

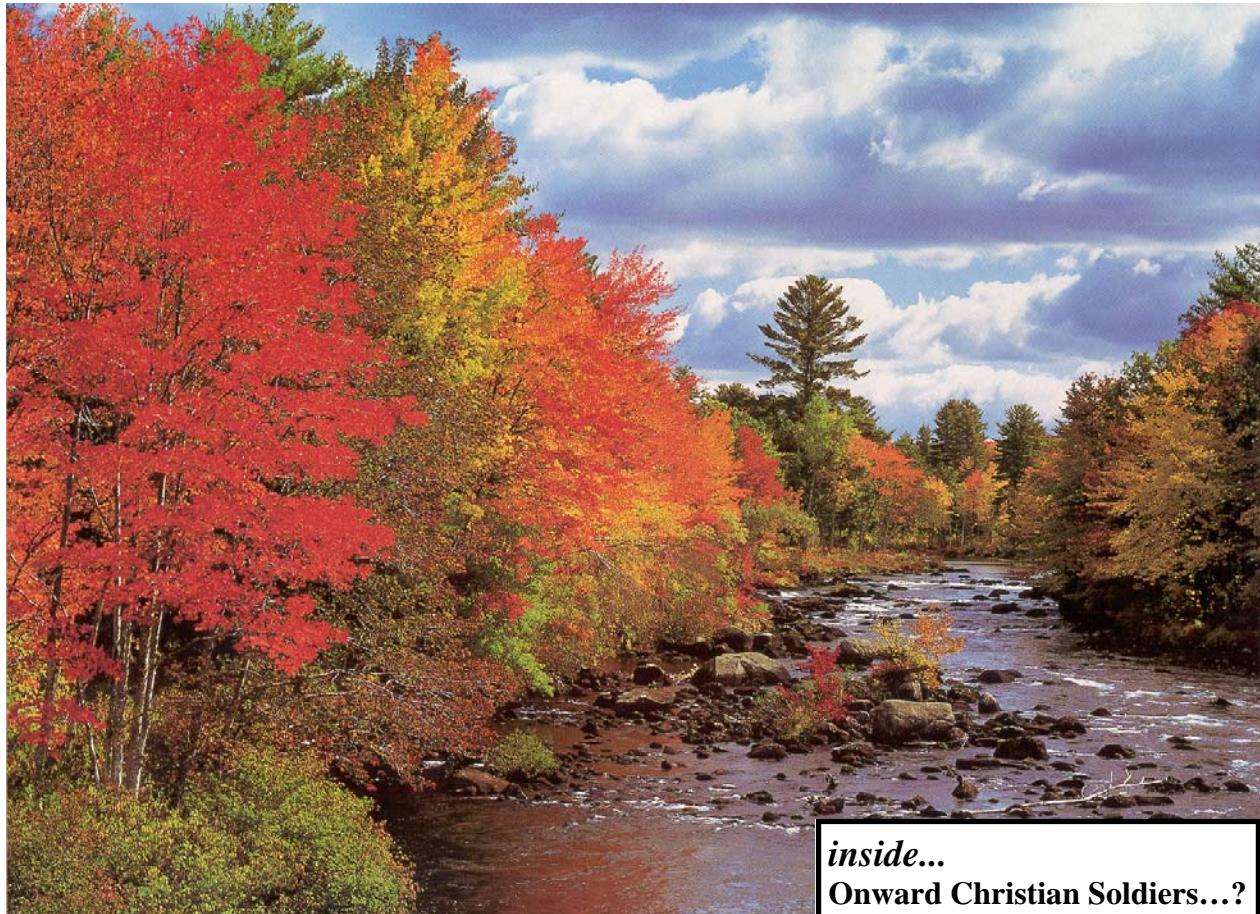


Horizons

Vol 10 No 5

September/October 2006

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

With around two thousand Christian denominations vying for your attention, it's easy to miss the important issues of life and religion. It's our hope that through *New Horizons* our readers will come to understand the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by his apostles in the clearest of terms - and recorded for us in the Scriptures. Over the centuries that truth has been buried, dug up, buried again. Our desire is to restore the simple apostolic message. We hope you will be excited by what the Scriptures reveal about life, and the horizons beyond

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new Horizons

Issue No 59

September/October 2006

The United States and her allies are at war. Should we be? And should a Christian nation fight? Should a Christian fight?

James McBride

Violent death has marked every generation. Mankind, however, is designed to live in harmony with one another. What happened?

