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Against most predictions, the electors of the United Kingdom have voted to leave the European Union, a result that has produced great joy among the Leavers and deep dismay among the Remainers. There is no doubt that the path ahead will be complicated as the far-reaching consequences of this decision are gradually worked through, both within the United Kingdom and beyond. A period of calm reflection is already being called for, and is very necessary.

There are some interesting scriptural parallels between this decision and the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, though let it be said there are a great many differences too! Britain is a far cry from being the children of Israel, and has not been in a position of downtrodden slavery within the European Union (EU) - though perhaps some might disagree!

At the burning bush, the Lord appointed Moses to go to Pharaoh, "that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3.10). Moses did not fancy the idea, but ended up doing as he was told (Chapters 3 and 4). After a long wrangle with the Pharaoh, when the Egyptian magicians were ranged against the living God with a predictable outcome, Pharaoh gave permission for the people to leave (Exodus 12.31-32). His defiance was finally broken by the slaying of Egypt's "firstborn", the households of Israel being protected by the blood of the lamb on the lintel and doorposts of their homes, a classic "type" pointing forward to the protective shedding of the blood of the true Lamb of God.

The Exodus itself was a dangerous, scary time, with fears and threats all too real. Yet the Lord delivered His people through the Sea, and Moses joined with them in a great song of praise for their deliverance, followed by Miriam and her companions singing and dancing before the Lord (Exodus 15. 1-20). In the years that followed, the children of Israel were gradually formed into a nation in their own right, with the God of the covenant granting them His presence, guidance, protection and provision, (manna, quails, the Law, the tabernacle, and finally the land itself, promised to Abraham five hundred years before). Throughout their wilderness wanderings, time and again the people murmured; time and again Moses fell before the Lord, begging Him for mercy; and time and again the Lord did show mercy. Through those many years of testing the children of Israel slowly learned what it meant to be God's chosen and covenant people.

And so to Britain today and this referendum result. Much prayer has been lifted to the Lord over these past months, on both sides of the debate, asking that the Lord will show mercy to this country by causing His will to prevail as He thinks best. So whatever our personal preferences may have been in those polling booths, let us as Christian people receive this result gratefully and trustingly, seeing it as indeed "of the Lord", His answer to much heartfelt prayer.

If this understanding is correct, two realisations now arise. First, the Lord has acted in mercy on account of the prayers of His "faithful remnant" within this land, whatever their views on this particular question. This remnant is presumably comparatively small in the nation as a whole, and is often weak and unnoticed, but as with all such faithful remnants in Scripture it is deeply precious and valued in God's sight; in its own quiet way such a remnant makes far more difference in a society than we will ever know this side of heaven.

Second, we are to learn afresh from those Israelites the value of seeking and following the Lord as a nation; indeed, that is what we are still committed to doing in terms of our Protestant constitution. For we are well aware that these are dangerous times, and by making this decision to leave the EU, Britain is going out on the proverbial limb, just as Moses and the people did at the Exodus.

God was found to be utterly faithful to them all those years ago, and will be found to be just as faithful in our generation, for those words of Scripture still hold good for any nation that cares to pay heed: "Thus says the Lord: Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it ..." (Jeremiah 6.16).

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