

Sunday 2nd August 2020



*Welcome
to
Giffnock
The Park
Church
A time for
Reflection*

Good Morning everyone,

Another week has passed and we are perhaps seeing what Sir Winston Churchill best described as, "not the beginning of the end but the end of the Beginning." It is hard to believe that we are in the 20th Week of this story that we call the Corona Virus Pandemic and I trust that through it all you have been able to contend with the challenges this has presented. How we have all dealt with this crisis as nations across the world will go down in history as one of the greater challenging times of history. The success of our Response and the mistakes made in the process will be there for all to see and if those responsible for decisions made try to cover it all up, the death toll alone should tell us enough. There will be a great deal said about the folly of the announcements by some of the more prominent and powerful Political leaders of the day, who have not approached the response to this disease well and there will be commendation to those who have and no doubts there may be initial celebration when a Vaccine is successfully produced and of course the race is now on among the Pharmaceutical giants to be the first to successfully achieve this.

Powerful nations are now spying on one another more intently to achieve this end and I am sure that it is not just the Russians or the Chinese who are playing this game. Industrial Espionage has been big business for a long time and the world of the internet allows that more disreputable behaviour to happen more remotely from the comforts of one's own home even. The People of nations today, political leaders of the day the collective of people of nations have all forgotten or refused to acknowledge that there will be a reckoning for one's behaviour and yet the Bibles clearly tells us of a time that will come when we will

stand before the Mercy Seat to account for all that was said and done. Perhaps an even greater indictment will be levelled at the Christian Church where there are so many today who refuse to acknowledge or cannot accept that God our Father is also our Judge, someone to whom we all must answer.

In our reflection this morning, we are to take a moment to consider these things as a timely reminder that we all need to take account of our lives and how we live in the light of God's love to us and for us and that we should be careful to recognise the plank in our own eye before commenting on the speck in another's. I hope you find this time once again to be an opportunity to be encouraged, challenged, and even changed for the better in our faith through these challenging days.

With best wishes

Calum D. Macdonald

Virtual Kirk Session Meeting

Elders please note that I seek to call a Virtual meeting on ZOOM of the Kirk Session for **Wednesday 5th August at 7.30pm.** My apologies to those who do not have the required internet capability- I am hopeful that we can begin to physically meet within the next 4 weeks. In the meantime, please note the information below to establish join our Zoom meeting.

Topic: CALUM MACDONALD's Zoom Meeting

Time: Aug 5, 2020 07:30 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/78784559591?pwd=dzNNZlZnUHJpSUZNTHdkVUI0Qmg0QT09>

Meeting ID: 787 8455 9591

Passcode: 1f63qw

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*“To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees.”
(Billy Graham)*

Let us Pray

Our Loving Heavenly Father,
As we Gaze upon the light of a new day, and as we get ready to face not just this new day but a new week ahead, we come again to You, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the one who flung stars into space and brought the earth into being. We see You as one who has a Holiness and perfection beyond compare, whose Immortal capacity to oversee life remains unequalled by anything that anyone might try, do or say.

Give us strength for these days to come that we might be strong for You in a world full of temptation and disappointment, a world of violence and fear, a world where there is so much uncertainty and distrust, of cynicism and unbelief.

Lord God, You know that there are struggles that we face in these days as we contend with a crisis of ill health across the world, where the fears of a second wave begin to arise - sustain us and keep us through these times we pray.

Father, there are those across the world today who continue to be persecuted for their faith by those in power. We see within our own nation and that of others a rising intolerance of a Christian view and that there are nations across the world for which it is a dangerous thing to proclaim one's

Christian faith. Sustain them and keep all for whom this applies, guard over them we pray.

Be with all of us as we go through these difficult days ahead. Carry us when we are too weak. Where we stumble into temptation, forgive us Gracious God, where our lives are marred by resentment and jealousy of others, forgive us Father where our mindset and our attitude towards those round about us is out of kilter with your ways and your purpose, forgive us not because we deserve it but because of the Grace our Lord Jesus upon us and our faith in Him. Lead us away from everything that distracts us from You our Father in heaven and bring us to that place in our lives where our faith and trust sustains us keeps in your Love. We need Your strength in these days to come that evil might be overcome so that, as with the Psalmist, we might triumph against them.

So, in the stillness of these moments, in the privacy of our homes, left with our own thoughts while we may not yet be able to meet with others in fellowship, we continue never the less to worship and praise you, our Father in heaven. Bless all our loved ones with your Strength this day and keep us all safe through these times as you remain our strength for today and hope for tomorrow.

