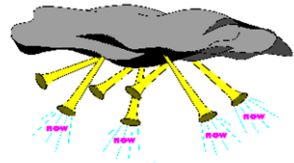


TRUMPET SOUNDS

Issue No 143

2nd Quarter 2022



No fruit on the vine

*"Though Tesco's shelves are empty and the phone networks are down.
Though gas prices have gone through the roof and the petrol pumps are dry.
Though inflation has destroyed our wealth and the government takes control.
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord my God is my strength."* Habakkuk 3: 17 – 19 (updated).

I will rejoice

To rejoice in God when the table is bare is an act of will. In the West we have lived through a period of plenty. The supermarket shelves have been well stocked. Most people have been able to supply more than sufficient food and clothing for their needs. Few of us have been really tested. Despite the trouble which caused him to tremble, Habakkuk chose to rejoice in the Lord. He was able to give thanks before receiving the provision because the Lord God was his strength and gave him peace.

Jesus tells us not to be like the heathen who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Father in heaven already knows what we need (Matthew 6: 7, 8). The faithful remember to give thanks to the Lord before a meal recognizing that it is an answer to the prayer *"give us this day our daily bread."* In the time to come we will need to move beyond gratitude into faith. We are to trust God to meet our needs even when the cupboard is empty and the table bare.

We, who have enjoyed comfort so long, have a problem in that we have come to regard luxuries as necessities. Paul in writing to the Philippians testified that, through the strength that God had given him, he was able to rise above outward circumstances. *"I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Philippians 4: 11 – 13. We can face whatever lies ahead if we, like Paul, rely on Christ to strengthen us.

Do Not Worry

We are to rely on the one who tells us not to worry. *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father*

knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6: 31 -33.
Do we Believe Him?

Most, if not all, who read this know about worry. As we look into the near future there is plenty to worry about. One worry is the coming global food shortage which is unparalleled in modern times. How will we cope when the supermarket shelves are empty? Our heavenly Father says trust Me and keep focused on building my kingdom. Trust our Father and do not forget those who are more vulnerable to the rising prices.

Global Food Shortage

The war in the Ukraine has aggravated what was already a looming crisis. In March, David M. Beasley, the executive director of the World Food Program, the United Nations agency that feeds 125 million people a day, said “Ukraine has only compounded a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe, there is no precedent even close to this since World War II.”

Farmers from Africa to the US have been forced to cut back on cultivated land due to the sharp rise in the price of fertilizer. Some fertilizer prices have increased by as much as 300% since last year. It is estimated that due to African farmers being unable to afford fertilizer, there will be a drop of 30 million tons in cereal production this year. That is enough to feed 100 million people. Half of Africa's grain imports come from Russia and Ukraine. Russia is also one of the world's biggest suppliers of fertilizers.

China is forecasting that its winter wheat harvest this year could be the worst in history. At the same time the US is expecting a disastrous winter wheat harvest due to the severe drought.

The Ukraine, which provides about 20% of the world's wheat exports, has announced that it will not be exporting any grain this year due to the need to feed its own population. Some countries such as, Armenia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Eritrea import nearly all their wheat from Russia and Ukraine. They will need to find new sources but will be bidding against other larger buyers such as Turkey, Egypt, Bangladesh and Iran which buy 60% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine.

Shortages of food are already occurring in many countries. In Spain there have been sporadic shortages of eggs, milk and dairy products, while two supermarket chains are rationing sunflower oil. Four supermarket chains in Greece have also started rationing flour and sunflower oil. Germany is forecasting a rise in food prices of between 20% and 50%. In poorer countries

food riots are starting to breakout. Riots will occur in the wealthier nations when the poorer members of the community are literally priced out of the market for food.

Food becomes a weapon

Gary Kah in 'Hope for the world' update spring 2022 reports a conversation with a farmer. "Today, I had an extended conversation with a very large farmer who is politically well connected. He told me in no uncertain terms that the powers that be at the World Economic Forum (WEF) are planning to "weaponize" food in order to pressure citizens to accept their Great Reset economic restructuring. America has long been a place of plenty – plenty of everything, including energy, money and food. Globalists will attempt to strip us of all the above in order to force us into their coming system. A food shortage is likely just around the corner. Expect it, and prepare now while you can."

The same will happen in Europe. The shortages which we will experience in coming months are only the beginning.

Digital Currency

"It's my ambition to make the UK a global hub for cryptoasset technology, and the measures we've outlined today will help to ensure firms can invest, innovate and scale up in this country. This is part of our plan to ensure the UK financial services industry is always at the forefront of technology and innovation," Rishi Sunak, 4th April 2022.