It didn't take long before *sin* entered the picture, death followed - and the first murder.

The penalty was the loss of the right to settle: Cain's sentence for killing his brother was that he become "...*a fugitive and a vagabond...*" He rebelled, and tried to "build a city" - a fixed settlement. It was the very first city state. Man has ever since sought - and fought - for territory.

Unseen Hand

But behind all people movements there's an unseen hand. Though men scoff, the Scriptures teach that "...*God divided the nations...*" And, "*He drove out the nations also before them [Israel], and allotted them for an inheritance by line*" (Psalm 78:55). The sovereign Creator oversees every nation, raises up some, causes others to fail. Boundaries change. Empires rise and empires fall. But all under God's watchful eye: "...*He changes the times and the seasons; He causes kings to pass away, and sets up kings*" (Daniel 2:21).

When borders are established, and within the context of divine sovereignty, every nation - Christian,

atheist, Hindu, whatever - has an obligation to defend its sovereign territory, and to care for its own citizens abroad. When the leaders make unwise decisions the nation suffers the consequences. When they govern wisely the people flourish: "*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked bears rule, the people mourn*" (Proverbs 29:2).

Holy War

Throughout history much unrest has been provoked by religion. A nation driven by fierce religious ideology will often turn to the sword to settle its disputes or to expand its territory or its belief system. Medieval Christianity is an example. And, of course, Islam was born in blood - and continues so, with the goal of worldwide dominion.

A billion Indians are unashamedly Hindu. Islam rules the Middle East, Indonesia, much of Africa etc. But some modern nations lay claim to be "Christian," some two billion adherents to that title. Most Americans, British and Scandinavians see their own nation as Christian. And most Italians. Southern Americans, too. Should these nations be pacifist? Should they look to divine intervention to fight their wars, to protect themselves?

In reality all such nations are armed to the teeth. Vast sums are annually spent by them to protect their citizens. But should Christian nations bear arms? Is the God of Christians too weak to protect His people, to blot out all opposition?

Despite the massive Christian influence it is generally recognized

that a nation must defend itself. 40% of the U.S. population claim to be "born again Christians". Should they bear arms? Most accept the need to do so, though some few strongly object.

It is curious that Christians, Jews and Muslims claim the "same God" - yet each prays to Him to intervene for victory in battle for themselves. In World War II Christian Germans and the Christian Allies prayed to the same God for victory. Muslims cry out to Allah. He must be confused!

The military excesses of the Middle Ages passed away, of course, and with the rise of humanism coupled with the powerful influence of the Christian Scriptures some nations became more benign. In 9th century Britain King Alfred had established a code of laws after studying the principles of the Biblical book of Exodus. Though undermined by foreign influence, it underpins legislation to this day. The divine Law was in degree incorporated in the United States Constitution. (And why not? It makes perfect sense.)

Who's In Charge?

Ancient Israel was selected by God as His model nation. They were to be a "holy nation" and He promised to fight for them. Israel would have none of it, and wanted to be like the surrounding nations. He let them have their choice, and they suffered the penalty in occasional loss of sovereignty and often the loss of military manpower. The LORD, though, kept the option of the right to intervene in order to fulfil His overall purpose.

But divine sovereignty wasn't - isn't - limited to ancient Israel. God (JHVH, Jehovah, the LORD, the Eternal) works to a master plan, everywhere allowing the exercise of national sov-

ereignty but intervening to achieve nations! His own ends.

As acknowledged by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: "...he does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What are you doing?" (Daniel 4:35). And he added, "...to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the lowest of men." The Persian king Cyrus, too, acknowledged God's sovereignty: "So says Cyrus king of Persia, Jehovah God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth" (Ezra 1:2). Modern times have also witnessed His power, as at Mons (World War I) and at Dunkirk on behalf of the Allied forces.

Divine Correction

Historically, God used the Assyrian nation to chasten His nation Israel: "*Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets*" (Isaiah 10).

Not that "the rod" is itself necessarily righteous. Assyria's national character, as with Pharaoh at the time of Israel's freedom from Egypt, lends itself to such a use: "*Howbeit he means not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.*" God bends national character to His own purpose. Excess on their part brings punishment on them (vv. 12-13). Perhaps this is a lesson for modern invaders.

