changing beyond all recognition. All principles of what is natural have been jettisoned as perversion prevails. I believe it will only be a matter of time before we see marriages consisting of more than two people ... *wait to you see!* ... The latest is that the Methodist Church is consulting on whether to revise its stance on marriage in view of the government's new law on the sodomite marriage. New figures that have come for divorce in the United Kingdom show there was the equivalent of thirteen divorces for every hour of every day throughout 2012!

And no wonder our children have no idea of God! Children round about our church do not know who Jesus is. They have never heard of Moses or Samuel or Daniel. Many of them have never been inside a church. They have never heard the Gospel ... and it is certain to get worse as we look towards future generations. In recent weeks, the national church has conceived a plan along with atheists to remove Christian assemblies and replace them with "Times of Reflection"! ... All we can say to them is, [James 4:4](#) *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

... And, in the wider sphere, many congregations that loosely claim the name 'evangelical' are in pursuit of an agenda not found in Scripture. Nevertheless, they follow after such activities even though it involves associations with organisations whose stance is incompatible with the Biblical Gospel message.

What is happening though? Marriages are on the decline ... although there might be a resurgence for a while when men start to marry men and women start to marry women! ... Also, just a few days ago news has come through of a baby in Vancouver, British Columbia who has *three* parents named on her birth certificate, - she is *legally* the daughter of a lesbian couple and their male friend. The article in the Canadian *National Post* reads, "When they decided to have a child, Anna Richards and wife Danielle Wiley both agreed that they wanted a father figure, rather than an anonymous donor."

Also, within these past few days, Belgium has become the first country in the world to remove any age restrictions on euthanasia. *Time* magazine explains, “Under the amendments to the country’s 2002 euthanasia law, a child of any age can be helped to die, but only under strict conditions. He or she must be terminally ill, close to death, and deemed to be suffering beyond any medical help. The child must be able to request euthanasia themselves and demonstrate they fully understand their choice.”

In Scotland, the party who wants to establish the country as an independent nation plans to assign every child a state guardian. Under the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill*, every child in Scotland will be assigned a named person – a state employee – who would be able to share information with a wide range of public authorities and intervene without parental consent.

And the law of the land has taken such a turn that no longer favours the innocent ... And the outside government and court of Europe, - for which no one has voted, - overrides all the decisions in this once-great country. No wonder that in a recent *Open-Air Campaigners* conference one of the speakers said, Europe is now regarded as “the new spiritually dark continent”. It was described as the most difficult place to see a positive response to the Gospel.

We could say a whole lot more of course ... but what has been the consequence of the direction our society has taken? Well, here is what God says, *sin [is] a reproach to any people*. The *Complete Jewish Bible* translates it, “sin degrades any people” ... and the old Geneva Bible of the Reformers and Puritans translates it, “sinne is a shame to the people”.

Recently a councillor belonging to a particular party in England described the ferocity of the floods as being a judgment from God ... and his words were received with great acrimony. (Incidentally, the evangelical Bishop J.C. Ryle of Liverpool said a similar thing about a foot and mouth epidemic in the nineteenth century). ... No matter what they say, our debt is increasing out of control, and will increase even further, - £100million alone is ‘earmarked for the floods in south-west England ... and I believe I heard it is increasing by another £30million. *Our finances are already precarious!* Crime isn’t falling, it is on the rise. Despite all the progress in scientific exploration, serious health issues are on the increase. New diseases are surfacing ... and old ones they thought had been done away with are returning. We have more affluence today than ever we have had, and yet it is not bringing any consistent satisfaction. There is not the same contentedness as in days gone-by. ... And God’s place has been taken over by science, humanism, secularism, atheism.

New and foreign religions are invading the country ... and to keep up, various forms of 'christianity' have and are developing that are not founded upon sound doctrine. As Paul told Timothy concerning the last days, II Tim. 4:3 after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ... There is an increasing flurry of insults being cast into the face of God!

Is God oblivious to all this? Or, if He does notice, is there anything He can do ... or is He powerless to confront it? ... No, on all accounts! ... And this is where our attitude to the present social developments 'comes into play'.

I don't want to depress you today ... but at the same time we need to realise and acknowledge what is going on around us. Jesus said, Lk. 17:26 as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. ²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; ²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed [them] all. ³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. ... And concerning those who profess His Name but are in danger of capitulating to the force of the day and being drawn away, He warns, Gal. 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

In other words, He tells us the world will fall into such a state of degradation and perverseness that will precede His return but God's people must remain faithful for the promise is that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (v.9) ... he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (v.8).

Before our very eyes, - and I know sin has always been rife in our country and society, - but never has it had the hold it is being allowed to have today. Officially and legally, sin in many of its forms is the law of the land ... and you and I as believers are powerless to do anything about it. ... And when sin takes a hold, it does not want to let go! Yes, we are grateful for Christian organisations like the Christian Institute that stand up in the various arenas, and for the achievements they win ... but surely the stage is being set for the *ultimate* man of lawlessness to take his position and 'railroad' our civilization, - such as it is, - along the tracks of disaster and doom.

It is good to have some idea of what God has planned in His Word concerning these present times, for we need to be prepared. You can be disappointed about what is taking place, but we must not become disheartened because God is working out His plans before our very eyes. ... And His plan is for His glory to shine! ... And “God is still on the throne, And He will remember His own ... [and] His promise is true, He will not forget you [believer], God is still on the throne”.

Yes, of course, - no one would deny it, - it's dark, and it will get darker, - that is what the Scriptures teach - ... but it is always darkest before the dawn ... and at the dawn, - the Bible promises us, - the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings, and says Malachi, *ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* ³ *And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do [this], saith the LORD of hosts (4:2).*

Righteousness exalteth a nation ... and sin has proved, and is proving, a reproach to its people ... and God's people must recognise it and stay away from it ... because righteousness shall return ... *as sure as God is on the throne!* The psalmist declared, *9:7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.* ⁸ *And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. ... And Isaiah saw it too, 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment ... 18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places ... 62:2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.*

It is far from over! The world is not out of God's control! God's plan is still in progress ... He will achieve everything He has set out, and it will *all* be to His wonderful and everlasting glory! ... We shall reign with Him and we shall be with Him forever and forever ... And therein lies the blessed hope of all His redeemed and blood-washed children in these present evil days, and in every generation whom Christ has saved from the creation of this world. So let's keep looking up as our redemption draws ever closer for all the signs are showing it, - even this godless society in which we live. ... And when He comes again, I trust He will find us faithfully watching and waiting with the great anticipation of His sovereign and splendid glory! Amen.