

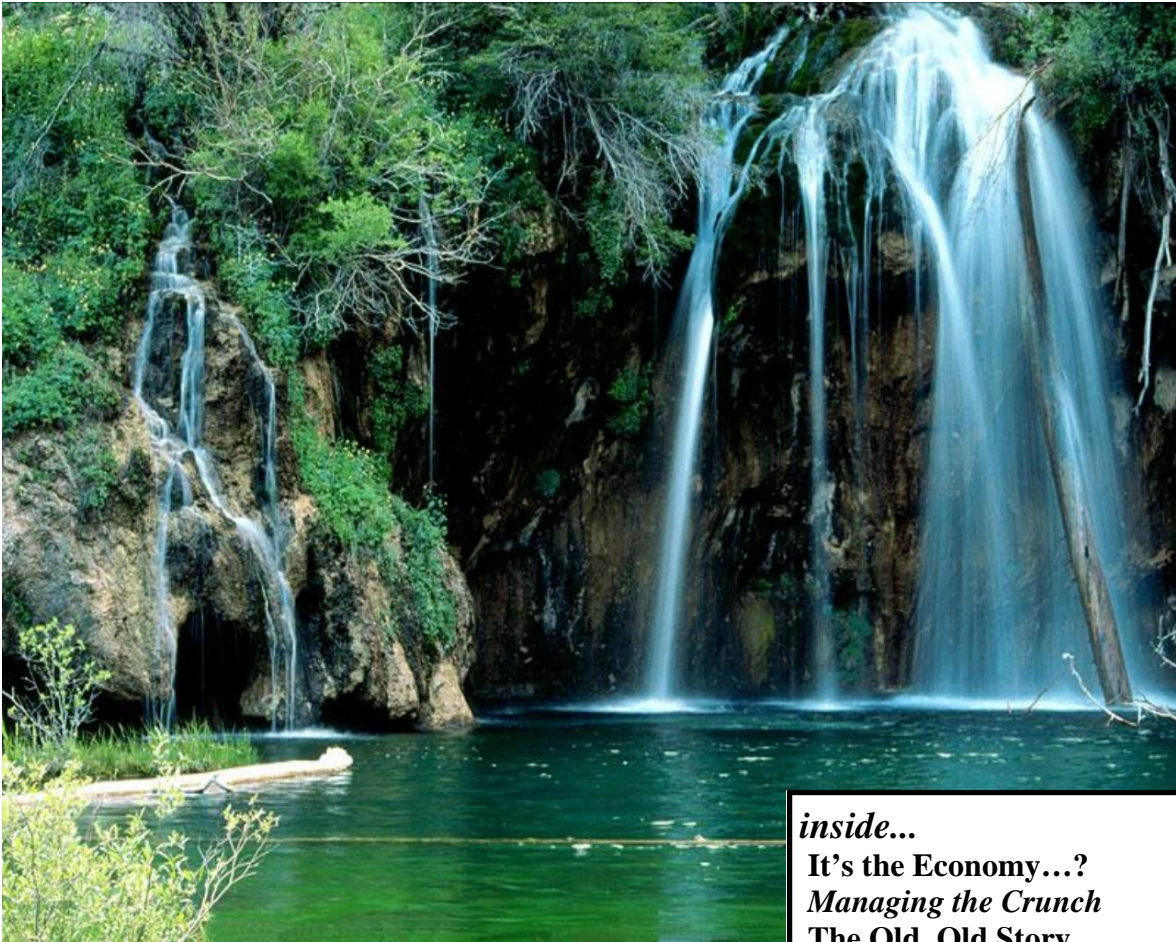
# **new Horizons**

*Vol 13 No 2*

*March/April 2009*

*addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow*

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*inside...*

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**CGOM**

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

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the true meaning of the  
Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

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in the clearest of terms - and  
recorded for us in the Scrip-  
tures. Over the centuries  
that truth has been buried,  
dug up, buried again. Our  
desire is to restore the sim-  
ple apostolic message. We  
hope you will be excited  
by what the Scriptures re-  
veal about life, and the  
horizons beyond**

*the views expressed by the writers are not  
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# new Horizons

Issue No 74

March/April 2009

## Governments focus on 'the economy' as the measure of national prosperity. Are they right?

(reprinted from *New Horizons*  
May 2005)

Famously, the battle cry for an American election was '*It's the economy, stupid*'. It won the vote. And, of course, the 'pound in your pocket' is a high priority for most. Yet in the West, at least, we enjoy greater material prosperity than previous generations. Earth has yielded vast resources that have more than compensated for our burgeoning population growth, while ingenuity has figured how to increase productivity. We all benefit materially.

