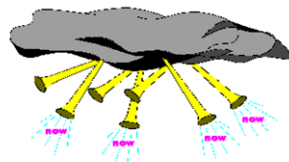


TRUMPET SOUNDS

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“...the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready, and to her is was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Revelation 19: 7 – 8.

It has often been said that we are not saved by good works but saved for good works. Good works being all that is done both in obedience to God's word and in obedience to the particular calling given to each one of us. They are the fruit of the Holy Spirit working through us.

In the first century, in accordance with Jewish marriage custom, a year would elapse between the betrothal ceremony and the wedding. During that year the bridegroom would prepare a home for His bride. The bride would spend the year preparing her wedding gown. She would embroider a linen garment so that on the wedding day she would look beautiful for her bridegroom. A beautiful gown would speak of the love the bride had for her betrothed.

Jesus told a parable about a king who held a wedding feast for his son. Many who were invited refused to come. So the king sent his servants out into the streets with an invitation to all to come to the feast. Once the guests had come in the king saw one person without a wedding garment. The King questioned the man as to why he wasn't dressed in a wedding garment to which the man had no answer. The king instructed his servants to cast the man out. (Matthew 22: 1 – 14). Without wedding garments we have no part in the wedding feast.

Are we to worry that our righteous acts may not be good enough? Will we be rejected? We all fall short and recognize that we could have done better. The word translated 'righteous acts' could also be translated 'righteous verdict'. The fine linen garment which we are given is a testimony to the verdict. Jesus declares all His followers as righteous, if they have sincerely repented of their sin, acknowledged Him as Lord and received the Holy Spirit. Righteous acts are our embroidery. They will speak of our response in love to Jesus.

We live in troubled times which are causing many to fear. Instead of fear we are to be looking forward to the *“blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Titus 2:13. Our priority is to make sure that we are ready. We are to respond to His love by preparing our wedding garments. He provides the garment we embroider it in obedience to please Him.

It is God's Work

"What does God's Word say about how we are to complete the work which He has started in us? Or is that even a proper question? Are we to complete the work that He has already promised to complete (Phil. 1:6; see also Psa. 138:8; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 2:13)? Well, yes and no. We are to work out our salvation, but it is only possible by trusting in God who is working in us to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Thess. 1:11; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:10). So while we co-labour with Him, yet the weight of the work rests on Him through His grace which abides in us as we abide in Messiah Yeshua. Of course, it was His grace which started the work by placing us in Messiah when we first were saved (Eph. 2:8)."

Chuck Cohen, Intercessors for Israel

Transgender

At the time of writing the UK Government has blocked the Scottish Gender Recognition Act from becoming law. What happens next is unclear. The Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament by a two thirds majority just before Christmas. The Act makes it faster and easier to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate. The process is opened up to 16 and 17 year olds and the time a person has to live as their chosen gender is cut from 2 years to 3 months before the change of gender is legally irreversible.

The UK Government's objection to the Act, is due to it adversely affecting the operation of the UK wide Equality Act.

Made in the Image of God

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them" Genesis 1: 27. For the Christian a key statement on this issue is found in the first chapter of Genesis. The very first thing the Bible tells us about man is that we are created in the image of God. It then adds we are created male and female.

Mankind was created to look after God's creation. That was our past and remains our future calling. For that role God created two people who would work in perfect harmony. With God as the third person they would be a picture on earth of the Trinity. The description of the creation of Eve emphasizes both her sameness (she was taken from Adam) and distinctness.

For how long Adam and Eve worked together in harmony we do not know. We do know that they gave in to temptation and fell from their perfect, harmonious, innocent early life. Their unity is replaced by conflict. They set about blaming each other for what had happened. The downward spiral leading

mankind further and further away from God had begun. Gender dysphoria is, like everything else which is wrong with this world, the fruit of the fall.

Irreversible Damage

Abigail Shrier, author of 'Irreversible Damage, Teenage Girls and the Transgender Craze', considers that there are three types of gender dysphoria. One is that of small boys who, for a time, want to dress as girls. Another is among teenage girls. The third type is predatory men who want access to women's spaces.

For the majority of small boys who want to dress as girls it is a passing phase. Very few will still identify as the opposite sex as adults. Shrier has talked with many adults in this condition. She found them non-threatening and not wanting to force their condition on others.