So whatever puny men in offices of state may think, they are but pawns in the hands of the Almighty! They play at global politics but can act only within the boundaries God establishes. A mighty empire today - tomorrow merely a memory of past glory. An apt warning to modern

A Christian Response

In our sinful and fallen world armed conflict is inevitable. Certainly God warns all of us to refrain from *murder*. That is a sane and essential provision in any legal system. War, however, is not murder. But He has left it to us how to deal with our differences - individually and between nations. He has set out the ideal and it is for man to follow it or ignore it. God's record in history is not to interfere - unless He so wishes! And those who embark on a war (and, who knows, God may have stirred it up!) will answer for their conduct of the war before the bar of Heaven.

Individual leaders in our world may flaunt their "Christian" credentials. None, however, can claim to follow the faith of the Scriptures. Modern Christianity is far removed from "*the faith once for all delivered to the saints.*" Unlike the newly-formed nation of Israel under Moses they do not have clear divine direction in times of war - though, as with any leader of any faith they may simply be a tool in God's hand.

In all this strife of nations, how should Christians respond? Military service in defence of our nation is not a defence of Christianity, for there's no such thing as "a Christian nation." True Christianity is personal, of the heart. "*My kingdom*" said Jesus, "*is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*" (John 18:36). Adds the apostle Paul: "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (II Corinthians 10:4-5). Unlike other faiths, as Christians we don't take up arms to defend - or promote - the Gospel.

Christians at War

Yet equally with the rest of our fellow-citizens we are beneficiaries, dependent on our armed forces and our Government - even a "Christian" government - to maintain our peace and safety (Romans 13: 1-7).

As Christians we are exhorted to pray "...for kings, and for all that are in authority." And why do we pray? "...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Not for victory in battle. It is reasonable, then, that we shouldn't object to serve in our country's defence. Of all people, Christians are not - should not be - cowardly. Said Jesus: "*For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it*" (Mark 8:35).

Self-preservation is not a reason to become a Christian - or to avoid service in the military. But the military is a killing machine, and that is where conscience may draw the line. It is a matter for personal informed conscience as to *how* we serve. Should an individual in all conscience object to *all* forms of military service then he or she must accept the consequences (Acts 5:32-40).

A Christian, for example, may draw the line at firing a weapon (or launching a Cruise missile). But the front-line military - laying down their lives, perhaps, to protect *me* or *you* - all too often also require front-line medical treatment. They need food. They need respite and off-duty entertainment and a variety of support systems - including *taxes* to finance them! The Christian objection is to war as a general principle. It's not the way to lasting peace but is the way this world turns. How we are personally involved is a matter of private conscience - not a matter of church authority or of salvation.

As Christians we live in a secular world. We use money bearing the Monarch's or the President's insignia. We interact daily with non-Christians - for transport, in restaurants, in the work-place etc. *cont'd p.8*

Many believe that by 'going to church' they will be 'saved'. But is there more to it?

Bill Faith

There is a strange saying that the Jews had, but which God called "lying words." It is found in Jeremiah 7:4,8 and says, "Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit."

What were these lying words? "*The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, etc.*" The various commentaries disagree somewhat on the meaning, although their final conclusion is the same. For instance, The Matthew Henry *Commentary* referring to, "*the temple of the Lord*" expression explains, "'Here He resides, here He is worshipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to Him as our King in this palace.' This, they thought, was security enough."

The Jamieson, Fausset & Brown *Critical, Experimental & Practical Commentary* states that the Jews falsely thought that because their temple had been chosen by God as His dwelling, that it could never be destroyed. And the triple repetition of "*The temple of the Lord*" expressed the intense confidence that they had in this belief.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words...Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.... Therefore I will do to this house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to

Don't Trust in Lying Words

this place I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh" (Jeremiah: chs 3,4,9,10,12,14)

But God told them not to trust in these lying words; and that He would destroy the temple if they did not repent of their sins:

God warned them that unless they truly repented of their ways that He would do to the temple as He had done to Shiloh where the Ark of the Covenant once was.

Is there a lesson in this story that we can apply to ourselves? Yes, there certainly is!

We Are the Temple

Under the new covenant the Holy Spirit is freely given to us. And because God's Spirit is in us, we don't have a temple building as they did under the old covenant. Rather, *our bodies* are the temple of God.

Yet, some people now have the same attitude that the Jews had then. They believe that they need not be all that concerned about observing God's commandments. They reason that Christ kept the commandments for them; therefore, they don't have to be that concerned about trying to observe them themselves. But as God said, "...Will you stand before Me in this house (now our own body) and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'" (Jeremiah 7:10).

The apostle Paul spoke on this subject. In I Corinthians 3:16-17 he wrote, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." This Scripture is very plain. Because we are the temple of God, if we defile ourselves, He will destroy us! Therefore we must keep ourselves from sin as much as possible.