Much of our 'prosperity' derives from reliance on the usurious banking industry. In Britain, for example, the private debt burden is estimated at over a *trillion* pounds. That's £1,000,000,000,000 \$1.8 trillion! The US national debt is officially four trillion dollars but the true figure has been estimated at five times that.

And war doesn't help.

National debt can be absorbed—for a

time But it will in the end catch up with us, and financial experts are already screaming warnings. Personal debt bites more quickly. Overspend and the bankruptcy court with all its painful consequences looms. Your home may be re-possessed and you are out on the street. Your family and business ruined. Friendships severed.

## Who's To Blame?

To seek improved quality of life is praiseworthy and to be considered by all. And indeed given human ingenuity and the products of nature's bounty it is disgraceful if such improvement stalls. Government—ignoring personal responsibility—seeks to re-distribute national income, to grab from the productive to help, often, the feckless and thus provoking tax-dodging, the black economy and other illegality.

We can pin blame for excessive national debt, at least in part—and especially but not exclusively in 'third world' nations—on corruption and profligacy at the top of government and business. Failed technology drains the national coffers—for example Government computer systems. And the arms industry absorbs vast sums. Unnecessary bureaucracy, too, with multiple thousands of useless jobs financed from the public (taxpayers) purse. And then there's the huge 'welfare' drain. No wonder national debt soars.

What of personal debt? The Christmas season gives a clue, for that's when most debt accumulates around the neck of unbelievers and believers alike. It's the time for perhaps a third of retail sales—also a clue.

There's a malaise in the human heart that wants to spend, spend, spend. Possessions—we want them. A more luxurious home, more exotic holidays, nicer designer clothes, better

furnishings, well-turned-out children, treasured *objets d'art*. And if the factor that underpins these—a sufficient income—can't be achieved by legal pursuits then there's always the illegal, the 'black economy'.

## National Prosperity

We may, in general, be more prosperous than before, have more 'goods', more leisure, live longer. Is a strong economy, though, *real* prosperity?

The downside, what we all live with, is neglect of the sick and the elderly, widespread violence, broken dysfunctional families and gross immorality in high places, fraudulent practices and corruption, a lack of integrity and the grasping for possessions.

Government—they bear some responsibility for all this—has failed to curb such excesses. Indeed, "*The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot to the head there is no soundness in it*". There are clear reasons.

Imagine a society in which there is the mirror image of this 'downside': the elderly and the disadvantaged are respected and cherished, intolerance of every form of violence, minimal divorce, adultery and 'co-habitation' marginalized, sound transparent practice in government and business, justice upheld, honesty everywhere, and contentment.

Burdensome pressures and finances would be minimized as exorbitant taxation is rolled away. But, did you notice anything? Such good practice is age-old.

Such practices are the public face of

**"It's the Economy"**

**...are they stupid?**

the divine pattern for a prosperous society. Paint in one more brush stroke and the picture is clear, for there is still a missing ingredient.

Through Moses and confirmed by Jesus and his apostles God tells us: *“Take heed lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes, lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and live in them, and your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the LORD your God”* (Deuteronomy 8:11-14)

This solemn warning was delivered to ancient Israel upon their inheritance of the Land of Canaan. But doesn't it ring true to our twenty-first century Western nations? What prosperity is ours. Haven't we *'eaten and are full'*? Don't we have *'goodly houses'*? Isn't there abundance of agricultural products? Only at the margins of society are these benefits scarce. And haven't we *'forgotten the LORD our God'*?

### The Pay-off

But are not such benefits the product of our ingenuity, our relentless effort, our industry? Hear the Creator: *“Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth’. You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth”* (v. 18). We don't remember Him. We have forgotten. We neglect the spirit.

That's why the economy bumps along. Why nationally and as families and individuals our resources are *'a bag with holes'*. Why hard cash is poured by the billion into public services only to dissipate without effect. Half the year, near enough, we work to pay our burden of taxation.

Individually, we waste resources on unnecessary possessions, time-wasting entertainment. Billions poured away into often useless public service 'jobs', into the deep trough of self indulgence, into a perverted justice system, into the destruction of national sovereignty. *That's* what keeps the economy afloat. But it floats on a candy-floss foundation.

