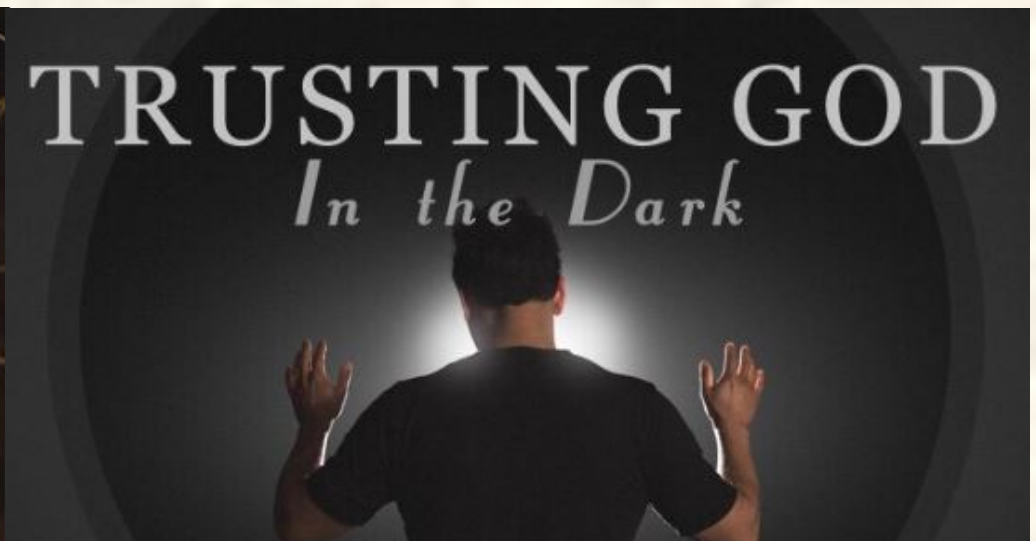


Isaiah 9 v1-7

Finding hope in dark times



Hope

“Desire accompanied by expectation or belief in fulfilment”

What are you looking forward to?

What do you hope for?

The end of the war between Russia & Ukraine.
I hope Global warming will slow & stop.
I hope poor people in the world will find food & shelter.
I hope the economy will recover

I hope I will be able to cope with rising prices
I hope I will be able to keep warm this winter
I hope to have a long life & stay healthy

Many of us feel we are in dark times.