This we pray in Jesus name

Amen

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Revelations Chapter 4: 1 – 9

The throne in heaven

4 ¹After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. *In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. **These are the seven spirits of God.*** ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the centre, round the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and behind. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all round, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

*“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,” [b]
who was, and is, and is to come’*

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall

down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

*¹¹ 'You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.'*

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Hi Everyone

The craziness continues as we continue in a restrictive lockdown story and we are now 20 weeks into this story. The Image above reflects our Reading this morning for I have chosen what some would understand to be among one of the most difficult books in the Bible to make reflection on. It is a book that many do not like to consider because of some of the themes that arise, themes that perhaps do not have the positive theological outcome. It speaks of the end times for Humanity and the judgement that awaits us all. In university circles, theologians would include this book among others that would be part of an overall theological theme called Eschatology

Our generations today do not like to consider that such things might be, that such calamity could be faced by all on earth today. While I believe we should be prepared to confront such issues at some point in our lives, I also think there is more to be positive about than fearful of when we understand things through the eyes of faith, even that which is written of, in the book of Revelation. So I hope this morning we might get a wee glimpse of how we might understand heaven.

Let me begin by a word of caution, that is to say, be careful about how we might mis-interpret what is written and hopefully receive things with an open mind and heart in the right Spirit and I use that word deliberately for our purposes. There have been many stories about a new minister and his congregation.

On this occasion the story is told of a minister who having only recently moved into town, set about the task of visiting his parishioners. All was going

well until he came upon this one house. Enjoying such a gloriously sunny day he noticed the car was in the driveway. It was obvious that someone was at home,

However, no one came to the door despite having knocked the door several times as well as wrung the bell. (A persistent minister without doubt) Finally he took out his card, wrote on the back "Revelation 3:20" and stuck it on the back of the door. Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if anyone hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me."

That Sunday after the service, the office bearers were counting the offering where they found an envelope in which the minister's calling card had been returned in the collection plate. Below his message was the notation "Genesis 3:10." Which of course reads, "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked: so I hid myself."

A cautionary tale for ministers not to be overly persistent to see someone but for our purposes it's about the way we sometimes misuse the bible to say other things other than what was said. Rev 3:20 is about Jesus knocking on the door of a Christian's heart not their house which was slightly different.

To understand how best to look at the book of Revelation, theologians have postulated 4 different ways of doing this.

a) The Preterist approach.... Most prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled during the time of the Roman empire.

The term Preterism has two very different approaches:

1) A belief that the text is not inspired prophecy, but is rather a description of certain historical events amidst fanciful apocalyptic imagery.

2) A belief that the prophecies of the book are divinely inspired and were fulfilled mostly in the first centuries after Christ.

b) The Historists Approach.... where prophecies have been fulfilled throughout history and are still being fulfilled today. Revelation is a kind of survey of church history, with historical events symbolically portrayed. Historicists believe that exact time periods are specified, assuming that each day specified in the text equals a year in real time.

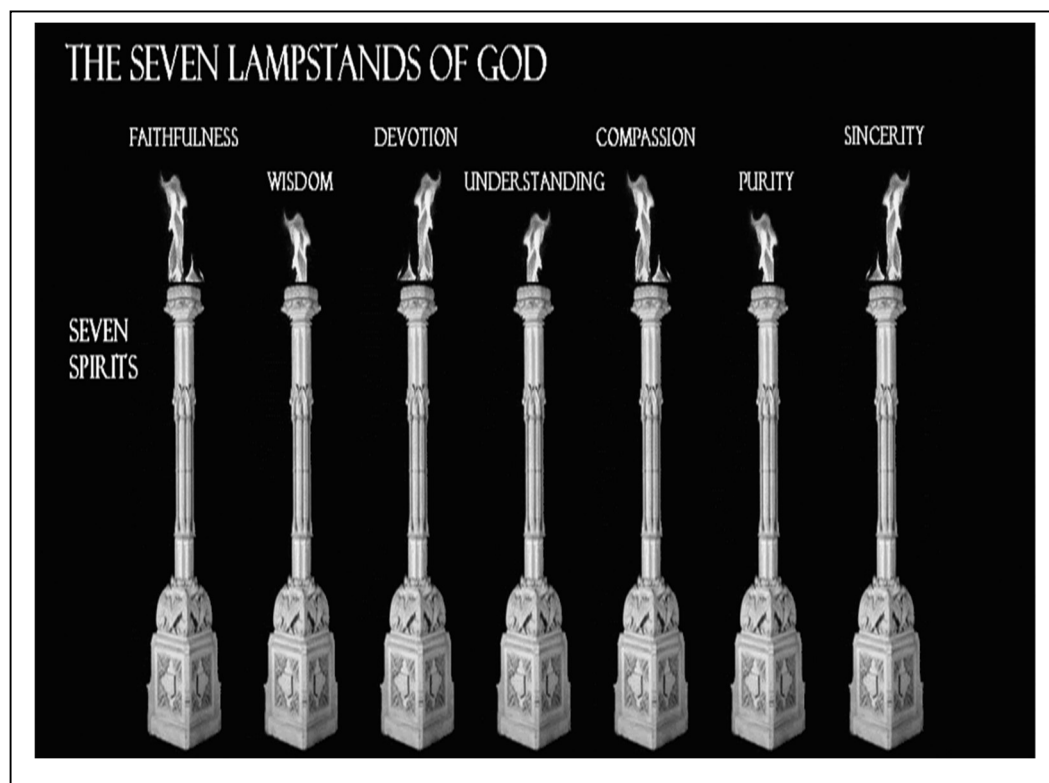
c) The Futurist Approach.... where most prophecies beyond Revelation 3 are yet to be fulfilled.