### First Cause

At the mere mention of 'God', of course, the scoffers swarm in droves. We have long, in government and in our personal lives, forsaken Him.

The clear logic of a super-intelligent First Cause is ignored along with the knowledge that He remains sovereign—and intimately interested in His *kosmos*, His creation.

It's *'the fool'* who has said in his heart *'there is no God'*. The lesson of history is that nations rise—and catastrophically fall. *Here's why:*

That voice is a clarion call from the pages of the Scriptures.

Is it already too late? Can government, can individuals, acknowledge the real source of prosperity? That it is the sovereign Creator who gives us wealth-giving power? That if He is to install that programme He requires obedience—obedience to His revealed plan for all mankind? That any other 'programme' we run will cause our system to crash?

It's *not* the economy. *It's us.*      **Ω**

## Managing the Crunch

By all accounts we face a fairly torrid and challenging time for the next few years. Government, financier and personal irresponsibility over many years has 'landed us in the soup'.

Surveys have indicated that for church people—as for others—the effect on the pocket has naturally led to financial belt tightening. (Charities are experiencing a downturn in income.) Jobs have been lost (a predicted three million plus by year end). Those reliant on income from savings and on fixed incomes have been particularly hard hit. Pension funds, too, have been devastated.

### Trust Me

It's a time like this that our trust in the Eternal God is tested. Sadly, in the good times we tend to take Him for granted! He, of course, never changes no matter how fickle may burn our trust in Him.

Addressing scattered Christians the apostle Peter wrote: *'...Be humble in the presence of God's mighty power, and he will honor you when the time*

*comes. God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him'* (I Peter 5:6-7).

That echoes what Jesus said: *'... Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these...Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself'* (Matthew 6:25-34).

So—'Trust Me'!      *cont'd p.3*

## Crunch...cont'd

### Stay Close

Our first century predecessors in the faith were no strangers to privation. It was a dangerous world and public services were inadequate, with serious disease outbreaks that swept away many. Food shortages, too, were common.

It has been suggested that Christians, though equally affected, fared better than most. They were a close community and shared their resources—not only with one another but with their needy neighbours.. It is an example for us.

Recall that we are counselled ‘... *We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer*’ (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Even though scattered, isolated even, brethren (especially in such times as these) ought to build our ‘support network’ with other brethren and with neighbors—by letter, phone, internet; and where possible by direct face-to-face contact.—especially when a fellowship is available within reach.

### One Another

The apostle Paul, especially, counselled this kind of interaction between the brethren. Note his words:

- Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ
- *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love*
- be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you
- *the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men*
- comfort yourselves together, and edify one another
- *Grudge not one against another, brethren*
- love one another with a pure heart fervently
- be of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren

- Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love
- *Be of the same mind one toward another*
- Owe no man any thing, but to love one another
- *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way*

Paul's counsel to the church is no less vital in the twenty-first century than in the first century. The Christian church is in disarray. Healing and change will come only through the intimate interaction of the brethren. In hard times, especially, we must lay aside sectarian differences and be ready to selflessly serve one another.

But above all, let's place our trust for every need in the hands of our loving Father, committing ourselves to His service. Ω

### END OF THE WORLD?

The ‘prophets of doom’ are on the prowl! To my knowledge none of them have a perfect predictive track record, so the LORD said ‘*don't fear them*’. (Deuteronomy 18:22). That's what is required of a true prophet.

But that doesn't mean one or more won't at some time burst on the scene. God has set a time limit on human incompetence, and when it is expiring He will give plenty of warning—by the ‘*signs of the times*’ or by infallible prophets who exercise divine powers.

But is this ‘it’? Will 2009 witness ‘the end’? The short answer: ‘*...no-one knows*’. For we have throughout the last two millennia been through similar times of ‘distress among nations’.

That awesome day *will come*—in God's time and when mankind reaches the end of its tether, and can no longer sustain life (Matthew 24:4-13).

It is for each of us to watch, to be alert, to avoid complacency. And to be spiritually prepared.

*calling all readers of...*

## *New Horizons*

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# THE OLD, OLD STORY

## That 'old-time religion' - is it relevant in century twenty-one?

The Christian faith has constantly been under siege. From its inception there have been disputes, heresies, counter-heresies. But it has survived. And one pillar of its survival is 'The Book'. That book is the *Christian Bible*—the Old and New Testaments.