Stablecoin

To fulfil this ambition the Government is set to introduce stablecoins as a recognised form of payment. Stablecoins are a type of digital currency that offers price stability due to being backed by a reserve asset which in this case would be the UK pound sterling. According to the Treasury, Government regulation will enable consumers to use stablecoin payment services with confidence. This is a step which will ease the way to the adoption of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).

In the past we have held our money either as cash or in a bank account. We are able to access our money by withdrawing cash or by writing a cheque. More recently many transactions are digital by using a bank card or over the internet. If the money is in the bank account the transaction will go through.

What is the difference between a digital transaction using a bank account either by card or on line and a digital currency? The simple answer is privacy. Banks do not divulge their customer's financial transactions unless compelled to do so.

Bitcoin

Bitcoin, the first digital currency, is limited to 21 million tokens. The scarcity is intended to ensure that Bitcoin becomes an investment. As demand increases so does its value. However the value of bitcoin fluctuates and can lead to heavy losses. Stablecoin removes the risk of falling value but it also removes the opportunity to profit. Bitcoins are not stored in a bank but in a personal digital wallet. In order to counter fraud all transactions are permanently recorded, made public and monitored under a system called Blockchain. While the creators of digital currency are independent your personal data is probably safe.

Beware; Bitcoin looks like a classic Ponzi scheme. Most Bitcoin holders see themselves as investors not users and therefore at some point it will fail losing investors billions of dollars. Failure will possibly come as Governments role out their digital surveillance currencies. They will do all they can to remove independent, trust based, currencies such as Bitcoin.

Central Bank Digital Currency

If Central Banks create and control a digital currency, it can be used as a tool for government surveillance of citizens and control of their financial transactions. China is already trialling a CBDC. China expert Akram Keram wrote for The Washington Post, "With digital yuan, the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] will have direct control over and access to the financial lives of individuals, without the need to strong-arm intermediary financial entities. In a digital-yuan-consumed society, the government easily could suspend the digital wallets of dissidents and human rights activists."

Total Control

"And what we're seeing in the world today is I think we are on the brink of a dramatic change where we are about to - and I'll say this boldly - we're about to abandon the traditional system of money and accounting and introduce a new one, and the new one - the new accounting - is what we call blockchain. It means digital. It means having an almost perfect record of every single transaction that happens in the economy, which will give us far greater clarity over what's going on." Dr. Phillipa Malmgren, a technology entrepreneur and economist, speaking at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland

John Whitehead of Activist Post wrote in March 2022. "Despite all of the advantages that go along with living in a digital age--namely, convenience--it's hard to imagine how a cashless world navigated by way of a digital wallet doesn't signal the beginning of the end for what little privacy we have left and leave us vulnerable to the likes of government thieves, data hackers and an all-knowing, all-seeing Orwellian corpo-governmental state."

Missing Millions

A day of repentance was held at the Emmanuel Centre in London on the 26th March. It was repentance over the nearly 10 million lives destroyed through abortion since the passing of the Abortion Act in 1967. There were speakers from several pro-life ministries. Three women recounted the devastating effect of their own abortion. Each was able to testify how Jesus had forgiven and restored them. The time was interspersed with worship and prayer.

A particular issue raised by Andrea Williams of Christian Concern was the amendment to the Health Care Bill which would make permanent pills by post DIY abortions. This amendment was due to be debated in the House of Commons the following Wednesday. Andrea pointed out that this was the most serious legal change to abortion law since the passing of the original act in 1967. Sadly the House of Commons passed the amendment.

Abortion is a sin set apart from other offences against God. It involves the shedding of innocent blood and destruction of a unique life created by God. We believe that life begins at conception. According to science at the moment of fertilisation the child's genetic makeup is complete. Everything is in its DNA including its gender, height, hair, eye and skin colour are all determined. King David understood this when he wrote, *"Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed. And in your book they were all written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them."* Psalm 139:16. Jeremiah also understood this, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."* Jeremiah 1: 5. Abortion is as much a sin as the child sacrifice condemned in the Old Testament.

I wrote in the last edition of Trumpet Sounds, "Jesus will return to a world in rebellion. He returns not in peace but in judgment. In the past I have likened our present state, as Christians, to that of an army fighting a rear guard action. Our orders are to hold as much ground as we can for as long as we can. A counter offensive is coming which will sweep all before it. Until that time those in the battle must persevere. Satan's plan is to flood the world with evil and in so doing wear down the saints. We are to stand firm on the truth. Our battle is against the lies and deceptions of Satan."