Suddenly we have developed a culture in which a four year old playing with dolls or wanting to wear a dress is identified as having gender dysphoria. Instead of encouraging them to grow out of it, they are condemned to be treated as the opposite sex as if that was their true nature.

Shrier observes with regard to teenage girls that this was a non-existent condition before the advent of social media. Prior to 2012 there was no scientific literature on girls aged 11 to 21 ever having developed gender dysphoria. Tragically there is today a teenage mental health crisis with record levels of anxiety, depression and self-harm. Social media tells teenagers that the way to escape their low self-esteem is to recognize that they are in the wrong body. Violent pornography, which is easily available on the internet, also plays a part. It causes girls to be terrified of men. Their escape from danger is to cease to be a woman.

The third type of gender dysphoria identified by Shrier is predatory men. They are men who use a pretense of gender dysphoria to gain access to women's spaces.

Confusion

The transgender movement insists that we must affirm people in their choices. There are apparently numerous genders. It is up to the individual which gender they identify with. To fail to honour that choice is becoming a criminal offence. The law at present requires a person to live as their chosen gender for a period of time. At present that is 2 years which is reduced to 3 months under the Scottish Act. With so many genders to choose from what is the appropriate life style to go with that gender? With so many pronouns how easy it is to get it wrong.

In the past biological sex and gender were interchangeable terms. People were understood to be either male or female. Radical feminist Judith Butler wrote, "When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequences that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and women and feminine a male body as easily as a female one".

Gender based on feelings is meaningless. When it is claimed that there are a hundred genders, it is a recipe for confusion. 'The text of 'The UK Gender Recognition Act 2004' deals mainly with the process of making a change. Very little is said about the effect. The Act only makes sense if gender and biological sex are the same. This is confirmed in Section 9:1

"Where a full gender recognition certificate is issued to a person, the person's gender becomes for all purposes the acquired gender (so that, if the acquired gender is the male gender, the person's sex becomes that of a man and, if it is the female gender, the person's sex becomes that of a woman)".

If we were to accept that there are numerous genders the legislation becomes confusing. Is it legislation for biological sex or for assumed gender? From a Christian point of view these are people who need either help or severe censure not affirmation.

Same Sex Marriage

On a similar issue the Bishops of the Church of England are proposing that the church should allow the blessing of same sex relationships following a Secular Civil Partnership. From reading an article in the Telegraph quoting the Archbishop of York it is clear that he accepts that it is a sexual relationship which is being blessed. Historically the church has always held, in obedience to the teaching of the Bible, that all sexual activity outside marriage is sinful. Even blessing a same sex relationship is a step too far.

On the Diocese of Chichester web site the Bishop describes the policy as "radical new Christian inclusion founded in scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology, and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it". I am perplexed as to how it is any of those things.

The 'inclusive gospel' is founded on the philosophy that God loves everyone. We are all part of His family. There is an element of truth in this. But the love of God is extended to draw us towards Him. At the Cross we repent of our sin and ask the Holy Spirit to transform us. God loves repentant sinners. He loves those who humble themselves in obedience to His word. That is the true gospel.

ChatGPT

The following link is to a must see 8 minute video launched at the beginning of January: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLehkWESDJ8>.

If you don't have a computer I urge you to find someone who has and watch it with them. The video is an excellent introduction by Jorden Peterson to an Artificial Intelligence Platform (AI) called ChatGPT.

We are used to internet search engines which answer our questions by finding out what has been written on a subject and listing it for us. (I appreciate that search engines like Google only show the information which they want us to see not everything available on a subject).

ChatGPT uses AI to analyse all the content on a subject on the internet and then write an answer to the question. For instance Jorden Peterson has written several books on rules for living. Peterson asked ChatGPT to write for him an essay that is a 13th rule for his book 'Beyond Order'. The essay was to be written in the style that combines his own writing, the King James Bible with the Tao Te Ching. He considered that the task of combining the intersection of all three was impossible.

ChatGPT wrote a 4 page essay in about 3 seconds. Peterson's verdict was that the essay was so good that even he wouldn't be able to tell that he didn't write it. In the video he gives other impressive examples of what the programme can achieve. That is now. In six months' time it will be far more intelligent. Elon Musk thinks that the world will be controlled by the person who produces the most functioning AI system, the fastest. He, like many others, including the Chinese Communist Party are working on these systems.