The first Christians, of course, didn't have what we call 'the New Testament', with its twenty-seven individual 'books'. In circulation were a number of letters—'epistles'—mostly from the apostle Paul. For thirty years or so the apostles were active. Their recollections and those of numerous eye-witnesses also were doing the rounds of the churches, with at least 'part-gospels'.

Multiple copies were made in different languages (Arabic, Greek, Ethiopian *etc*) which accounts for minor variations in the text. A letter or gospel account would be read out and copied over and over again. There may have been 'copyist error' but the substance was preserved intact. It was from these that consensus approved the 'canon'—the authentic record of the life and teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Every word of the selection, however, was carefully compared with what we know as 'the Old Testament' or 'the Hebrew Scriptures'. Anything in conflict was discarded, for these Scriptures had the imprimatur of Jesus himself: '*...Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets*' (Luke 24:27 CEV).

No less should we now pay attention to this, God's revelation to mankind.

## Hear Him

Jesus once had a confrontation with the Pharisees about this. He said: '*...He who is a child of God listens to God's words. You do not listen to them: and why? It is because you are not God's children*' (John 8:47 Weymouth). Later he adds: '*...when he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know his voice. The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice, and they run away*' (ch 10:4-5 CEV).

Many who profess the Christian faith simply fail in this test. Their reading of the Scriptures—both Old Testament and New—is superficial, and the divine Word falls on deaf ears. Yet Jesus said: '*...God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink*' (Matthew 5:6 CEV).

We may 'believe on' Jesus—but unless we listen actively and do what he teaches us through the Scriptures (not tradition) we clearly are not children of the Father. (I may *believe* a coach will take me to London—but to arrive there I have to climb on board, and stay on board!)

## Tradition Addiction

Much Christian belief is unsupported by the Scriptures—tradition, in other words. As with the choice of texts for the New Testament canon, *all of Scripture* is the gold standard for any teaching. Such doctrines as man's nature, the divinely-revealed times of worship, the role of Law and the nature of grace—crystal clear in the Bible to any who seek for truth—these have been supplanted by teach-

ings derived from non-Christian faiths.

Those words of Jesus to the Pharisees (John 8:47) ought to stop us in our tracks. Are we listening? Do we sincerely want to understand? Or, are we addicted to tradition?

The complete Scriptures are widely available in some 250 languages—and portions in many more. They are a 'call' to those who can access them: '*...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him*' (II Chronicles 16:9).

Respond to His Word and God draws you towards Jesus. Shut your ears to it and His truth remains hidden. As God said through Jeremiah: '*...And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all year heart*' (ch 29:13). For this very reason Jesus spoke to his hearers in 'parables'.

But this doesn't mean that God's Word is of no effect for those who read but don't commit. Read it. Study it. Absorb it. Even if you hang on to your church's traditions and yet neglect to obey the Bible teachings—the Word will still, as with the Israelites, influence you for good.

Commit yourself, freed from tradition, to obey God's revelation, however, and you become a son or daughter of the Father, a joint-heir of the universe with Jesus the Messiah, our elder brother. Ω

*Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms*

# LIVING WITH *UNCERTAINTY*

**Our world is fraught with uncertainty. Whether health, family affairs, finances, work—none offer us the solid foundation of certainty.**

**How can we thrive in an uncertain world?**

Will I succumb to ill-health—or even die soon? Who will support me should I become incapacitated? Will I be safe at home and on the street? Can I stay married for a lifetime or will my partner be unfaithful and leave? Will I have healthy children? Do I face redundancy at work? Will I lose my home? Add on the uncertainty of a world in turmoil with its threats from both nature and human nature.

## **Prudence Needed...**

In our Western world we needn't be destitute, even in face of State incompetence. Not even Government, however, is able to guarantee retirement comfort (except for themselves!).

But we must still live with uncertainty. The prudent look at their circumstances and take whatever steps are necessary to avoid catastrophe. They eat healthfully. They avoid noxious substances and destructive practices. They select carefully their life's partner ensuring shared values. There's no 'keeping up with the Joneses' or wild and frivolous overspending. Instead they work hard and personally provide for their future.

## **...but Anxiety Rules**

Take a look at our world. It is dominated by a single all-powerful superpower, the United States of America perhaps the most altruistic of nations. Yet America is increasingly subject to abuse from lesser entities. The invasion of Iraq, accompanied by Great Britain, has precipitated a wall of hate from Islamic terrorists and timid 'friends'. It's not unlikely that

the invasion was stirred up by the Creator—just as He has done throughout history. But that doesn't mean He is pleased with America or Britain! Both nations have for two hundred years experienced untold abundance. Now, however, they ignore Him—both Government and people. So He removes the protective hedge built around us.