Also, in II Corinthians 6:16-17:1 Paul wrote, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.' Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Hopefully, we will not falsely believe as the Jews in the past believed, that because God chose their temple that He would never destroy it under any circumstances. Nor that we will falsely believe that just because we attend church at the appointed times that there is nothing more we need to do.

The fact is we need to live a life that is worthy of our calling. Yes, we sin. And we are sinners. Nevertheless, we cannot use our weaknesses as an excuse to turn God's grace into licentiousness. Just because we fail at times, we can't begin thinking that God doesn't expect us to keep His laws. Jesus paid a heavy price for us. It cost Him His life. We need to try and put forth the best effort possible to obey Him. And if we fail now and then, we need to repent of our sins and ask Him for forgiveness. He will understand.

A very comforting Scripture is found in II Timothy 1:12 where we are told, "...For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He (Jesus) is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." What have we committed to Christ? Those who have repented of their sins, were baptized *cont'd p.8*

CHILDREN...*the best job*

Parental care for our children is the safeguard of our future

James McBride

A potential 750,000 members of “the next generation,” in the United Kingdom, are conceived annually - though one in four (185,000 last year) never see the light of day - deliberately destroyed in the womb.

The death of a *desired* new-born, however, is agony for the parents. The infant has been carried for nine months in the mother’s womb - a living part of her. Then gone - a perpetual memory. Happily, the vast majority live on, sometimes causing heartbreak but almost always a joy, certainly as a babe. Then what? Let’s focus on those live births.

Born With Purpose

Gaze on that new-born “bundle of joy” and you envisage - what? Certainly you picture health and happiness for the infant, success in one field of endeavour or another. A great artist or musician or scientist. Some might even see a future politician!

But what of the precious formative months and years? Which child guru do you follow? Or, is folklore best - the way grandmother recommends? There’s a supermarket of ideas of child-rearing out there. Yet every sane new parent knows guidance is necessary; children cannot simply be left to their own devices.

The excitement of watching your child grow is almost unbearable. That first toothless smile. The first crawl, the first mumbling of “ma ma” and “da da” or “pa-pa”, the first stumbling attempt to walk. The aware parent doesn’t want to miss those unrepeatable milestones - events often accompanied by joyful parental tears. But those days end,

and life marches on.

The Next Generation

The Bible has a curious expression: “*Better the day of one’s death than the day of one’s birth.*” Few of us achieve much in the first couple of decades of life. It’s a time of preparation. It’s a time for laying the foundation on which is built your contribution to civilization. You are not remembered - unless by the parent - for being born but for your legacy. Beyond your genetic inheritance you don’t, in your early years, add much to that foundation. *But your parents do.*

The most important job is not that of the President or the Queen or a brilliant scientist or top military commander. The most important job is to prepare *the next generation.*

In those early years you instil the habits for a lifetime. Why you don’t torture the cat or pull the legs off a frog. How to deal with anger and disappointment, and to interact with your peers. What’s right, what’s wrong (*your values*). What is greed and how to share. When not to interrupt a conversation. Patience. Grooming. Good eating habits. Consideration and respect for others. Self-respect, too. Together with self-discipline and personal responsibility. All essential for a civilized and successful human being who can positively contribute to society. And all must be taught - largely by direct parental example.

That, in part, is a road-map for every new-born - and the parents are responsible to instil those fundamental values. The alternative is wild growth - a tree unpruned and grotesquely distorted.

Cuckoo’s Nest

It has been said that the best experience, sometimes, is someone else’s

experience. And there are plenty of horror stories to learn from. Our media highlights the abuse, the neglect, the teen and pre-teen gangs, the promiscuity. Talking heads express their abhorrence of feckless parenting. Government imposes law upon law. And then “respectable parents” hypocritically dump their precious offspring on strangers - and not always from “economic necessity.”

Birds in general lay their eggs - and then jealously guard their young. Most other creatures follow suit. Yet human infants barely dry from the womb are farmed out for a price. They crawl the nursery floor along with a dozen other squalling infants and toddlers. Staff, often half-trained, are at their wit’s end seeking to control the noisy mayhem. Older “inmates” run wild, learn to swear and spout street talk, add new “naughtiness” to their own, pick up every sniffle and tummy bug.

