

Acts of Power

One day recently, we awoke to find that the British had voted to leave the European Union. National leaders and other politicians appeared on the news coverage to express joy or anger, surprise, outrage or self-satisfaction about the outcome, depending on their views and how they had campaigned.

The result defied most expectations; even as voting closed, a leading supporter of 'Leave' said that he felt the 'Remain' movement would win, and this was supported by many of the inevitable opinion polls and forecasts.

As the morning wore on, the impact of the decision grew. The British Prime Minister resigned, his counterpart in opposition faced a vote to remove him too. The British currency fell dramatically in value; stock markets around the world suffered great turmoil; businesses were faced immediately with the challenges of uncertainty and currency fluctuation; some holidaymakers overseas found hotels refusing to exchange their British pounds.

Opinion around the world was heated: people said this was a devastating blow to the EU; Britain would be thrown into chaos and recession; older voters had destroyed the future of the young; this was the end of 70 years' peace and prosperity in Europe. How far any of these will prove true remains to be seen. But it was an explosion of panic, uncertainty and perplexity such as one rarely sees, especially among the usually calm British.

Control Behind the Chaos

With the Bible in hand, we were reminded of words of Jesus:

There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Luke 21:25–26).

These words remind us that behind all the apparent chaos and hopelessness of our world, there is a great power – Almighty God. He knows what is happening, and even more importantly He is controlling events to achieve His purpose – in this case to bring about His kingdom by sending Jesus back to the earth. Look at how Jesus continued:

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21:27–28).

Choosing World Leaders

In the time of the Babylonian empire, their King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world. God sent him a message which applies every bit as much to our own times:

The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men (Daniel 4:17).

This is true power. Awe-inspiring power. God decides how world events will turn out as part of His plan for the

earth, and has His angels carry out those decisions. Sometimes this means putting the most unlikely people in power, individuals whom we might find disagreeable, but who unwittingly carry out God's purpose.

A good example of this is found in a king who ruled the empire which followed Babylon, the Medo-Persians. Cyrus was one of their leaders, not especially more God-fearing, but one whom God named through His prophet Isaiah nearly 200 years beforehand:

[God] says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'" (Isaiah 44:28).

Cyrus did indeed send the captive Jews back to their land, with instructions and the materials to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. Evidence once more of the Almighty's power at work, moving and shaking the political elements.

Visible Power

That same evening, in Germany, we experienced a storm: rain, thunder and lightning. But rain which turned the streets into rivers and lakes; thunder which threatened to deafen us and seemed to shake the very sky; and lightning which illuminated the whole landscape with flashes, forks and arcs. Exposed to the elements, we felt very small, feeble and in awe of this overwhelming power.

It was another reminder, a physical one this time, of the power of God. He created the earth and the elements and uses them at times to demonstrate His power.



When the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, the people of Israel were gathered at Mount Sinai and witnessed terrific storms, earthquakes and fire.

So terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Hebrews 12:21).

One of God's prophets, Elijah, had a similar experience when God spoke to him in *1 Kings 19:11-18*. He witnessed God's breath-taking might in the elements, but it was in a 'still, small voice' that God showed His purpose and power in the world. Elijah was to carry out God's will, anointing kings and the next prophet.

The God who can send thunder and lightning and shake our physical world is the God who can shake the political world and shape the course of nations.

We do not always know exactly what is each individual step in His plan, but we can take confidence from the fact that He is in control. He will send Jesus to set up His kingdom: world events are steps on the way to that end, and signposts that it will happen. It is a privilege we have that we can read our Bibles, understand God's plan and seek to have a part in His kingdom.

Editor