What will now happen in Iraq, and indeed the Middle East in general? There's uncertainty.. Uncertainty that spills into personal lives, not only of the families involved but for all of us. How will oil-rich Mid-Eastern nations respond? Will Iran go nuclear? Will Asian nations pull their financial prop of the US economy? And how will that affect us personally? *Uncertainty.*

Uncertainty, too, in matters of health, for none of us is guaranteed a life free from illness or accident. Modern technological medicine is amazing, but it is by no means infallible. Who knows when the 'Grim Reaper' will call by. Or some incapacitating illness or accident. We can financially insure ourselves but that's no substitute. Again—*uncertainty.*

Then there is the family, for the ancient stability within a lifetime marriage is no longer. In the UK the average duration is but eleven years (though one couple recently celebrated eighty years of marriage.)

The foundations have crumbled. A lifetime marriage is now merely one option in a sea of choice including sterile same-sex relationships and the single-parent option. Yet the facts clearly show mere co-habitation—living together without 'the piece of paper'—is usually prone to early collapse with children abandoned to single parenthood. Weird welfare provision, Government and societal

undermining of the marriage institution and neglect of personal responsibility encourages feckless youth to procreate with dire social consequence for the nation.

The pinnacle of creation, mankind, is equated with amoral animals. Sexual promiscuity, also encouraged by Governments, results in infertility, abortion and rampant STDs. More uncertainty.

What about 'church'? Surely here we can be sure—sure of personal satisfaction through faith here and now, and eternal security? No—not so. The universal assault by pseudoscience and so-called liberalism on the very idea of a Creator God has undermined faith, increased doubt and launched a wave of secular uncertainty.

## **Set Foundations**

How, in such a world, can we build stability and certainty into our short lifespan?

Psychology teaches belief in self, and certainly confidence in our talents and skills is an important ingredient. We search out—or should do—our inherited abilities and skills and nourish them through education, practice and experience, enabling us to foresee problems and nip them in the bud. Wise parents instil in their offspring a desire to succeed. Such life skills enable a degree of certainty.

## **Faulty Solutions**

Uncertainty, however, runs deeper. No era of human existence has been 'perfect', and mankind has always had to deal with the unexpected, for too much is beyond the control of any one of us.

Sadly, many lack the essential foundation to deal with it. Some simply cave in and take their own life. Millions more live in a Prozac-induced stupor as they seek a chemical solution to depression *cont'd p.8*

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS...just a sham?

### The greatest hoax ever? Or, the certain evidence of a Creator God?

The resurrection of Jesus is perhaps the most attested fact of history. It has significance for all mankind—for you, whether Christian or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist or even in Judaism. *All* mankind.

Since man was created and 'fell' the knowledge of a coming Deliverer—the '*Desire of all nations*'—was common knowledge. That knowledge—however distorted—passed down the generations, into all nations, all religions. Inevitably false teachers hi-jacked God's plan introducing many of its elements into sometimes successful humanly-devised religions. Since creation there have been numerous such deceptions—in Babylon, in Egypt, in ancient Iran, for example.

In Mithraism, 'born' in ancient Persia, the 'god' supposedly died and was resurrected. The hand of the great Deceiver, however, is seen in other aspects of that false faith. In stark contrast to the true church being built (to this day) by Jesus Christ, adherents of Mithraism observed his birth—on December 25. They worshipped on Sunday, believed in an 'immortal soul', believed in false ideas of heaven and hell and eternal torment for the wicked. Just like the modern face of 'Christianity'.

But no-one, ever, has returned from death in the same manner as did Jesus the Messiah. Certainly no founder of any other faith has done so. Not in all human history. Devotees visit the tombs of Abraham and Mohammed. Buddha disappeared into

nirvana. Yet Jesus predicted, in detail, his death. He predicted his resurrection and the precise timing of it. He carefully laid the plans for his future activities. He burst the chains of death and came among his contemporaries in a tangible body that defies explanation, able—and visibly to witnesses—to pass through solid matter. He was transported instantly from place to place. He passed through locked doors. This was no myth. Many contemporary witnesses bore testimony to this unparalleled event. And it's not over, *for he still lives*. The fact of his resurrection was well-known throughout the then known world.