Tragically the passing of the pills by post amendment will result in much suffering on the part of women, as a high percentage of home abortions end in hospitalisation. Even more tragic will be the loss of more innocent lives. Jesus is returning to undo all this evil, but before that time His outpoured wrath will be greater because of the shedding of innocent blood.

A World Converted?

How many will be saved. Is it a tiny remnant or a great multitude?

In the last edition of Trumpet Sounds I commented on the confusion within the church with regard to the fulfilment of end time prophecy. To clear that confusion I asked if the 'The Prophetical Creed' of Bishop J C Ryle might be used as a basis to build a consensus with regard to the revelation of things to come. A consensus which sets out what we are agreed upon and identifies those things on which we can hold different views. To take this a step further this article looks at the first statement in that creed. Ryle wrote as follows:

"I BELIEVE that the world will never be completely converted to Christianity by any existing agency before the end comes. In spite of all that can be done by ministers, churches, schools, and missions, the wheat and tares will grow together until the harvest. And when the end comes, it will find the earth in much the same state that it was when the flood came in the days of Noah (Matthew 13:24-30; 24: 37-39)."

In response to this statement I would remove one word. In the first line the word completely could imply substantially converted to Christianity but not total conversion. I find that way too optimistic.

The few

When I was about 8 years old, the Sunday school I attended held a painting completion. The challenge was to draw/paint a picture illustrating a Bible verse. I remember that my contribution was an attempt at illustrating Matthew 7: 13, 14. That verse left its mark. From an early age it was imprinted on my mind that the Christian faith was about the few rather than the many.

The wheat and the tares

Ryle uses Matthew 13:24 – 30, the parable of the wheat and the tares, to support his creed. At night the enemy sowed tares among the wheat. How do you visualise the parable. Do you see a field with an occasional tare amongst the wheat? Perhaps it is a field where wheat and tares are about equal or maybe the tares dominate with little sign of wheat. The parable doesn't answer the question of how much of the harvest is tares. It only asserts that good and evil will coexist right up to the end of the age when Jesus comes for the harvest.

As in the days of Noah

Ryle's next supporting scripture could suit the diehard pessimist. Matthew 24: 37-39, starts "*as in the day of Noah*". It has been estimated that by the time of Noah the population of the world could have reached several billion. Out of that huge number only eight were saved. Are the few going to be that few!?

Of course the point of the reference to Noah is to highlight the failure of the many to heed the warnings. Noah's extraordinary behaviour in building a huge boat was probably a source of mockery. It should have been a stimulus to ask why. Why was this vast structure being built with no apparent purpose? If only people had listened they could have been saved.

Watching the world go by

A short walk from Nazareth is the Mount of the Precipice. By tradition this is the place where the crowd tried to throw Jesus over the cliff. It is a view point which overlooks the Jezreel valley. Far below in the valley ran the Via Maris. It was one of the major trade routes of the ancient world. Along this road, which connected Africa to Asia, the world went by. Traders with their camels loaded with goods, Farmers taking their flocks and herds to market, Roman legions marching out to war and returning loaded with booty and slaves. Was this the inspiration for *"broad is the way which leads to destruction"*? All those people passing by were wrapped up in their daily lives. Like the people of Noah's day they had no concern to know God. Without the fear of God they were on the road to destruction.

In contrast there was another way which led down the hill from Nazareth. It would cross the Via Maris and continue on through the hills of Samaria. The destination was Jerusalem. Three times a year Jesus with His family would travel that rocky way. The small group from the village was not like the bustle on the main trade route. They had a common purpose which was to go to worship God. *"... difficult is the way which leads to life and few there be that find it."* The few is to be understood in comparison to the many on the Via Maris. This small band were intent on going to worship God and obey Him which is the way to life.

What about the harvest?

Jesus sent out 70 disciples to prepare the way in all the towns and villages where He was about to go. In sending them out He said, *"The harvest truly is great but the labourers are few."* Luke 10: 2. The words create a picture of fields of waving corn just waiting to be harvested. Doesn't this image of a plentiful harvest contradict *"and few there be that find it."*?

We could put the two passages together and arrive at the conclusion that the reason few find the way to life is a lack of labourers to reap the harvest. A conclusion which is enough to make many of us feel uncomfortable. Did we pray, as instructed later in the verse, for more labourers? Were we willing to go ourselves to the harvest?