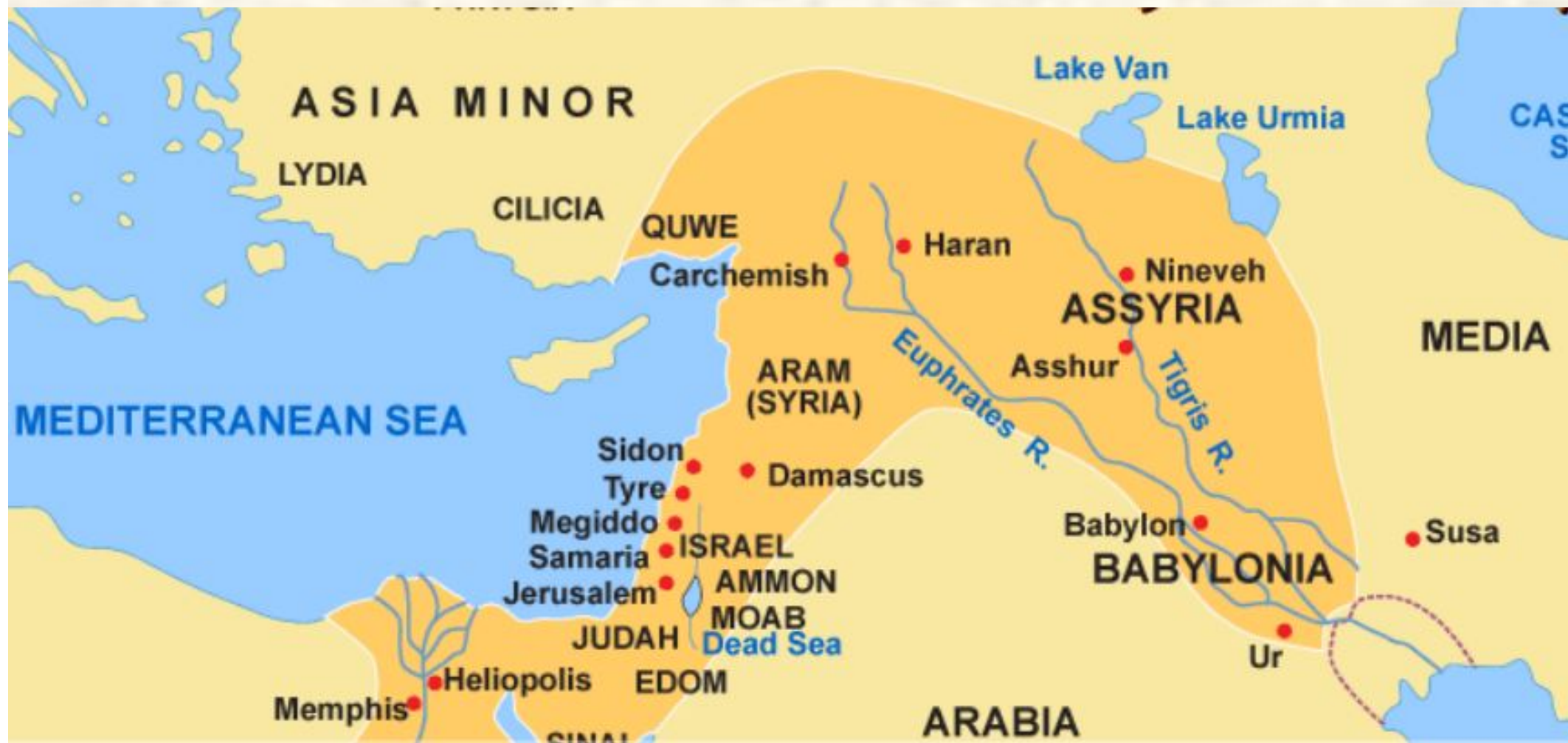
We desire these things but cannot be sure they will happen.

In our western culture we are not very good at waiting!

Imagine life in exile 700 years before Jesus came . .

How dark was it? 8 v22





How dark was it?

In Isaiah's time: Pekah was king of Israel, Ahaz was king of Judah.

Assyria threatening Israel led to Israel/Syria alliance.

Israel wanted Judah to join, but Ahaz declined.

Israel/Syria planned to attack Judah

(to put an anti Assyrian puppet king in Judah)

Ahaz was afraid so Isaiah gave him a prophecy (Is 7 v4-9):

“planned invasion of Judah will fail– trust in God not Assyria!”

“If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

Ahaz instead turned to Assyria who initially help by invading Israel but then went on to invade Judah (but the damage had a limit) . . .

Read Isaiah 8 v6-8

In 732 BC Assyria attack Israel (initially Zebulun & Naphtali)

Whole northern kingdom fell & all people deported 722BC

Why had this happened?

2 Kings 17 v7-22 tells us:

Israelites deported because of their sin

They worshipped other gods

& followed practices of the nations they had driven out.

Built their own high places & Asherah poles.

The LORD used prophets to warn them . . but they would not listen!

They made 2 idols shaped like calves & bowed to them.

