



# Issachar Comments Papers

## Expounding biblical concepts on the world scene today

January 2014

# OUTLOOK FOR 2014

*"Watchman, what is left of the night?  
Morning is coming, but also the night"*

On New Year's Day I listened to a programme on the radio in which a number of BBC reporters discussed the outlook for the coming year. They began by looking back over the past year at the outstanding events of 2013. They also played recordings of their predictions in the New Year broadcast a year ago and they gave each other marks for their accuracy. Several of them had thought that the euro would not survive the year and there were a number of other things that were not right.

Then they turned to the coming year and discussed their outlook for the year 2014. They had lots to say about different parts of the world, the economy, and the outlook for Britain and Europe. Most of their forecasts were pretty gloomy and the chairman asked if they had any good news. It was strange that none of them had anything of significance that they could foresee as good news for the future.

### Strange Prophecy

I think this is true for any discerning observer of the international scene but in my quiet times I took this before the Lord and I felt his response was that there most certainly is good news but this does not mean that suddenly all our problems are going to fade away. I was reminded of the rather strange prophecy in Isaiah 21.11-12 where someone asks a similar question of what lies in the future.

*"Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night? The watchman replies, 'Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again'."*

Biblical scholars all struggle to interpret this prophecy because it is presented as a question coming from Edom and the Edomites were really hated in Judah because they had gloated over Jerusalem when it was destroyed by the Babylonians. But Edom had also been conquered by the Babylonians and there was great suffering there. Now someone comes from Edom with a question for the Prophet in Jerusalem because people in the whole region were suffering from the cruelty, oppression and injustice of Babylon. How much longer was this going to continue? This was the question on everyone's lips. Knowing there was a Prophet in Jerusalem the Edomites were so desperate they sent someone to ask if there was any word from God about when Babylon would fall.

### Dawn Will Come

The answer was that it is still night but the dawn will come. Babylon will certainly fall, but not just yet. That, I believe is the word of the Lord for 2014. Of course there is good news! But there is no end in sight of the creeping secularisation that for 40 years has been destroying the spiritual heritage of our nation and undermining the foundations of Western civilisation. This will continue for a while

It is just one year ago that I believed God was saying, "Teach my people to live in Babylon". A few months later the word "victoriously" was added. So the word we have been carrying in Issachar Ministries is, "Teach my people to live **victoriously** in Babylon". That word is unchanged today as we look ahead into 2014.

### New Mini-Book

The people of Israel and all the surrounding nations had to learn to live under Babylon and there is much that we can learn from them. I have spent much of the Christmas and New Year break in writing

a mini book, "Living in Babylon" which brings together a lot of what I've been studying throughout the past year, beginning with Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jeremiah 29) telling them to build up their community life so that they increase in number and not decrease. He also assured them that God had got good plans for them, to prosper them and not to harm them - to give them hope and a future. More importantly, whereas traditionally they had relied on the priests in the Temple in Jerusalem to pray for the nation, now, their prayer life would change dramatically and they would discover a new relationship with God through which he could guide them and prosper them.

## Signs of Hope

Last month I said that there were some signs of hope that young people in the age group 14 to 44 have significantly changed their attitudes towards adultery and faithfulness in marriage since 1990. This shows the deep longing for love and stability in family relationships that is part of our human nature but has been corrupted by the undermining of biblical values of truth in our modern secular society. All the indications show that family life will continue to break down at an increasing rate during this coming year especially when the first homosexual couples will be married in March with a great deal of hype and publicity.

This is why God is allowing us to go through a season in Babylon in order to work out his purposes just as he allowed his covenant people to go into exile in Babylon in the sixth century BC. It was there that they discovered the value of family and community and it was there in Babylon that they discovered the new covenant relationship with God prophesied by Jeremiah. They saw the horrific results of idolatry in Babylon which cured them of running after other gods. There is no mention of idolatry in the postexilic prophets and idolatry has never been a problem in Jewish society for the past 2500 years. In a similar way it may take a season in Babylon for the Western nations in this post-Christian era to recognise what they have lost through discarding their heritage - selling their inheritance for a mess of pottage that will lead them to disaster.

## Season in Babylon

It may be that the disaster has to come upon Western civilisation in the same way as disaster had to come upon Jerusalem and Judaea; and a season in Babylon was essential for them to discover the truth about God and about human sin and society. We are well on the road to that disaster, both in economic and social values. The economy is still in great trouble, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted to MPs last week and he is going to have to cut £1 billion from the welfare budget which will have huge social consequences but we cannot go on borrowing and building up the national debt for ever. There will come a point when the whole system collapses.

In a similar way, having ditched the fundamental concept of marriage which is the major stabiliser of family and community, the breakdown of family life will continue with the inevitable results in destabilising society to the point where the breakdown of civil order will occur on a massive scale which the authorities cannot contain or control.

These two forces of economic and social corruption will coalesce at some point in the future which will cause the general collapse of Western civilisation as all its major social institutions crumble.

## Night will End: Morning will Dawn

But the good news is that night will end and morning will dawn. Out of the ashes of our crumbling civilisation there will arise new forms of Christian community that are already being birthed today in the small groups of Christians committed to prayer and Bible study. These are the foetal signposts of the new Church that will lead the way to the creation of the new era in a post-modernist society emerging from 21st century Babylon. The good news will be proclaimed across the world, "Babylon has fallen!" That day will surely come.

Those who know the truth and have the word of the Lord, need to support one another and ensure that the community of believers increases and does not decrease. These are the good plans that God has for his people - plans to give hope and a future. This is what we have to teach our children and our grandchildren - to pass on the faith while it is still night, preparing the way for the dawn.

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