

Resolutions

New Year is resolution time. Resolutions most often range from the wildly optimistic – “I’m going to quit smoking” – to the laughably unachievable – “*and* I’m giving up chocolate”. These well-meaning and sincere commitments are reflected on the sales graphs of tobacconists and confectioners: there’s a two-day downturn.... followed by a sharp spike as normality returns. Though a few determined souls escape the clutches of their habits/addictions, most resolutions bring only an annual reminder that ‘wish-power’ doesn’t equate to will-power. It’s business as usual – present trends continue.

Present trends are sometimes the basis for that other New Year obsession – predicting the future. This is the season when the pundits tell us what’s going to happen - they speculate on everything from interest rates to infant mortality. But present trends are not always the best guide: for example, the head of IBM once predicted that there could be a global market for as many as 5 computers; his counterpart at Daimler Benz foresaw a total European market for 1000 cars, and the Times alarmed it’s readers with its claim that – by 1907 – London would be submerged under 9 feet of manure from horse traffic. It seems they shared Daimler’s rather modest expectation of car sales.

On present trends, pundits paint a bleak picture of Britain’s future: A nation awash with crime - swamped by addicts, alcoholics and asylum seekers. They foresee the NHS in freefall, the transport system in meltdown, and yet more mass-murders by deluded terrorists desperate for personal significance. There’s no shortage of prophets of doom – but even Jesus predicted there would one day be problems on an unprecedented scale. The difference with him, of course, is that none of his predictions were based on present trends....and – unlike those of the pundits – none of them have ever been wrong.

There’s an awful lot more to Jesus, however, than a man who can successfully predict, say, Peter’s denial, or his own death and resurrection....impressive though that might be. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament is shot through with prophecies about *him*. They are relentlessly and disturbingly accurate. So - who was this guy....and why is he still so significant to some people today? That question brings me back to resolutions: Why not resolve to make *this year* the time when you thoroughly check him out – to see if there is any substance to the claims made about him? As resolutions go, it’s got to be easier than giving up smoking, and much more fun than a bleak, chocolate-free future. And just perhaps - it might even have a beneficial effect lasting *more* than two days!

Happy New Year,