A great multitude

Going to the book of Revelation we read of, *a great multitude which no one can number of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb*". Revelation 7: 9. As we read on we find out that this multitude are saved and engaged in worship. The few have become a great multitude which cannot be numbered. An elder explains to John that *"These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation"*. From my personal study of Revelation I conclude that in this passage *"the great tribulation"* refers to the whole period from the fall to the second coming. As in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17, they are all the saints both resurrected and raptured.

Can the great multitude which cannot be numbered still be regarded as the few? We can rejoice that when gathered to be with the Lord we will be part of a huge crowd. We will also be sad that out of the millions who have lived on this earth, I believe that we will be a tiny minority.

Coming judgment

It is an inescapable conclusion from reading the Bible that when the Lord comes again it will be in judgment. Jesus likens the judgment at His second coming to the destruction of the flood. Suddenly the flood came and took them all away. Jesus adds, *"so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* Matthew 24: 39.

If the world had been largely converted to following Christ there would be no need for an outpouring of Wrath. The return of Jesus would be accompanied by great celebrations. Instead we read of how Jesus will destroy the armies of the world which have come up against Jerusalem. We read that God will pour out bowls of wrath on the earth and that the people of this world will be struck with terror at the appearing of the Lamb.

There is much more in the Bible about the wrath of God at the sin of man. Jesus will come in judgment on the world because the majority have rejected Him and the salvation He has freely offered. A rejection exposed by the world's persecution of the righteous.

Sodom

The story of God's judgment on Sodom confirms that the Lord will not pour out His wrath on this world if there is even a modest number of believers remaining. When the Lord revealed to Abraham that He was about to judge Sodom for its sin, Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom. He knew that God was just and would spare the righteous. Responding to Abraham's pleading the Lord revealed that He would spare Sodom if only ten righteous people were to be found there. The angels who went down to the city only found four to save. Being so few they were removed from the city before the outpouring of wrath.

An unconverted world

Will the world be converted to Christianity before Jesus returns? I agree with the first item of Ryle's Prophetic Creed. All the efforts of Christian missions will not lead to the conversion of the world. Despite a great harvest through the ages at the end of the age there will be a turning away from God. *"....lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold."* Matthew 24: 12. In the end there will be too few believers to cause the Lord to hold back his wrath. Those that trust Him will be removed and then judgment will fall.

The Servant of the People

'The Servant of the People' is a Ukrainian comic TV series. The lead character Vasiliy is a school teacher who is caught on camera raging over the political corruption in his country. The video is posted on YouTube where it goes viral. There is such strong public support that Vasiliy is persuaded to stand for election to President and is elected. As President he is the ordinary decent honest guy who seeks to resist being forced into the government's mold. All around him everyone is to some extent corrupt or acting out of self-interest. The lead character is played by Volodymyr Zelenskiy the current President of the Ukraine. The series with sub titles can be watched on Channel 4. (<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/servant-of-the-people/on-demand/73985-001>).

Volodymyr Zelenskiy

According to the profile of Zelenskiy, posted on the World Economic Forum (WEF) website, he graduated with a law degree in 2000 from Kyiv National Economic University. After university he followed a career as an actor, screenwriter, creative director, and stand-up comedian. His movie career includes 10 feature films.

He played the lead role as Vasiliy in 'The Servant of the People' TV Series, which effectively launched his political career. On 21 April 2019, Zelenskiy won the election with 73.22% of the vote and on 20 May 2019, was sworn-in as the President of Ukraine. Did the Ukrainians vote for Vasiliy from 'The Servant of the People'? His election demonstrates the power of creating a media persona which many believe in.

What Ukraine got was Zelenskiy. When campaigning Zelenskiy railed against politicians who hid their assets offshore to avoid tax. A Guardian report 3rd October 2021 found that Zelenskiy was no different. His wealth is hidden in a sprawling network of offshore companies co-owned with his long-time friends and TV business partners some of who have joined him in government.

On becoming Ukraine's president, Zelenskiy hailed Justin Trudeau (PM of Canada) as "one of those leaders who inspired" him "to join politics". In January 2020 Zelenskiy addressed the annual meeting of Klaus Schwab's WEF.

(I accept that Zelenskiy has given real leadership to Ukraine in the current crisis but he is part of the globalist elite).

Mykhailo Fedorov

In 2020. Zelenskiy's government launched the Diia. It is a digital app that combines identity card, passport, driving license, vaccination record, national insurance, social and healthcare benefits. It is the brainchild of Zelenskiy's former digital campaign manager and now deputy Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov. The aim is to put all government services on line by 2024. This year Fedorov was named as one of the WEF's young global leaders.