The Second Coming

Are we ready for that great day when our Lord Jesus Christ will return?

In exploring the Prophetic creed of J.C.Ryle, we have looked at the first three statements. First comes the understanding that the world will not be converted before Jesus returns. Second is the recognition that the world will in fact get progressively more evil as the day of the Lord's return gets nearer. The third item identifies Christians as a called out people. We are not of this world but destined for a future with Christ. We now move on to the fourth item of the creed. It is the great hope of all true believers. One day Jesus Christ is coming back. Hallelujah!

To quote Ryle: "I BELIEVE that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the great event which will wind up the present dispensation, and for which we

ought daily to long and pray. “Thy kingdom come,” “Come, Lord Jesus,” should be our daily prayer. We look backward, if we have faith, to Christ dying on the cross, to His resurrection from the dead, and we ought to look forward no less, if we have hope, to Christ coming again. (John 14:3; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:12).”

Come Lord Jesus should be our daily prayer. Especially as we see the world around us become steadily darker. We used to feel that evil was becoming more entrenched with every passing year. It now seems that every day witnesses a deepening rebellion against God and His laws. In times like this we need to be *“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Titus 2: 13. But churches that build that hope are very few. How many in today’s church are; “... eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 1: 7? In writing his letters to the churches Paul took it for granted that longing for Christ’s return would be one of the identifying marks of a true believer.

Home

Our eagerness for Christ’s return will be influenced by where we consider home. If home is this world then we will not look for or even want Jesus to return. It really would upset our plans. But if our heart is in heaven then the sooner Jesus comes back the happier we will be. Jesus said that, *“For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.”* Matthew 6: 21. Laying up treasure in heaven will always prove a good investment.

The first verse which Ryle used to support his creed is John 14: 3, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”*. Jesus is coming back to take us home. Once we have put our trust in Jesus our real home is with Him. We have become like the people of faith in Hebrews who, *“desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.”* Hebrews 11: 16.

Not all long for that heavenly country. Jesus summed it up in His warning, *“remember Lot’s wife.”* Luke 17: 32. When Lot’s wife was dragged out of Sodom by the angels she was told not to look back. She could not resist the backward glance. Her home, friends and life were behind her in the city. Her heart was there and so she was lost.

Anticipation

That day when Jesus returns will be a time to reward the righteous. Ryle uses 2 Timothy 4: 8 as the second scripture to support his creed. *“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will*

give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

The crown of righteousness is a victors crown for all who complete the race. Like the medals at the Olympics they are there ready and waiting to be awarded to the winners. The crowns are not just for those who come first but will be given to all who run with endurance the race set before us.

Besides rewards there is so much more that we can look forward to when the Lord returns. Foremost is the promise that from that time on we will always be with Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4: 17). What a comfort after all the sin and darkness of this present age. But there is much more to come.

On that day, we can also look forward to renewed bodies (1 Corinthians 15: 52). In this present age we experience decay. The effect of sin takes its toll on our bodies, which age and wear out. Creation is also subject to the bondage of death. Pain and suffering, toil and tears abound. Through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross we are saved from the guilt of sin. Through the Holy Spirit entering into our lives we can have victory over sin. Still to come is the day when we will be liberated from the effect of sin. That day of liberation is our blessed hope. When our God and Saviour Jesus Christ appears we will be transformed. Our present mortal bodies will be changed into immortal bodies. Sin and death will no longer have any power over us.

On that wonderful day we will share in Christ's glory. *"When Christ who is our life appears then you also will appear with Him in glory.* Colossians 3:4. We will be a new creation prepared to enjoy eternity with the Father and the Son.

On that day creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption. It will be renewed by the power of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:21). Wars will be no more (Isaiah 2:2-4), famine forgotten (Amos 9:13), disease will be a thing of the past (Isaiah 33:24). The natural world will be brought into perfect harmony (Isaiah 11:6-9). A golden age of peace will dawn when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2: 14).

The redemption of our bodies and the establishment of the kingdom should fill us with anticipation, but there is even more promised to those who are faithful. *"Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them."* Luke 12: 37.

