

## 322 No King in Israel

We have been speaking in our recent Reflections of the gradually increasing chaos we see around us these days, making the point that this chaos may well be a significant “sign of the times” with regard to the various unfulfilled biblical prophecies that are yet to come to pass.

As if to emphasise the point, we have yet more chaos this week. In the House of Commons some MPs have left their parties to join an independent grouping as the Brexit situation becomes ever more tense, making the likelihood of a Brexit agreement being passed in the Commons even less likely than it is at present. We are well aware of the undoubted positive aspects of democracy – notably, its simplicity, clarity and acceptability - but perhaps we are seeing in this abandonment of party loyalties and angry changing of sides some of democracy’s negative aspects too?

Any path ahead that is arrived at by democratic decision is reached merely by majority opinion, which of course gives no guarantee that the chosen path is right or good in itself, indeed it may be utterly foolish. This risk of folly is increased by democracy’s other weakness - that by definition democracy gives the prime responsibility of choosing the path ahead to “the people” (and often in practice to very few people) rather than to Almighty God. If the choice for a ship in trouble lies between heeding the lights from some untethered lightships drifting around on the currents between the rocks and shoals, or heeding the great light from a fixed lighthouse, we would surely recommend heeding the latter for everybody’s sake! How apt in this political chaos are those simple verses from the Book of Judges - “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17.6 & 21 25).

A second “chaos story”, much smaller but no less significant in its way, concerns the Home Secretary, a Muslim, wrestling with the problems caused by a young Muslim mother involved with ISIS wanting to return to Britain with her baby (perhaps only one of hundreds of ISIS-affiliates wanting to come back here). Interestingly the Muslim faith of the Home Secretary is scarcely mentioned, implying that in modern Britain the religious affiliation of senior political figures is now irrelevant, while the Muslim faith of the girl is unavoidably central to the case. (But of course religious affiliation is very far from being irrelevant! Britain still possesses a Christian, Protestant constitution, and the many blessings and freedoms in British society have been shaped in no small part by the Christian Faith. A glance around the world shows how very different are the societies of nations shaped by the Islamic Faith).

This situation of the British Muslim girl with ISIS connections seems to be a telling “mini-reflection” of contemporary Britain, with those sombre words, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” coming to mind (Galatians 6.7). The “man” in this case applies to the nation itself, and the “sowing” to the many God-ignoring laws passed over recent decades, whose consequences we are now having to reap.

The Book of Judges tells of a grim period in the history of Israel, with the old cycle being repeated time after time: the people’s disobedience to the Lord God of the covenant; leading to the Lord’s warnings and judgments upon them, usually involving

years of servitude for them under surrounding hostile nations; followed by the people coming to their senses and returning to the Lord in repentance; followed by the Lord raising up one (hopefully) God-fearing judge after another to get the people back on track.

There was no king in Israel, but in another sense, of course there was a King, THE King, the God of the covenant, and this was the King who the people in their sinfulness kept spurning (eg., I Samuel 8.7).

The parallels between the times of the judges and Britain today are plain to see. Right now, today, there IS a king over Britain – THE King, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord! – be He recognised or not. He is evidently deeply displeased with this nation and has every reason to be, but the way back is clear and open – humility, prayer, and a change of heart and direction – “then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land” (from II Chronicles 7.14, an oft-quoted verse in these Reflections).

We continue to pray for our Queen and for our Christian and political leaders in the midst of growing chaos, that they will join earnestly with the rest of us in this old prayer of repentance from the Psalms - “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt” (Psalm 123.3, KJV).

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