### What It Means

The death and resurrection of Jesus sets divine approval on the faith he promoted. In face of philosophers, sceptics, even bishops, unless Jesus of Nazareth arose from the grave Christianity is a fraud. Unless he arose from the grave every professing Christian is still unforgiven, still in their sins, still without salvation. Unless he arose you may as well go away and devise your own rules for behaviour, follow any faith.

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***The Empty Tomb***

If Jesus conquered death it undeniably proves the existence of an Almighty God. It means that every other faith system is, however successful, fraudulent. It puts every individual who commits to Christianity under awesome obligation. It answers the ultimate question—*is there life beyond the grave?* If the Gospel reports of his resurrection are true can we then question the substance of the rest of the Bible? Or the existence of God?

Jesus time and again predicted his own death. But always he made clear that in a specified time he would rise from the dead. Talk about going out on a limb. It happened—precisely as

he predicted. Since he was right you can be sure his other predictions are certain. Like, '*I will come again*'. Like, '*when the Son of man returns in all his glory he will gather the nations before him*' for judgment. And believe him, he will not return as the 'meek and mild' Jesus of popular imagination but as the all-conquering King of kings set on exposing and destroying '*those who destroy the earth*'.

### Irrefutable Evidence

Consider the following, each of which can be supported by much evidence:

- Jesus predicted his own death—'killed'—many times
- He time and again predicted his resurrection
- He fulfilled a precise timetable, resurrected as the '*first of the firstfruits*'
- He predicted when he would rise again from the dead: in '*three days and three nights*'. This, he said, was the only sign he would give the unbelieving Jewish authorities
- He fulfilled all the many prophecies concerning his death
- He was seen on numerous occasions, after he rose, by numerous contemporaries—on one occasion by around five hundred
- The Jewish authorities couldn't produce his body and resorted to bribery and influence
- The empty tomb on the outskirts of Jerusalem, easily accessible to all comers, bore witness to his resurrection. No evidence was produced showing it fake or fantasy. No-one made the tomb a shrine. It was empty.
- Following his crucifixion the disciples were unbelieving, fearful and timid. They were transformed following the resurrection appearances of Jesus
- The teachings of the apostles following the first Christian Pentecost (*ie* six weeks later) centred on the undisputed fact of the resurrection of Jesus. No-one in Jerusalem contradicted them.
- Only in the fantasy realm of fiction

*cont'd p.8*



## The Feast of the Passover

Firmly entrenched in the Christian calendar is the 'Easter season'. Annually in the Spring is celebrated perhaps the highlight of the ecclesial year, even - for the believer - eclipsing Christmas. 'Easter' includes both the final suffering of Jesus ('Good Friday') and a celebration of his resurrection on 'Easter Sunday'. Its observance is not without controversy. For most of Christendom Easter replaced the Biblical *Feast of the Passover*.

The festival of Easter, perhaps a surprise to most Christians, was unknown to the first Christians. It was introduced in the second-century by the church in Rome - at least in part to distance itself from the Jewish Passover observance - on which the festival's timing is now based. The word 'Easter' appears but once in the King James Bible and is a translator's interpretation of the Greek *pascha* - Passover: '*...intending to bring [Peter] up to the people after the Passover [KJV- Easter]*' (Acts 12:4 LITV). 'Easter' is a late introduction and the name derives from the Assyrian mother goddess *Ishtar* - also worshipped as *Diana*, *Cybele* etc.

The *Feast of the Passover* - in the New Testament also called the *Days of Unleavened Bread* (Acts 12:3, 20:6, John 13:1) - is perhaps the oldest continuously-observed religious festival - even, in embryonic form, pre-dating the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The Israelites were delivered from slavery by divine power. Each family (or group of families) set aside a lamb on a specific date on their calendar, placing the blood of its sacrifice around the door of their dwellings: '*... And I will see the blood, and I will pass over you*' (Exodus 12:13). By this means they escaped God's awesome judgment on the murderous Egyptians. It is this which is commemorated annu-

ally in Judaism as *Passover*.

*Passover* is a seven-day festival, the first and last days of which are 'holy convocations' - special 'high' days. In its beginning Passover began with the 'sacrifice of the Passover' and Israel was commanded to observe it '*...throughout your generations*'. It will, unlike the Lord's Supper, be observed even after The LORD returns (Ezekiel 45:21, I Corinthians 11:26). A representative lamb was sacrificed in the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice on Nisan 14. Jesus replaced the sacrifice that year. The sacrifice had to be at the place where '*God places his name*' - in the Tabernacle or the Temple. (It cannot be sacrificed today as there is not yet a sanctioned Temple and/or altar.)