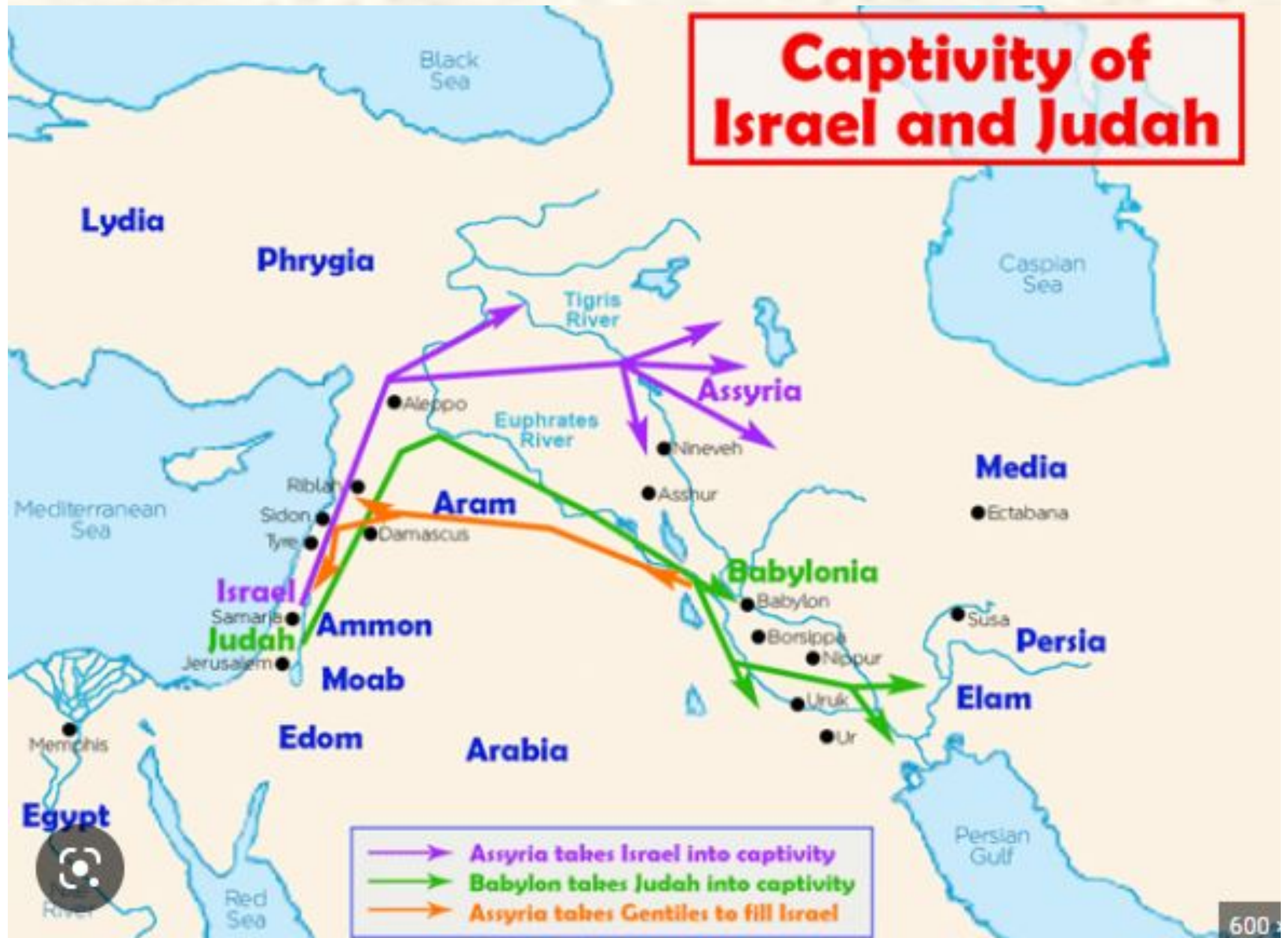
They worshipped Baal.

They sacrificed their sons & daughters.

So the LORD was very angry & removed them from his presence.

The people of Israel & Judah were overrun by Assyria & deported

Captivity of Israel and Judah



Notice two responses from the people of God:

Cursing God:

“Those ignoring God’s instruction . . Distressed & hungry they will roam . . when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will **curse their King & their God**. Then they will look toward the earth . . .& be **thrust into utter darkness**” Is 8 v20b-22

Waiting for God:

“Bind up this testimony (the LORD is the one they are to fear, he will be their holy place) . . I will **wait for the LORD**, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob, I will put my trust in him.” Is 8 v16-17

Their homeland was a disgrace.

God’s face (light) had turned away.

