

PREPARING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

From the Chairman

FEBRUARY 2009

watchmen
International



Dear Friends

Newsletters generally have to do with keeping you informed about the past year's activities. This is important because your support for the ministry is vital, and we want to encourage you and share with you all that is going on. We are in the process of putting together our next newsletter, but in this letter I want to remind us of the reason that the ministry exists at all.

This is succinctly proclaimed in the banner at the top of this letter. We do not have a 'popular' ministry in the sense that any likelihood of Jesus' soon return is generally considered to be unrealistic, and yet the Bible is very clear that it is imperative that God's people are properly prepared for that Day, which will come like a thief in the night for those who are not ready for it.

I think that it is helpful to us all to be upfront with this message, because it is not a isolated subject for study but one that is at the very heart of the gospel. Watchmen claim to have an orthodox message that embraces the whole truth of scripture – it is a message that calls us to discipleship and spiritual maturity even in suffering and difficulty.

This year, 2009, began with a world that is in financial and economic chaos, and with a certainty that it will get worse. The first people to really suffer from this will be the poorest and weakest in all societies: that also means the mass of people living in the Third World. The year also began with the election of Barack Obama as president of the USA to worldwide euphoria. Is there a connection?

The euphoria is founded on the 'hope' that Obama can somehow do miracles and save the world from itself. In Africa, because he is black and part Kenyan, they view him as a potential 'saviour' (whatever that may mean) and a hope for the future.

Watchmen know that before Christ returns the Antichrist world ruler will be revealed to those who know the scripture (2 Thess. 2:3). Right now we do not know who the Antichrist is, and nor do we speculate about it, but it is likely that he is alive and waiting in the wings for his moment. However, we do know that, although he will be attractive on the outside, the Bible calls him "the man of iniquity", the exact opposite of a man of God, He will operate in the political world but will certainly have a spiritual agenda that will reject the proclamation of an exclusive Bible gospel.

It seems that just as Israel was unprepared for the coming of Messiah in accordance with Bible prophecy, so also many Christians are unaware of the fulfilment of Bible prophecy in our generation. Last year we published three booklets in a "Wake up" series. The first contains a 'prophecy' and warning concerning the imminence of the last days. The second is entitled 'Babylon is now' and the third is 'The Irreducible Gospel'

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All of this lends urgency to all we do in Watchmen. Through the giving of generous sponsors we have been able to support more Nursery Schools this year. We now have eighteen schools in six countries. The LifeWater project continues and we now have a commercially produced kit that allows a school, clinic or home to have clean, bacteria free water half an hour after receiving it. We give many kits away and subsidise the cost of others we sell to individuals. Donations in support of this work, like the schools donations, are ring fenced and go directly to fund the supply of kits.

This year we are hoping to establish further Watchmen Teams in Ethiopia, Sudan and Zambia. This will be in addition to the Teams already operating in Uganda, DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania. In all these countries we bring no prospect of enhanced material well being to meet their needs, nor can we offer them improvements in their political and social circumstances. But we proclaim a Jesus who is coming soon and who wants to be dynamically involved with them in their everyday lives. This is orthodox teaching for disciples of Jesus. They quickly discover that, although their circumstances may not change, they change (for the better) within their circumstances and they have a hope which is certain and guaranteed.

The launch of our Africa Youth Award scheme, which reaches out to the vast numbers of youth without work or prospects, has been well received, and we are planning to expand in 2009 as we have the resources to do so.

As a result of the earlier work by the National Watchmen Teams, we have been invited to contribute to training pastors as Watchmen in two nationwide denominations in Tanzania and Rwanda. It is a major challenge and extension of the ministry which we welcome. The gospel we preach is profoundly a message of reconciliation of man to God and man to man. In this war-torn and traumatised continent how can tribes and peoples, victims and perpetrators of atrocities, possibly find reconciliation? Only Jesus can break the desperate cycle of hatred, mistrust and revenge that plagues the earth.

The Watchmen Team here in the UK believe that the message we have is urgently needed everywhere. We continue to pray and look for opportunities to share it. We will all be challenged, none can escape it, but we know that whatever the enemy purposes and is allowed to achieve, Jesus already reigns. We would be glad if you will add your prayers to ours in this year.

I am thrilled to say that we have submitted finalised accounts for the last financial year to the Charities Commission. We have been able to meet our increased budget for the year almost exactly. This year's budget shows a 50% increase of planned expenditure to meet our opportunities.

Finally, just a sentence to recognise the wonderful work of the many dedicated men and women (all volunteers) in Africa, here in the UK and in the USA who all contribute so much within the Watchmen network.

We are truly grateful for your support and encouragement also. We very much welcome your contacts and comments. May the Lord bless you and yours,

Hugh Shelbourne
Watchman