Can you be sure that what you are told about the “high quality of service” is what actually happens when you have left - for your workplace? And, above all, that the staff will reflect your personal values? “Group socialization” has a powerful effect on behaviour - indeed, is considered by some psychologists to be more powerful than either nature or parental influence. Nursery behaviour will tend towards the lowest common denominator.

Increasingly, psychologists emphasise the need for continuity of care. And care that is best provided in the home and jointly by the child’s mother and father. Many experts believe the increase in childhood dysfunction arises from deviation from this norm.

In the United Kingdom nearly seventy percent of working women are mothers of younger children. Financial pressures - and, too often, the career ladder - drive many out

of the home and into the work place. To keep the bills under control often needs a double wage - especially when that wage is, for both, the minimum. We might ask why that's the case.

A major cause - spell that "curse" - is the present UK Government's appalling ideology of encouraging mothers into work in the name of sexual equality and liberation, and "helping the economy." Generous tax-funded financial support for nursery fees is one such measure - driving up public expenditure and necessitating increased taxation. And that's more pressure on the family finances. The need for a second income is understandable. Or, if you are a single parent, the need for an income. (Here, too, we might ask *why* that situation has arisen.)

Concern for your child's well-being should drive a family to exert every effort to care for their children at home - despite the cost in lowered material standards. It's a calamity that Government and society in general undermines what has been the safe and proven human experience for millennia.

Teach At Home

The foundation principles of life are laid in the home, and as stated, direct parental example is the key. Sound training is not, of course, a guarantee your child will never

trouble you. (Peer pressure is powerful.)

The Creator informed our first parents that the consequence of their stupidity would be: "...in sorrow shall you bring forth children." If, however, you prepare yourself the chance of success increases. Vandalism, anti-social behaviour, week-end wasters, drug taking - and teenage problems - are less likely when these principles have been actively taught and encouraged and exemplified in the home. Sadly, in all levels of society they are neglected. Few of us grow up in the perfect home.

Blessed is the mother who can confidently expect her chosen nursery to be as effective in accomplishing these challenges as well as she personally could.

On your way to work, plonk your three-month old baby - and he or she is still a baby - in a nursery. It's not unusual, believe it or not! Will the staff, however skilled and dedicated, duplicate your expertise, your compassion, your capacity to comfort? Perhaps most important will they consistently instil those vital spiritual values you desire for your precious child?

The Most Important Job

It's possible, of course, that "financial pressure" is self-imposed. So - a few questions.

Why do you need extra income? Do your "basic living costs" include expensive purchases - new car, jewellery and cosmetics, plasma television, luxury holidays, keeping up with fashion? Is your home beyond adequate? *Etc.* Are you a shopaholic? Perhaps wrapped up in the "good life?" The Bible pinpoints excess desire for the material as a cause of poverty: "*You should not covet.*" Greed, avarice, acquisition - they are a curse of our era. But poverty may also be measured in terms of how your child is raised.

Another "reason" for leaving your child in a nursery is career. *Career* becomes "the most important job," and your personal care for your child is secondary. A sense of guilt is often reported as a mother deposits her child at the nursery - especially the worry if there are possible signs of impending sickness. It's very much "you can't serve two masters." Which, to you, is most important?

The most important, indeed the best, career of all is that of personally training your own flesh and blood to become a civilized, well-adjusted teen and a civilized adult. That takes time and patience and self-education. It takes intense focused effort. It takes, for most, personal sacrifice.

Although it will at times be exhausting, caring for a young child need not be a banal mind-numbing passing of time at home. With proper forethought it can be a rewarding, even exciting, joyful experience - with some tears.

It's the most important career on earth for most parents. And the key to our future. **Q**

CALLING ALL INTERNET USERS!

The Outreach Ministries website lists over a hundred Bible-based articles which address issues frequently on the minds of Christians. You may download any, or request print copies. There is, too, a section of on-line audio sermons, links to associated groups, back issues of *New Horizons* and an on-line magazine for our younger readers. Be sure to take a look at: www.cgom.org

A Framework for Prophecy

Prophecy holds great fascination for many students of the Christian Scriptures. Miles of words have over the centuries been penned in an attempt to fathom its mysteries. Any attempt to understand it is like assembling a complex jigsaw puzzle. And like a jigsaw puzzle there are basic rules for success.

James McBride

Perhaps the prime step, in our jigsaw analogy, is to pick out the edges and corners. And it is almost a necessity to have before us a full-colour picture of the end result. Prophecy is like that.