Only a few of the people of Israel were still faithful to God

A message of hope 9 v1-3



A message of hope read 9 v1-3

- 1) honour where there was contempt v1
 - Zebulun & Naphtali had been humbled (Assyria invaded & deported the Israelites) but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations (Nazareth was in Galilee – Jesus would come from there) read Matt 4 v12-17
- 2) 'Light has dawned' where there was darkness v2
- 3) 'nation enlarged' where there was a small remnant v3
- 4) 'Joy increased' where there was gloom v3

Last three spoken of as already done

But they point to future times when the Messiah would come

Three reasons for the light & joy: 9 v4-6

Because the LORD has acted to deliver v4

As in the day of Midian's defeat you have shattered . .

Yoke/bar/rod/oppressor – words that remind us of slavery in Egypt

Midian's defeat (Judges 7) involved Gideon (& a sudden burst of light) liberating Zebulun/Naphtali (land now to be honoured)

In the exodus from Egypt & Gideon defeating Midian

God acted in power

People respond poorly:

After initial rejoicing they soon grumbled & went after other gods.

In this prophecy about the coming Messiah:

God acts: he has made light dawn & he has increased their joy

People response positively.

But what does the Messiah deliver us from?
In Jesus' day many thought from the Romans!
He came to deliver us from the power of sin & death

Because the enemy has been utterly defeated v5
The warrior's boots & blood soaked robes will be burned

Who is our enemy?
The devil, who will be utterly defeated (key battle already won).
The people enter the battlefield to divide spoils (v3b) after God
had won the victory.

Because a child has been born, to us a son is given v6
Who is this child?
A perfect king.
Mere fact of birth means all that results from his coming is
secured.

The perfect king 9 v6-7



“And he will be called:” (v6b)

“**Wonderful counsellor**” (*lit wonder counsellor & wonder*)

Leaders good or bad decisions have consequences on the people.

This king is wise (Ahaz was clever & able but not wise)

“**Mighty God**” (*El gibbor – warrior*)

This king is strong

“**Everlasting father**”

Not common in OT re Kings – used of the LORD this points to:

Concern for the helpless (Ps 68 v5)

Care or discipline of his people (Ps 103 v13)

Their loyal/reverential response to him (Jer 3 v19)

Israel used to stop/go between kings & not all kings were good

This king is everlasting & cares for us

“Prince of peace”

On a personal level - peace is well being, freedom from anxiety

In relationships - it is good will & harmony – opposite of war

Towards God - it is the full realisation of his favour

This prince instils peace in his people

A kingdom with no end

‘To the increase of princely rule & to peace there is no limit’ v7a

“It is an empire indeed but no imperialism, there is rule but no exploitation, rather the endless sharing of his own perfect ‘fulfilment’ in bringing those under his rule to perfection.” A Motyer

“ He will reign on David’s throne . . . with justice & righteousness . . .

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” v7b

Lessons for us

Their darkness was a direct result of disobedience.

Relief was not available yet but there was certain hope for the future.

Their best response: “I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob, I will put my trust in him.”

Is 8 v16-17

Later in Isaiah there is advice to ‘one who walks in the dark’
read Is 50 v10-11

“Let him trust in the name of the LORD . .
But woe to the self sufficient who light fire

You will lie down in torment.”



How dark is it for us?

National debt from Covid

Brexit not working out quite as planned.

NHS & many council departments need more funds but from where?

High inflation – everything costs more

Global warming & not much hope we are going to stop it.

Wars that cost many lives & reduce availability of resources for world

Energy costs out of control.

Nearer to home:

