

February 2012

Dear neighbours,

February 6th 1952. 60 years ago. That was the day on which King George VI died. And, of course, on the principle, "The King is dead. Long live the Queen" that was the day on which the Queen's reign commenced.

I remember well what I was doing that day. I was a senior pupil at my school in north-west London and was the nearest at hand when the head heard the news. He emerged from his study, I was passing by, so it fell to me to be sent to enter every classroom and announce to the teacher in front of the class that the King had died. No pupil could recall another reign. Simply because I was born in 1935 I was about to enter my fourth reign, but, of course, could not remember the first two. Though it was not personal, there was a sense of shock that a pillar of my experience of growing up had been removed, especially bearing in mind the monarch's high and encouraging profile in the wartime years.

Now the Queen, born in 1926, is nearly 86. She has seen at first-hand so much of mid-20th century history till the present day, and has doubtless been influential in high places in ways beyond those of which we know.

The Bible reminds us that our lives must come to an end. Among monarchs, only the Lord Jesus Christ, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19.16; 17.14) has an everlasting dominion (Daniel 7.14). Young people may be shaken when a prominent sportsperson dies suddenly, or one of their own number tragically dies. Older people are stirred, uneasily perhaps, when a contemporary dies or one who was an ever-present during their younger days. And if we have achieved 70 or 80 years and suddenly, but inevitably, there is one less of the generation of our friends and acquaintances maybe there is a shiver in our experience. And if,

"age comes on uncheered by faith or hope"

we know that, for the most part, the best is past and gone. Yet the poet speaks of

"the last of life for which the first was made"

a true reflection of the teaching of the Bible throughout and highlighted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus, speaking of God, said, "this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6.40). He also said (to His disciple Thomas), "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20.29). One of the most famous verses in the Bible (John 3.16) says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

To Martha, Jesus said (John 11. 25-26), "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Faced with these great encouragements to trust the Lord Jesus Christ with our one and only lives why, indeed, should age come on uncheered by faith and hope? There is no need. Faith is one of the characteristics with which human nature is endowed. Why should it not find its best achievement in leading us to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Bible speaks frequently of everlasting life. And the human soul finds that, in trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life and the forgiveness of sins, by repentance (Mark 1.15), it finds peace in relation to God. It is described (Romans 5.1) as, "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14.27). That peace is described as a "peace which passeth (surpasses) all understanding" (Philippians 4.7).

The beginning of the future life after death is described like this (Revelation 21.4):- "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away".

May I encourage you to read again the four gospels, perhaps at one sitting (or four) so that a fresh impact may be made upon you at this particular juncture of your life. In the words of Exodus 33.13 why not pray to the Lord, "show me **now** thy way"?

It is my privilege to serve on the committee of the Trinitarian Bible Society which has been publishing Bibles in many languages since 1831. Because it was the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version in 2011 we produced a special, well-received, anniversary edition. We hope to produce a diamond jubilee edition later this year. Clearly we can't begin until the 6th February has passed, but, with the proviso that our Sovereign lives to celebrate that day, that edition will appear later this year. If you were interested in obtaining such a memento, especially because you desire to draw close to the Saviour by reading it carefully, then you could access the Trinitarian Bible Society website www.tbsbibles.org

At our church services we always explain a passage from the Bible and cordially invite you to join with us. Our services are easy to participate in and consist of two or three readings from the Bible, two prayers, four hymns and a sermon; altogether lasting about 1hr 20mins on a Sunday morning from 1045 am; and a slightly shorter service, between 65 and 70 minutes, on a Sunday afternoon from 2pm. We hold a Bible study at 7.30pm with two hymns and a prayer in addition to the reading and study of the scriptures on a Tuesday followed, after the briefest of intervals, by an extended time of prayer until about 9pm. If you were to come, you would receive a warm welcome.

Yours sincerely,