The “edges and corners” of prophecy, and the “picture,” have been provided for us by the Creator. The annual holy convocations detailed for ancient Israel, properly understood, are the frame from which we glimpse the broad outline of prophecy. This is especially so in regard to annual convocations held in the autumn. These four convocations outline events to occur at “the end of the age” and carry us through to the glorious end purpose devised by God for mankind.

Divine Origin

It's a common fallacy to assume that these annual “meetings” (they are listed in Leviticus 23) were devised by Moses, that they are simply “for Jews” and of no significance for Christians.

Not so: “*And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, The set feasts of Jehovah, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my set feasts*” (Leviticus 23:1-2). These age-old festivals, notice, are “*the set feasts of Jehovah*.” There are

indications in the Scriptures that they were introduced by the Creator from the beginnings of human history.

It also comes as a surprise to many Christians to learn that they continued to be observed annually by the first Christians - both Jew and Gentile. Paul, for example, notes (I Corinthians 5) that the largely Gentile Corinthian brethren were at the time of his writing to them observing the spring festival of *Unleavened Bread*. Indeed many books have been written explaining their application within Christianity. As the centuries rolled by heathen practices swamped their observance, and are today widespread within Christianity - annual practices now known as Easter, Christmas, All Hallows and various “saints days” and the weekly Sunday. None of these have Scriptural authority for their observance. They are a smokescreen that obliterates the divine plan.

Harvest Festivals

The beginning of the festival year is in early spring. The festivals “follow the harvest”. They begin with the well-known *Passover* - a term which by convention includes both the *Passover* sacrifice and the following seven days (called *Unleavened Bread*) when “no leaven [i.e. raising agents, yeasted products] shall be in all your dwellings.” It was the beginning of the agricultural year, and initiated the early harvest in Palestine.

This “firstfruits” harvest of barley and wheat continued for seven weeks, and was celebrated in the early summer festival of the *Feast of Weeks* - also called *Pentecost*, a name familiar to practicing Christians from the events recorded in Acts 2. We have covered their significance for the divine plan else-

where - e.g. in the *Bible Basics* study course. There are, of course, other crops, and autumn sees the harvesting of various fruits. It is to these autumn festivals we now turn.

The calendar used in Israel - and indeed one that was widely used anciently in the Middle East - was based in part on the phases of the moon. The first month of the year on that calendar is, logically enough, in the spring. The seventh month falls in autumn, and the first of the autumnal festivals is on the first day of that month (it is called *Tishri*). It is called the *Day of Trumpets* from the practice of the blowing of trumpets on that day. The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, relays Jesus' take on this. He unveils to John events at the end time as a series of seven “seals” and “trumpets” (ch 5ff). It is a time of terrible failed harvests which result in famine, disease and widespread death (ch 6:5-6).

As each angelic “trumpet” is sounded it heralds the unfolding of awesome mix of man-made and divinely inflicted consequences on Earth. There are seven of these trumpets, the “*last trumpet*” being the resurrection of Christians and the return of Jesus to reign a thousand years. Recall the prophecy of Paul: “*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*” (1st Corinthians 15:51ff). To the Colossian brethren he wrote: “*When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with him be manifested in glory*” (Colossians 3:4). [Request the free booklet **Key to the Book of Revelation** for a more detailed exposition of that prophetic era]

Reconciled to God

The message of the *Day of Trumpets* is a sober warning of the consequences of human disobedience and rejection of our Creator. The following ten days (on the calendar) are a time of reflection leading to the solemnity of the next holy convocation - the *Day of Atonement*. It is the most solemn holy day on the divine calendar. As with all the festivals it reflects the life and ministry of Jesus. For Israel it was the annual ceremony by which the nation was reconciled to God, to JHVH, their individual and collective sin forgiven. Prophetically it refers to the time - yet future - when the remnant of the two scattered Houses of Israel will return together to the Land of Promise, this time led by the returning Redeemer and Saviour, Jesus. They will come rejoicing - cleansed and forgiven - not by temporary sacrifices and ceremonies but by the shed blood of Jesus, the divine Law implanted in their minds through the indwelling Spirit.

A sub-set of *Atonement* is seen by some Bible students as having reference to a major event that takes place at that time: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time" (Revelation 20:1-5). It signals the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Jesus, with mankind freed from the malign influence of Satan and his evil angels. All mankind, indeed free to be reconciled to God.

Universal Peace

Events move on, and the next festi-

Who we are

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is an international association of independent local assemblies - Christians who meet together for worship, instruction in the faith and fellowship. Each assembly is self-governing according to Bible principles, but co-operates through our Conference with other like-minded assemblies to work towards agreed evangelistic goals.