health concerns

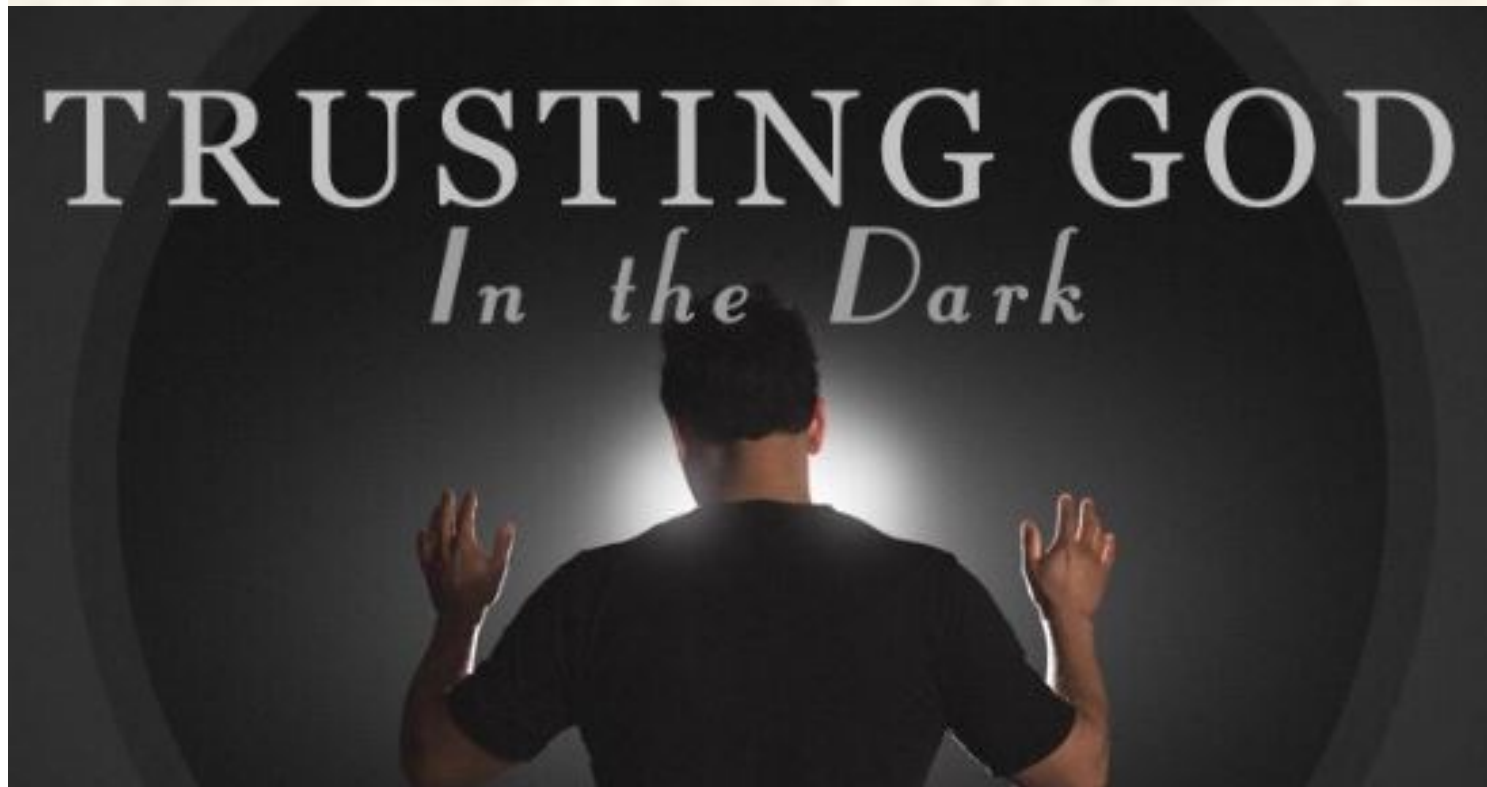
heartache in the family

bereavement

difficulty finding work

we maybe prone to depression

Two responses?



Ignoring God – lighting our own torches?

It may be dark at the moment but the king has come.
He was born, died, was raised to life & ascended to
heaven

His kingdom has started already.

A light has dawned, a child is born.

Are you prepared to wait for the LORD?

Nothing can stop his kingdom growing.

There is no wiser, more powerful, more caring King,
the

prince of peace who endlessly shares his nature with
those under his rule.

“The people of God must decide what reading of their experiences they will live by.

Are they to look at the darkness, the hopelessness, the dreams shattered & conclude that God has forgotten them?

Or are they to recall his past mercies, to remember his present promises & to make great affirmations of faith?”

(A Motyer)

Will you trust this perfect king?