Until the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, families brought their own offerings, a portion of which was eaten as darkness fell on Nisan 14. '*And they shall eat the flesh in this night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs*' (Exodus 12:8). It was observed at the beginning of the

Hebrew year, in early Spring: '*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening\* you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month, at evening*' (v.18). The festival continued seven days. \**Note*: As there are but seven days of unleavened bread, and as the festival ends on the 21st, this clearly refers to the end of Nisan 14, approaching sunset. *Note*: time designations were, as today, fluid - evening merges with night.

At the Exodus the instructions were practical; *unleavened* (ie unyeasted) *bread* because they didn't have time to allow the dough to rise (it was made daily). *Bitter herbs* (*Heb* bitters - we don't know what these were!) may have been a nutritional ingredient. In succeeding observances the blood, flesh, unleavened bread and bitters took on symbolic meaning.

The seven-day *Feast of the Passover* was - along with the remaining festivals (see Leviticus 23) universally observed by the first Christians, both Jew and Gentile. The symbols are perfectly adapted to the Christian faith. The *lamb*, clearly, is Jesus (John 1:29, I Corinthians 5:7). *Leaven* represents false teaching (Matthew 16:6-12), hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), and as Paul adds: '*So let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and of evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*' (I Corinthians 5:8).

*Note*: (v.7), the Corinthian brethren (largely Gentile) were at that time 'unleavened' (Gk *azumos*) - ie, they were observing the festival both physically and symbolically. Yeasted products were - are - removed from the home for the seven-day period of the festival. (The practice is akin to the six week Lenten period on the Christian calendar - but at God's designated time).

The implication for Christian observance is that by eating, during the seven days of the festival, only bread

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### Uncertainty...cont'd

and anxiety. Others seek solace through religious ritual or are sucked into a sect that offers certainty: protection from a coming 'tribulation', doctrines set in stone, a reclusive community, an unbending hierarchical structure.

### Divine Remedy

But true religion can indeed provide that sought-after certainty. Not, however, assurance of a long and tranquil life or abundant health and material prosperity. Nor a guarantee of physical protection through all of life's ups and downs. And certainly no promise that Christians won't suffer persecution and martyrdom. Millions, perhaps, have down the centuries suffered and been mercilessly killed for their faith at the hand of individuals, of pseudo-Christians and other faiths, and of the State. So, the certainty of faith lies elsewhere.

Jesus, the Saviour of the world, experienced life in the raw, was widely despised and rejected in his generation—and today. He lived under the totalitarian Roman power. His expression of the true faith incurred the wrath of the religious authorities. He was tested by all those desires of the flesh to which any human is heir—yet without in any way succumbing to them. His message was: *despite life's challenges ensure you have a sound foundation*. Build on rock, he says, not shifting sand. That 'rock' is the basic principles of living as embodied in his own life.

Don't be anxious about the material in life. Just as with any wild creature, life will end, challenges will beset us—but in the meantime, says Jesus, 'trust me, for I will provide your needs'. "Take heed" he said, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all must come to pass, but the end

*is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows"* (Matthew 24:4-8). That describes our age!

But, says Jesus : 'See that you be not troubled'

### What to do

You can't control every aspect of life, but you *can* introduce a degree of certainty:

- **Manage your health:** eat healthily, control your life-style, avoid noxious substances
- **Look after your finances:** live within your means, become debt-free as quickly as possible
- **Strive for betterment:** but be content with your circumstances
- **Avoid an information overload:** be aware of what's going on in the world—but don't be anxious about it
- **Align your life to God's principles of living:** apply the Biblical Book of Proverbs
- **Nourish family life:** a stable family life within a binding marriage provides essential support; ensure shared material and spiritual values
- **Above all:** trust God; lay all your anxieties on a loving and caring heavenly Father Ω

### Passover ...cont'd

that is *unleavened* (alongside other foods) we are, in symbol, 'putting on' the character of Jesus: 'But you have not so learned Christ; If so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true

### Resurrection...Cont'd

did Jesus Christ recover, live for a time in the flesh and then die like everyone else

### Act Now

The passing of centuries has blurred the impact of the resurrection of Jesus. The undeniable fact is that he died, horribly mutilated, and then three days and three nights later passed through the undisturbed grave—clothes and a sealed and solid rock 'door'. He walked and talked with his disciples. And then, before many witnesses, ascended to the right hand of God. Historically, some have been restored to life. But all of us, like them, die sooner or later.