d) **The Spiritual Approach (AKA Symbolic or Idealist)**.... Most prophecies portray the ongoing cosmic conflict of spiritual realities and may have had much fulfilment throughout history. This is a view held by many contemporary evangelical preachers, writers and teachers.

Most preachers, academics alike will have come to this story using one of the above methodologies. For my money I don't think I could ever support the Preterist approach to things but there are times when I have seen things using one of the other three approaches. I wouldn't want to isolate a genuine understanding of God's Word because I wasn't to use more than one particular method. The thing that sticks out about the text of Revelation is the sense of symbolic image and metaphor. For our purposes I thought to home in on one verse this morning, that of Rev 4: 5, almost in the middle of the text where it speaks of the seven lamp stands,

***"In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing.
These are the seven spirits of God".***

The question I was left with was; what are the 7 spirits of God? Paul the Apostle speaks in 1 Corinthians 12:13 of us being "baptized by *one Spirit* so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given *the one Spirit* to drink."



Perhaps the nuance of ancient language has helped to confuse us rather than enlighten us. Someone did come to my rescue as I considered this and so I came to think of the Spirit in this case referring not so much in the terms of a person but instead to think of

an attitude or mindset. In other words we have the right spirit in approaching things rather than this being a reference to The Holy Spirit Himself as the

third part of The Trinity. The apostle Paul considered this in relation to the 8 fruits of the Spirit being Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, gentleness and Self control. Perhaps Revelation 4: 5 here is speaking not of a person but rather the very attitudes or mindset of God. Any of the great theological Tomes that systematically look to understand who God is and What he is like will speak of the Attributes of God. The image portrayed above may refer to these attributes or at least some of them. It certainly can be no bad thing that we approach things in the Spirit of God himself. The Acronym WWJD (What would Jesus Do?) became very popular in Church circles here in the UK but more so in the United States. Having the right Spirit is something that impacts us all, in our relationships, productivity at work, in our hobbies and interests - you will never reduce your golf handicap without having the right mindset. Athletes at the height of their success talk of 'being in the Zone'. They say it is critical. It's not about luck, it's about the mindset and how we approach things. As I think about that I see how that must impact our Christian Life, how we treat that beggar on the street, how we react and respond to that member of our family who drives us to the point of frustration and even anger, how we deal with that difficult member of the congregation or even awkward parish minister who is uncompromising and stubbornly refusing to listen to you.

Maybe it really is about having the right spirit, being faithful in our diligence to Him who loved us and gave himself for us, having that wisdom to know how best to contend with a difficult situation or person (possibly both at the same time). Maybe it is about having the Devotion to Service, or the Compassion and understanding for a particular situation or about having the Purity and sincerity of heart - attributes that are like the fruits of the Spirit which are difficult to counterfeit and easy to recognise as genuine.

That's an incredible thought to come from one verse of one of the most difficult books to understand in the bible. Perhaps the blessing of God will come when we become like King David in the Old Testament and his great confession and cry to God. Psalm 51 10-12 sums it up best.

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

**¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit,
to sustain me."**

Have a great Week Folks and as always I hope you remain healthy and free from this dreaded bug going around.

Calum D. Macdonald

For Happy Moments..... Praise God

For difficult moments Seek God

For Quiet moments Worship God

For Painful moments Trust God

For Every moment ... May we thank God &

Know his Blessing

