

Knowing The Times: The State We're In

1. Our secular context

- Christians are a small minority
- Christian belief is culturally implausible
- Religion is confined to the private sphere

- 48% identity as 'Christian'
- 6% are 'practicing Christians'
- 2-3% are born-again evangelicals
- 2011- 4.4% Muslim & 1.4% Hindu – 39% 'no-religion'
- 2022 You Gov – 25% believe in 'a god' – 40% believe neither in 'a god' nor a 'higher power'

2. Our post-Christian context

- Society is based on Christian values
- Society has rejected Christian beliefs
- People are ignorant of Christianity
- People are prejudiced against Christianity

3. How we got here

- 1858 – High point of evangelicalism
- 1858-1900 – Science & Theological liberalism
- 1900-1914 – Imperial Optimism and rise Sport/Leisure
- 1914-1918 – War
- 1918-1945 – Socialism, Communism, Nationalism
- 1945-1960 – Evangelical growth
- 1960- 1990 – Sexual Revolution & Mass Immigration (=pluralism)
- 1990-2010 – Postmodernism
- 2010 -2022 – Liberal Progressivism

4. What are the implications?

- Assumption of irrelevance
- Marginalisation
- Demonisation
- Evangelism is slower

5. Legal and cultural atmosphere

- Decriminalisation of homosexuality/abortion
- Antidiscrimination legislation
- Civil partnerships/same-sex marriage
- Hate speech
- Media (mis)representation

BUT:

- Freedom of religion/worship
- Freedom of speech
- Human Rights Act/ECHR

6. We shouldn't be surprised!

- We are living in the 'last days' – 2 Timothy 3v1-5
- God's people are called to be exiles in the world – 1 Peter 1v1 & 2v11

7. How should we respond?

- Constitutionalism – ie state imposed Christianity
- Compromise – change the gospel to fit the culture
- Confrontation – fight a war of attrition against the culture
- Counterculture – grow the church as an alternative culture

8. Engaging with a secular post-Christian context

- Expectations
- Common Good
- Freedom for all
- Apologetics
- Compelling community

9. Reasons for Encouragement

- The gospel is still true
- Secularism is demonstrably failing
- Evangelical churches are (slowly) growing
- The gospel is advancing around the world
- God has worked in Reformation and Revival in dark times in the past

For further reading:

Steve McAlpine, *Being the Bad Guys*

Carl Trueman, *Strange New World*

Glenn Scrivener, *The Air We Breathe*

Michael Bird, *Religious Freedom in a Secular Age: A Christian Case for Liberty, Equality, and Secular Government*

<https://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>