Believe he was resurrected and your life has to change. It is evidence that death isn't the end, that there is life beyond the grave. That God exists. And, as Jesus said and as confirmed by his apostles a time of judgment is coming for everyone.

Jesus was the first to be resurrected—'the first of the firstfruits' - in a spirit-body. At his coming again all those who truly believe and are baptized will join him, in the same spirit form, to reign with him for a thousand years in a renewed world. Wrote James: 'We are a kind of firstfruits'. There is, now, time for you to commit to him and to have stake in his Kingdom, to reign with him. Ω

The death and the resurrection of Jesus are recalled annually in observing the *Lord's Supper* and the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. You are invited to request our publications explaining these days

*holiness* (Ephesians 4:20-32).

With 'Christ in us' we are truly celebrating his resurrection. In contrast to the memorial of Christ's death, the festival is a joyous occasion.

\* On the Hebrew calendar, days begin at sunset the previous evening Ω

**MiniStudy****WHY DOES GOD KILL?**

*'Don't you understand? I am the only God; there are no others. I am the one who takes life and gives it again' (Deuteronomy 32:39 CEV)*

*'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16)*

All of us live with death - it is inevitable. But isn't it a puzzle that a loving God claims to *kill* His creation? How can we reconcile that with Jesus' claim that he came to *save* the world?

- The Old Testament record makes clear that JHVH did indeed kill - sometimes on a massive scale. All mankind but one family of eight, for example, was destroyed in the Flood (Genesis 6). Why? In short, God has a set purpose for the pinnacle of His creation, mankind, and is not disposed to jeopardise that plan. He will remove all obstacles - human or spirit - that knowingly oppose it
- Having created man and instructed him in the way of life, the Creator had initiated His plan, having made it plain (Romans 1). We blew it. Rather than follow the *Manual* we devised our own operating system, and as with any misused device it didn't work. Over the centuries man deviated further and further from the Way - to such a degree that eventually *'...GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'* (Genesis 6:5). The result? All of mankind but for one righteous family was 'purged' in a worldwide flood - to save the plan
- Lessons were not learned, and before long the different families were scattered (*ch* 11) - again to save the plan. But corruption once more set in. The 'righteous' became ever sparser, and the LORD again had to work with one family - that of Abraham. In his days the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had become degenerate: *'...this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me.'* (Ezekiel 16:49-50). Clearly a corrupting influence: *'...therefore I took them away...'*
- God had given ample time for the nations to embrace the one true faith. The Amorites - perhaps the leading Canaanite tribe in occupation of Palestine - sank deeper and deeper into lawlessness, despite the righteous witness of Shem, of Abraham, of Melchizedek. They continued four generations before being expelled by Israel (Genesis 15:16). There may well be parallels in our day
- Nothing will stand in the way of the fulfillment of God's loving purpose. Here's what the Psalmist tells us: *'...You [God] warn the nations and destroy evil people; you wipe out their names forever and ever'* (Psalm 9:5 CEV). And: *'...the LORD preserves all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy'* (145:20). Solomon adds: *'...I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me'* (Proverbs 8:17). God will when necessary remove individuals, communities, nations who stand in the way. He warns, He is very patient, He is merciful. God is love. But when we persistently 'throw a spanner in the works' - He acts
- Jesus is generally perceived as expressing love for all mankind (John 3:16 *etc*). He is not, however, the 'gentle Jesus' of childhood's bed-time stories. In the days of his flesh, he was fearless when opposed, courageous in face of death. And he 'told it like it is': *'.. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth'* (Matthew 13:42). The words of Jesus himself! And through the apostle John he adds: *'...hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'* (Revelation 6:16-17)
- God's purpose is that not one of us should ultimately perish, that we should change, and He patiently gives us time to so do (II Peter 3:9). Some flatly refuse, preferring their false faiths and corrupt life-style (Revelation 9:20-21, 16:9-11). They will experience the *'wrath of the Lamb'*. That's *Jesus*
- In both Old and new Testament the Godhead is presented as loving, gracious, merciful (II Chronicles 30:9 *for example*). When the Father and Jesus kill it is to protect and advance their master plan (Romans 11:36) Ω

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