World Government

WEF's founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab gave a key note speech to the World Government Summit in Dubai in March. In the speech Schwab called on world leaders to address global issues, such as the damage done to our economies and societies by COVID-19, climate change and clashes between global powers. To tackle these problems a one world government must be formed as soon as possible.

Klaus Schwab has consistently praised Chinese Communist President Xi Jinping, including a statement from this year in which he told the leader of China that his dictatorial regime has made "significant social and economic achievements" under his "inclusive" leadership.

Does that mean that Schwab approves of the current lockdown in Shanghai and 45 other Chinese cities? Is he concerned that starving people scream from balconies while food rots on ships? Does the genocide of Uyghur Muslims and the massive organ-harvesting program concern him? China has been referred to by critics as the "nightmare of the world's first truly totalitarian state." Is the Chinese totalitarian state the type of World Government he has in mind?

The Snatching Away

We pray regularly 'come Lord Jesus'. His return is our blessed hope. Especially in these closing years of the age, as the darkness deepens and mankind becomes more entrenched in its rebellion, we long for His return. We pray for the Lord's coming but are we ready? Are we ready to drop everything and go, when the angels come for us?

Snatched away

"Then we, who are alive and survive, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we

shall always be together with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4: 17 (Interlinear Scripture analyser).

Most translations of the Bible describe Christians as being ‘caught up’ to meet the Lord when He returns. However a more literal translation which corresponds to how the Greek is translated elsewhere in the New Testament is to be ‘snatched up’.

It is the word used when the people tried to take Jesus by force to make Him king (John 6:15): the devil snatches away the good seed sown in people’s hearts (Matt 13: 19): the wolf snatches a lamb when the hired shepherd runs away (John 10:12): the Roman captain snatched Paul away from the angry mob when they are trying to kill him (Acts 23: 10). The above illustrate that the word implies a decisive sometimes violent intervention.

When the Lord returns He will send His angels to snatch us away. It will be a raid on enemy territory.

Raid on Entebbe

A good image of snatching away is presented in the 1976 film ‘Raid on Entebbe’. The film is about the covert mission mounted by the Israeli military to rescue Jewish hostages being held at Entebbe airport in Uganda. The whole operation depended on secrecy. If the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin had found out what was planned it is probable that all the hostages would have been killed.

The arrival by plane of the Israeli soldiers was so unexpected that the Ugandan guards were taken by surprise. The operation had to be completed very quickly. The hostages had no time to prepare. As soon as the order was given they went straight to the awaiting planes which carried them away to safety.

We must always be ready so that when the angels come to fetch us we drop everything and go. Jesus said don’t even go back into the house to pack your bags. As in the military operation at Entebbe we are to be like the hostages, who obeyed orders and at the word went with the soldiers.

Satan’s House

“But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.” Matt 24: 43. In this instance Satan is the master of the house. Jesus is the one who comes like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5: 2) to break into that house in order to snatch his followers away. He is not stealing but claiming what is His own.

Because this is a raid into enemy territory there has to be absolute secrecy. The timing of our Lord’s return must be a surprise to Satan and his evil host. That is why Jesus said that He is coming at an hour we do not expect.

For most people life will be going on as normal. Jesus said that they will be eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Giving in marriage tells us that they will be making plans for the future unaware that everything is about to change.

The Rescue

Suddenly the world will be reeling from the unexpected. The earth will literally be shaken. There will be a brief period of dense darkness into which intense light will burst. There will be the voice of an archangel with the trumpet of God sounding. The people of the world will be terrified. Into this confusion the angels will come, sent to rescue all God's faithful ones.

Lots wife

When describing this time Jesus gave a very succinct warning, "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17: 32). In the story in Genesis 19, when Lot and his wife and daughters were fleeing Sodom, Lot's wife looked back. In hesitating she was caught in the judgment which fell on the city and died. She looked back because her life, friends, possessions were in the Sodom. She was unable to leave it all behind. Jesus is telling us in advance that when the angels come to snatch us away we must not hesitate. The angels insisted that Lot hurry. He had to reach the place of safety before they could bring down judgment.

When?

It is clear to me that Jesus taught us always to be living in the expectation of His return. His coming will take the world and more importantly Satan by surprise. If I were to place the time of His return it would be immediately after the tribulation, but because of the element of surprise I can pray every day 'come Lord Jesus'.

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