These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus: "going, therefore, disciple all nations, baptising them...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded that we "Shepherd...[and] feed my sheep".

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature (e.g. our quarterly *Newsletter*, *Fountain of Life*, a bi-monthly outreach magazine *New Horizons*, the *Bible Basics* home study course). The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren.

We cordially invite all independent fellowships of whatever size - or individuals - to associate with us in this worldwide ministry. Our *Statement of Beliefs* and a *Publications Catalogue* is available from any of our addresses. We are pleased to offer you, without charge, any of our publications.

val - beginning on the 15th of the seventh month - lasts for seven days. It's called the *Feast of Tabernacles*. [A *tabernacle* is a tent or booth, a temporary dwelling.] *Tabernacles* was celebrated in Israel in remembrance of their wanderings in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, during which time - forty years - they lived in tents. The prophet Zechariah tells us that this festival will, after Christ's return, be celebrated by all mankind - Jew

and Gentile (*ch 14: 16-19*). Comments by the apostles Peter and Paul add to the symbolism showing that our bodies are "tabernacles" - temporary dwellings. In sum, the festival reminds us that since Adam all around is material and temporary.

Tabernacles has special reference to the reign on Earth of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords - supreme in Government and in Faith. During that millennial reign, mankind will continue to be born, live and die. Under the reign of Jesus and the saints - resurrected at his coming - there will be universal peace. All nations will look to Jerusalem for guidance on their legal systems, and Jesus is the Supreme Judge. Wrote the prophet Isaiah: The weekly *Sabbath*, too, has

'The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'

(Isaiah 2:1-4)

implications for prophecy. It has been a long-held concept that the seven days of the week represent God's plan for us. There will be six "days" - each of a thousand years - during which man is left largely to his own devices. Ten will follow a "day of rest" - also a thousand years - under the reign of Messiah. It is a reminder that our time on Earth is limited,

cont'd p.8

Soldiers...? cont'd

We pay tax to our secular - "Christian" - Government - a large portion of which funds military adventures. As said Jesus, then living under a totalitarian regime: "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's*" (Luke 20:25).

Spiritual Warfare

As Christians our real warfare as servants of Jesus the Christ is in the spiritual realm - against our sinful nature, against the "*wiles of the devil*," and in defense of the church of God in face of Satanic pressures.

To this end we gird on God's armor and deploy in our war the defensive spiritual weapons of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:13-18). **Ω**

Lying Words... cont'd

and received the Holy Spirit have committed their lives to Him. And as Paul believed we should also believe that Jesus is able to keep what we have committed to Him. That is, our life.

Remember the picture of the "*Footprints in the sand?*" A picture showing two sets of footprints walking along the beach side by side. Then for a while there was only one set of prints. The picture was portraying a person's walk with Christ and the person asked Him, "Why is there only one set of footprints for a while?" Jesus answered, "*That was when I had to carry you.*" It is a reminder that we are indeed weak, but Christ in us is strong. We must remember the words of the apostle Paul when he said, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philip 4:13). **Ω**

PROPHETIC FRAME... cont'd
and that God is Sovereign. This present phase of our existence is just temporary.

A General Resurrection

The last day of *Tabernacles* - called "*the great day of the feast*" (John 7:37) - is prophetic of the years following the Millennium. Satan is released at this time to once again roam our planet, deceiving mankind and luring them into a grand coalition against Jesus and his regime (Revelation 20:7-10). He is defeated and removed forever from influencing mankind. Those who join him in this rebellion, having experienced at first hand the perfect benign rulership of Messiah, will be judged by fire, having lost their chance to live eternally (Revelation 20:9).

The "*last day*" represents the time of the "*white throne judgment*" (vv.11-

what sort ought you to be in holy behavior and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, through which the heavens having been set afire will be dissolved; and burning, the elements will melt? But according to His promise, we look for "new heavens and a new earth," in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:11-13).

It's a time when everyone on the planet will no longer be flesh and blood but will be eternal spirit, to die no more. The Father - for the first time ever - will dwell on Earth in person. There will be no more pain, no sorrow, no more death:

"And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God with men! And He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no longer, nor mourning, nor outcry, nor will there be pain any more; for the first things passed away. And the One sitting on the throne said, Behold! I make all things new. And He says to me, Write, because these Words are faithful and true. And He said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending. To the one thirsting, I will freely give of the fountain of the Water of Life. The one overcoming will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to Me" (Revelation 21:3-7)

Autumn festivals 2006:
Trumpets: September 23
Atonement: October 2nd
Tabernacles: October 7th-13th
Eighth Day: October 14th

15). Then, all mankind who have not in this life responded to the invitation to eternal life will be resurrected in their flesh for a period of testing during which they are judged according the "the books" - the Scriptures. Then comes the end.

