

## 402 The Old Christ-Pathways

In view of the current situation over the Covid-19 pandemic in Britain, we start this time with a straight question - how are you feeling?!

We, along with many others these days, may well be weary, shoulder-shrugging or depressed by now, especially as the government tactics in trying to get us through this difficult time entirely ignore the existence of Almighty God. Because of this old, profound mistake – “don’t bother us with any God-talk, we’re cracking this ourselves” – it is no wonder that the politicians, professors and pundits are dashing about hither and thither, echoing Corporal Jones’ cry in “Dad’s Army” of “Don’t panic, don’t panic”!

But by His grace we know all too well that Almighty God DOES exist - and that knowledge changes, or should change, everything. This nation is Christian-shaped with a Christian Protestant Constitution. How utterly refreshing it would be if our Royal Family members and our politicians acknowledged these facts, and spoke of our dependence upon God for His guidance and mercy, and of our need to “seek His face” constantly in prayer, at family, local and national levels, as we humbly tackle together, under the Lord, Covid-19 and the other problems the nation is facing.

In God’s Word we are left in no doubt that God, our powerful, benevolent, approachable Creator, is in complete control of the affairs of this planet, of this universe and beyond. Covid-19 has come as no surprise to Him for this, His creation, which He initially described as “good” and “very good” (Genesis 1.4,10,12,18,21,25 & 31), remains messed up because of human sinfulness (Genesis 3.17b / Romans 5.12 & 8.19-22 / I Corinthians 15.21-22). We can be quite clear that Covid-19, (along with all other forms of human suffering), is being allowed by the Lord God as a wake-up call for sinful mankind to return to Him, our Maker and our Redeemer in His Son Jesus Christ, before His well-justified divine judgment gathers pace.

We learn throughout the Old Testament of God’s endlessly-patient dealings with His chosen covenant people the Jews. This people, just as with the rest of us today, had the knack of repeatedly turning their backs on the Lord God and chasing after anything else that took their fancy. When faced with their constant waywardness, time and again God warned, then He judged. At last the people came to their senses and returned to the Lord in repentance and resolve. God forgave, the

covenant was restored - until the people's next "turning-their-backs" excursion into folly and idolatry.

God's gracious attributes are then further expressed in Jesus Christ, Son of Man, Son of God, in the New Testament. As promised beforehand, Jesus is laid "in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner [stone], a sure foundation (from Isaiah 28.16, KJV) – for blessing. He is given "for a sanctuary" yet also "... for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence ... for a gin and for a snare" (from Isaiah 8.14; see also I Peter 2.1-10). We see from these words how Jesus really is the crux of the matter for both Jew and Gentile: our acceptance of Him leads to great blessings from Almighty God our heavenly Father - and vice-versa (eg., John 3.16-18,36; 14.6).

So as an antidote to any lurking hopelessness we may be feeling, we focus on God's numerous promises – to know them, believe them, rehearse them, claim them, act on them and speak of them. Of course for the time being our lives will have periods of trial, (as well as of joy), just as Jesus forewarned – "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16.33).

Meanwhile we know full well that God the Father has the future utterly secure in Christ. Jesus is to come first for His own, a coming that increasingly seems to be imminent (eg., I Thessalonians 4.13-18 / I Corinthians 15.51-52). Then after the 7-year tribulation Jesus is to come in public, visible glory to rescue His original covenant people as their Messiah (eg., Mark 13.24-27 and parallels). God's Kingdom will be established on the earth, the fulfilment of those long-standing requests in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6.10).

After Satan's final efforts, and the solemn judgments before the great white throne (Revelation 20.7-15), the new heaven and the new earth will come (Revelation 21.1-8 and following). Truly, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy [cometh] in the morning ... He will swallow up death in victory ... He will wipe away all tears ..." (from Psalm 30.5b / Isaiah 25.8 / Revelation 7.17 & 21.4).

So in good heart we follow the old Christ-pathways of faith, trust, hope, love, peace and thankfulness - come what may and day by day. For, praise God, by His grace, "in Christ the best is yet to be".

