

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## HEED THE WARNINGS

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10TH MAY 2021

OK...it's confession time again.

I don't drive as many miles up and down the UK anymore, but I still have occasion to get in my car and navigate the motorway network to various destinations, including recently my caravan in Anglesey.

One of the things that I find most annoying is the seemingly endless closed lanes marked out with thousands of glaring orange and white traffic cones – with no sign of maintenance crews, wagons, asphalt laying or lane marking going on at all. Just cone after cone after cone, for mile after mile. These are almost always accompanied by signs telling me and others to reduce speed and keep to the new limit and recently by endless yellow poles with cameras perched on top, taking average speed readings to make sure of compliance.

Now, I know that work has to be carried out, so, I am not at all disturbed when I see the wagons out and workmen making the road safer as they re-lay and fix worn out parts of the carriageway, what I find frustrating is when there is no one about, no sign of any work and yet I have been forced to slow down, presumably so I can count the cones as I pass them by.

Oh, and another thing – have you ever noticed that roadworks (or even red traffic lights on the A6) have a habit of being there just when you are in a hurry or need them to be not there! Infuriating isn't it, being restricted - being told what to do?

Recently these pesky intrusions into my road travel have escalated with the introduction of the big illuminated signs which seem to have sprouted along every mile of the motorway network. You know the ones, 'don't drink and drive' or 'covid restrictions apply' or any other notification that is intended to remind us of the rules.

The one I find most irritating (probably because I've never seen an instance of it even when I have dutifully restricted my speed to 40 or 50 in line with the instruction), is 'SLOW – ANIMALS IN CARRIAGEWAY'. I, along with many others seem to just ignore this one now – perhaps because I convince myself that it is just a ploy to keep motorists speeds down – either way, I've never encountered an animal in the carriageway on all the occasions that the signs have been lit, so, the likelihood is I never will!

I think that there is a human response here that we need to be aware of: Just because we haven't encountered something, doesn't mean that the danger doesn't exist. Think about that for a second. We can become so hardened and desensitised to things that we are in danger of sleepwalking straight into disaster.

I have worked in the chemical industry for many years, and I have worked with some chemicals that carry a warning on them – danger of sensitisation. This simply means that if the exposure level to the chemical is high, then there is a possibility that a person can become so sensitised to the product that they only have to be somewhere near it, for the body to take on a horrible reaction. They don't need to be using the chemical, just simply walk into a room where the smallest trace of it may be and the sensitivity is such that the reaction occurs.

I have the opposite problem most of the time. I have very little sense of smell; therefore, I can miss the first hints of danger, and can be a little gung-ho. When I went on mission to India back in 2007, I was seen as pretty fearless as I would enter slums and run-down areas without hesitation, whilst most of the group would step back and recoil. This was because my sense of smell was so limited that I did not register what everyone else was encountering – these slums often had open sewers flowing through them. I wasn't fearless – just unaware!

Why do the gas board introduce noxious odours to the gas supply? It's so that we recognise and have a sense of danger when we smell the invisible gas and do something about it. Don't rely on me in these circumstances folks – the chances are, I would keep going, oblivious to the seemingly obvious danger.

I'm surprised, that as Christians, we can often adopt something of the attitudes introduced in these examples.

We haven't seen it happen, so it probably won't happen – as a consequence we live a life that is stripped of urgency and potential.

Peter spoke to the Believers in the churches in Asia in his second letter, when they were in danger of being overwhelmed by those who were 'scoffing' – that is goading or questioning in disbelief – the promise of God, that Jesus will return and judge the human race.

These scoffers were saying 'where is this coming that He (God) promised?' They then went on to offer 'proof' that since their ancestors and they themselves had not seen this return, then it was probable that it would never happen.

Peter's response was to say:

2 Peter 3:9

"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

This puts a completely different slant on things. To the scoffers this would mean that actually God was waiting for them to see sense! A promise is a promise, whether we see the fulfilment of it in our lifetime or not.

God always has a better reason than our reasoning can cope with!

On the way back from Anglesey this week, as I came along the A55, I saw on the other side of the carriageway an entire truck bed from a pick up, in the middle of the road. This was avoidable by most of the cars approaching it as it straddled the two lanes and there was room to manoeuvre around, however, what became obvious to me, was that obstruction could not be avoided if two cars were side by side, or a car was overtaking one of the HGVs on its way to the Holyhead ferry. I flashed my lights at oncoming traffic to try and make them aware of potential danger, but I have no idea whether my attempts to warn had any effect or not.

The point is, the danger was real and unsuspecting traffic was heading towards it at break neck speed. I pray that the obstruction was moved before it created a problem for anyone, but it was a sharp reminder to me, that we can be very blasé in our attitudes to danger – just as the scoffers in the Bible, throughout scripture have been shown to be.

Noah built a boat for 100 years whilst the scoffers mocked him. The earth was still flooded – just as God said it would.

The scoffers mocked Nehemiah and Ezra as they rebuilt the temple and walls of Jerusalem – But it was completed.

Scoffers mocked Jesus as he was crucified on a cruel cross – but, just as HE said He would, He rose from the grave victorious over death.

And still the scoffers laugh at the thought of Jesus' return to judge all mankind on that final day - but a promise is a promise – especially when made by the promise keeper. So perhaps I have to re-evaluate my attitude towards warning signs that are there to protect me and others from danger.

I'll keep flashing my lights hoping to alert others of the dangers ahead.

I'll heed the warnings that scripture gives me – even if I don't encounter the actual trial or tribulation.

After all, slowing down and being less hasty, gives me the chance to count the cones, be alert for danger and possibly avoid disaster.

God is being patient because He knows we are impatient. Don't live by chance, read the signs and accept the truth. God is giving us every opportunity to put our lives right with him, to repent of our values and wrongdoings and submit to His promises and love.

My prayer is that you will do just that and experience the safety for eternity that god promises.



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