

THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE (Is. 40:1-8)

This week we have been remembering the events which took place on the Normandy beaches seventy-five years ago. A hard-fought battle defended our shores from the onslaught of the wickedness of Hitler and his evil Nazism. You hear the commentators searching for words to describe the almost impossible task for the Allied forces to take the beaches. The area was swamped with German machine guns and battery posts, - everything was to their advantage.

On the Allied side, it had all the potential to be quite the opposite. For example, in the early hours of the 6th July British paratroopers had been dropped in the wrong location, too far behind the German line ... Also, many of the British soldiers jumped from their landing crafts where the water was too deep, and they drowned. Despite this, preparation had been made, and much of it carried out to an unbelievably high standard ... and significantly, at just the right time, the weather changed to facilitate their victory that day.

Just over four years earlier, the war looked as if it was over. Six months after Britain joined the Second World War, on 10th May 1940 Hitler unleashed a military onslaught on France and Belgium. The British and Allied forces were taken completely unawares, - ... outmanoeuvred and unprepared. The German High Command boasted they were about "to annihilate the British Army".

It didn't happen though. On 23rd May, King George VI called for a National Day of Prayer on the following Sunday, 26th May. On the previous evening Winston Churchill and his war council planned to evacuate as many as possible from Dunkirk. On the Sunday church congregations overflowed throughout the nation to pray. On the same day an urgent request went out for boats of all sizes and shapes to cross the English Channel and rescue the besieged army on the beaches. Eight hundred vessels responded to the call.

Then Hitler made a decision which made no sense. He went against the advice of his generals and halted his soldiers. Why he did it continues to baffle the historians today. If the German soldiers had continued as their generals had planned, the British army at Dunkirk would have been slaughtered ... yet, for three days, the German soldiers stood idle as the British troops were evacuated.

On the Tuesday, when the Luftwaffe decided to attack, bad weather hindered them, and they couldn't fly ... and the British evacuation from Dunkirk was completed. By the time the German forces acted, over 338,000 Allied troops had returned to Britain.

God has been good to our nation. In its golden days He used many He had placed in high positions to direct the affairs of the United Kingdom. Also, during those years, from these shores He sent many missionaries all over the world with the Gospel ... God is active among the nations. The psalmist said, **Ps. 22:28** *the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations ...* **113:4** *The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.* Paul wrote to the church in the great city of Rome, **Rom. 13:1** *there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God....* God is on the throne. He is in control! Look around you for if He was not, we would have destroyed ourselves by now!

There has been another very important anniversary this week which I did not hear mentioned. Fifty-two years ago, on 5th June 1967 the armies of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) entered the streets of Jerusalem, and on Friday 7th June the IDF walked through the Lion's Gate, up the steps and liberated the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. For the first time since 586 BC, - 2,553 years earlier, - Israel was again in control of the area upon which the Temple of Solomon had stood ... the place purchased, - not stolen or captured, but paid for by King David from Araunah the Jebusite, where David then built an altar to the Lord, and upon which Solomon built the temple. ... It was also the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac, and where God promised him, **Gen. 22:17** *I will bless thee ...* **18** *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. ...* Such a significant capture by the Israeli army!

When Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives looking over at the temple with His disciples, He told them, **Mt. 24:2** *There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. ...* And that is what happened in 70 AD when the armies of the Roman General Titus destroyed it ... *The Lord said it and it happened!* ... And the Jews were massacred in Jerusalem, at Massada, and other places too, *just as He said,* **Lk. 21:24** *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles ...* One after another, the Gentiles ruled Jerusalem ... Outside nations were always in control of it from the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Even when Israel got their own land back in May 1948, east Jerusalem remained in the hands of the enemies ... *until* 7th June 1967, when the IDF entered through the Lion Gate and onto the area where Solomon's temple stood. ... And as they stood on the Temple Mount, the soldiers quoted from the Jewish Talmud, "Blessed art Thou Lord God King of the Universe Who has sustained us and kept us and has brought us to this day" ... To which the rabbi replied, "This year in a rebuilt Jerusalem! In the Jerusalem of old!" ...

Let me quote again what Jesus prophesied in Lk 21:24, *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles ... and then He concluded, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* ... 7th June 1967 was a date in God's calendar when Jerusalem was handed back to the Jews, ... just as God said it would thousands of years earlier. ... And in 1967 prophecy was fulfilled when Jerusalem was returned to Israeli ownership.

Why am I going over all this again? Two reasons ... the first reason is by way of introduction to the photos George and Ruth are going to show us relating to their recent trip to Israel. The more important reason though, - as we are surrounded by all the uncertainties within parliaments and politics and politicians and Brexit and everything else, - ... despite all the uncertainties, one thing is sure ... the prayer Jesus taught His disciples *will be fulfilled, Thy will be done* ... and God's will *will be done*, no matter how ridiculous it sounds to the unbeliever. Our God has a 100% proven record of keeping His Word!

And that is the encouragement for us today! God keeps His Word, even when it seems everything is stacked against Him! You can depend on what He says! ... And the day is coming when He *will glorify His Name on this earth, when He will reign in righteousness* ... for that is what He has promised in His Word, **Ps. 22:27** *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. ... Ps. 72:17* *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. 18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ... Ps. 86:9* *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.*

So, let's look at these photographs and see what God has done, what He is doing, and what He will yet complete.