When Jesus comes again He will provide a wedding feast for all who have trusted Him. For those who have been faithful in the final hour He will come and

personally serve them. They will have the privilege of being treated as the most honoured guests at the feast.

Hastening

In 2 Peter 3: 12 we read *“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,”* With all the blessings that will flow from that glorious day we ask how can we hasten the coming of the Lord? The answer has been expressed as three P's.

Preach the gospel.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come”. Matthew 24: 14. The church has been given a commission to preach the gospel to all nations. The end will not come until that commission is fulfilled. The Father will determine when that task has been accomplished.

Prepare a people

“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.” 2 Peter 3:11. The bride is to make herself ready (Revelation 19: 7). The Father will not let His son return until the bride is ready. As we near the end of the marathon, as written in Hebrews, *“let us lay aside every weight, and sin that easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”* Hebrews 12: 1. It may take the fires of persecution to perfect that bride, but when Jesus returns she will be ready.

Pray

As Ryle wrote, *“Thy kingdom come,” “Come, Lord Jesus,”* should be our daily prayer. *“Thy kingdom come”* is not just a prayer for the establishing of Christ's reign on earth here and now. It is also recognition that His kingdom cannot truly come until the King is in residence.

Jesus told a parable about a persistent widow. Day after day she pleaded for justice. Eventually the unjust judge gave in and granted her plea. Jesus then said that we, His elect, are to cry out to Him day and night. God will in His time avenge all the injustice, cruelty, barbarity in this world.

Jesus ends the parable with a question, *“Never the less, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find the faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:1 – 8). I believe that He will find faith if, as Ryle wrote, we make *“Thy kingdom come,”* and *“Come, Lord Jesus,”* our daily prayer. Soon that great day will come when the trumpet shall sound and the Lord will call all His servants to join Him in the air. Hallelujah. Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.

The 15 Minute City to Save the World

Paris was the first 15 minute city. In 2024 the concept is going to be trialled in Oxford. The 15 minute city restricts residents' freedom to travel. They must keep within defined areas. The World Economic Forum (WEF) is enthusiastic about this development. They are promoting it as a way to save the planet. In November 2021 the WEF hailed it as "one of the biggest urban ideas to emerge from the pandemic".

A 15 minute city is divided up into neighbourhoods each containing all the essential services such as shops, schools, doctors etc. Everything you need will be available within 15 minutes walking time. Oxford was probably chosen because it is notorious for its gridlocked traffic. Easing the gridlock provides a cover for why the policy is needed, while not admitting that it is a globalist agenda.

The 15 minute city concept is deemed an essential part of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and achieving Net Zero. If you live in a Green 15 minute city travel by car outside of your designated neighbourhood will be restricted to a limited number of times a year. Oxford will be divided into six neighbourhood zones. Surveillance cameras will be installed at the access points with residents leaving their neighbourhood monitored as they travel across the city. There will be fines for those who exceed the number of times that they are permitted to leave their neighbourhood.

Not to be left behind in the bid to take more control over people's lives, the Scottish Government is working towards its own 20 minute neighbourhood plans. These are outlined in the draft National Planning Framework 4. The aim is to reduce the need to travel in order to meet the United Nations sustainable Development Goals.

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the Government taking greater control of our lives and destroying our freedom. So how will the government respond to those who refuse to go along with what is proposed? Lessons have been learnt from Covid on how to deal with dissidents. The following quote is from 'In our hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals'. House of Lords 7 September 2022.

"Lessons can be learned from both successful and unsuccessful behaviour change interventions in other policy areas. Most notably, the widespread behaviour change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise that the changes demanded by the pandemic were seen as a short-term response to a short-term emergency, nonetheless it will be a major missed opportunity if

the Government does not seize the chance to evaluate behaviour change interventions implemented during the pandemic and apply lessons learned”.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30146/documents/174873/default/>

According to the House of Lord’s committee all aspects of our lives need to be managed in order to lessen the impact of climate change. Just as the public were coerced into accepting Covid lockdowns, so they will be coerced into accepting increased restrictions on freedom. Remember Covid project fear? Some people still seem to be suffering from it.

The Chosen

In Trumpet Sounds 142 I included a summary of some of the points raised in a booklet by Lighthouse Trails concerning the popular TV series ‘The Chosen’. Recently I have been in contact with people who have enthused about the series. This has awakened my fears. They have talked as if the dramatization was a true reflection of the characters involved.