The End of Time

There's one more festival day - immediately following the seven days of *Tabernacles*. This "*eighth day*" is prophetic of the culmination, the completion, of God's grand design. It marks a new beginning.

(The number "*eight*" throughout Scripture symbolizes this.) The final two chapters of the book of Revelation inform us of a "*new heavens and a new earth*." Writes the apostle Peter: "*Then all these being about to be dissolved, of*

A Time To Observe

These festivals - instituted to be observed by all mankind and not just by Jews - provide insight into the magnificent plan God has for mankind - a plan determined "before the world began."

Bible believers around the world continue to observe the festivals. For details of when and where contact any of our offices. **Ω**

MiniStudy

Will You Be Left Behind?

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

For most of us, “rapture” is an excited state of mind, joy at a very pleasant experience. For millions of Christians, however, it's more - much more - than that. For it is believed that they will be “raptured” - caught away from Earth - to escape the coming wrath of God. The term derives from the Latin *rapare*: to take or snatch away. The concept has been popularized in recent years by a series of fictional titles (*Left Behind* series) by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B Jenkins. The implication is that mankind is about to experience a time of terrible suffering - “the Great Tribulation” - and the awesome horrors of “the wrath of God,” the “Day of the LORD.” Christians, however, will be snatched into heaven to escape, and unless you are “born again” (just 35% of US citizens) you will be left behind to experience them.

While the Scriptures do refer to a form of “rapture”, careful study casts doubt on the usual explanation.

- Paul's words to the brethren in Thessalonica (quoted above) contain the elements on which the idea of a snatching away is based
- at the prophesied return to Earth of Jesus, Christians will indeed be caught up [Gk. *harpazo*: seize, be caught away, 1 Thess 4:17] to the clouds to meet him - those Christians who have previously died together with those alive at that time. It is a time of resurrection
- the *Left Behind* series places this astounding and momentous event *before* the Great Tribulation. (It is termed the *Pre-Tribulation* viewpoint by theologians.) The books envisage that when it happens pilots will be snatched from their planes, drivers from cars and trucks and trains, millions suddenly disappear from the home, the field, the workplace. Clearly with catastrophic consequences for those left behind - two-thirds of world population
- elsewhere, the apostle Paul refers to the same event: *"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [i.e., die], but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (I Corinthians 15:51-53). This resurrection, note, is to a state of immortality. Christians are “changed” from flesh to incorruptible spirit
- but when does this happen? Paul supplies the clue: “...at the last trumpet”. A curious expression but one which refers to a specific time in prophecy. The last apostle, John, fills in the details in the New Testament book of *Revelation*
- unsurprisingly, the “last” trumpet is preceded by others. There are seven prophetic trumpets blown by angels - each with reference to successive events on Earth at the end-time. They are unveiled in the book of Revelation chapters 8-16. These seven trumpet prophecies culminate in the “last trumpet” and the return of Jesus
- “the tribulation” will come *before* Jesus returns: *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky..."* (Matthew 24:29-30pp). So - Jesus says: tribulation, then heavenly signs, then the “sign of the Son of man”
- the “heavenly signs” are what Jesus calls “the sixth seal” (Revelation 6:12). This precedes the Seven Trumpets. Recall that the resurrection of Christians is at “the last trumpet”, coinciding with the return of Jesus
- the seventh Trumpet welcomes the returning Christ and the resurrection of the saints. It is also the beginning of “the Day of the LORD” - God's sentence executed upon rebellious mankind in Christ's presence
- some students stumble by confounding the *Tribulation* with God's wrath - which is also called, *the Day of the LORD*. Notice what the apostle Peter adds: *"The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come"* (Acts 2:20). That is, the *Day of the Lord* follows the “heavenly signs” which in turn follow the *Tribulation*
- in sum, the resurrection of Christians - called by some “the Rapture” - takes place, says Jesus, *after* the Tribulation and before the Day of the LORD. The implication is that Christians will experience the challenges that the Tribulation will bring. Indeed Jesus warned that some Christians would suffer martyrdom. All of us, of course, must be willing to stand firm in face of persecution (cf Luke 17:33)

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