I confess a personal dislike of the historical biographical novel. It is a book in which some unfortunate real historical person has a story woven around them. The author can turn the person into any sort of character they think fit. Whether it is a reasonable reflection of the person, who knows. If the book is well written it will define the historical character in people’s mind.

With ‘The Chosen’ the writers admit that 95% of the material is not found in the Bible. Therefore 95% of the content is historical fiction. It expresses the writers’ reinterpretation of events. From comments heard and the enthusiasm surrounding the series it is clear that ‘The Chosen’ is defining the Biblical characters in viewers minds. How many viewers keep in mind that these are fictional people?

I have been criticised for repeating comments on ‘The Chosen’ without having watched the series myself. From what I have seen it only reinforces my qualms. The Bible contains all we need for our salvation. There is legitimate background information which can help our understanding of the context of statements and events. Caution is required to ensure that we do not move away from the verifiable to mere speculation.

Lighthouse trails commented on the Mormon influence in the production of ‘The Chosen’. Enthusiasts have assured me that so far no Mormon ideas have been evident. However I would expect that as the series gains acceptance some Mormon teaching will subtly creep in. Especially as director Dallas Jenkins can see no difference between the Mormon Jesus and the Biblical Jesus.

To read the booklet: <https://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=34462>

Open Doors ‘World Watch List 2023’.

Open Doors distinguishes between two main expressions of persecution: ‘squeeze’ and ‘smash’. ‘Smash’ is relatively easy to identify and track, since it refers to concrete acts of overt violence against Christians, because of their faith. ‘Squeeze’, on the other hand, is the persecution experienced as pressure in many areas of Christian life.

Christian experience is thus considered in five different areas of life – which can be considered ‘squeeze’ – as well as the final category being the ‘smash’ of violence:

- **Private life.** What freedom does a Christian have to worship and own religious material? Is conversion to Christianity allowed? Is freedom of thought permitted?
- **Family life.** How free are Christians to express their faith within their family? Is it possible to hold Christian family milestones, such as Christian marriages and funerals?
- **Community life.** Can Christians live without harassment and discrimination in their local communities? How does their faith affect their education or employment?
- **National life.** Does the government allow Christians to express their faith? Can converts call themselves Christians on official documents? Do the police target Christians?
- **Church life.** Are Christians allowed to meet together? Can they build churches? And if they can, are they heavily monitored? Are Bibles freely available?
- **Violence.** Are Christians attacked mentally or physically? Do they face sexual harassment? Are they arrested, abducted, tortured, imprisoned or even killed?

The list includes 11 countries in which Christians suffer severe persecutions. They are in order of severity; North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan and India.

To arrive at this list Open Doors uses a 100 question survey. The questions are answered by Open Doors partners in each country who gather information from key contacts. Completed questionnaires are cross checked by external experts and results are independently audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. While the World Watch list includes 50 countries each year the research is conducted in 150 countries.

Rabbis accept Jesus - Quoted from Israel Today

A few years ago more than 25 prominent rabbis from Israel and abroad issued a statement calling for a renewed look at Jesus, Christians and the New Testament faith.

Quoting from their own sages, these outstanding Orthodox rabbis are not ashamed to exalt the name of Jesus, welcoming the carpenter from Nazareth back into the Jewish fold.

“Jesus brought a double goodness to the world,” declared the group of well-known rabbis. “On the one hand he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically... and not one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah.” At the same time “he removed idols from the nations.”

Saying that Jesus, even more than any other Jewish Sage, honoured, strengthened and protected the “immutability of the Torah” is an extraordinary acknowledgement. These leading rabbis are turning the tides of history by removing one of the main stumbling blocks in the path of a major Jewish reclamation of Jesus!

This call by these distinguished rabbis to embrace Christians as “brothers and sisters” is no less a miracle. For Jews to accept Christians with such endearment, after so much misunderstanding and anti-Semitic ugliness, can only be understood as a divine work of heavenly grace, the likes of which I find unfathomable.

David Lazarus, Israel Today 22/12/22.

Web Site: www.trumpetsounds.net

Email: contact@trumpetsounds.net

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