

NEW **Horizons**

Vol 13 No 5

September/October 2009

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



inside...

Are You 'Called'?

Economics Made Simple

Life Without Death

Why Britain is Broken

Pathway to Peace

Why the Holy Days?

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

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 - eg our bi-monthly Newsletter OUTREACH, NEW HORIZONS magazine, the BIBLE BASICS on-line home study course, and the 32-lesson Study Course. The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren

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

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If you would like a copy of our *Statement of Beliefs* please request it from any of the addresses listed

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new Horizons

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God's desire is that through Jesus all of mankind may join His Family. Yet He appears to be very selective. How does He choose?

Jesus claims to be the only way to have access to the Father—the Creator. The apostle Peter reflects this: *'...in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved (Acts 4:12 RV).* And yet: *'... No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him'* (John 6:44 RV). Sounds like God is quite selective in whom He invites to join His Family!

Yet we know that He *'...is long-suffering to you—ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'* (II Peter 3:9). God's purpose in creating the material universe—and all in it—is to *'...bring many sons to glory'*, to share in His spiritual Kingdom, His Family. *And all of us are invited.*

Wrote the apostle Paul of the Gospel: *'...their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world'* (Romans 10:18). In the first flush of the Gospel, the good news of salvation was offered far

and wide, indiscriminately to all races, all colours. And no less so in our day.

Why, then, do so few accept the invitation?

Limited Choice

The Father, however, is vigilant to identify the willing. These He draws to His Word—both written, and incarnate in Jesus. Records the Psalmist: *'...the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men'* (Psalm 11:4).

Do You Know if You Are 'Called'?

Millions confess to be 'Christian' by virtue of their birth into a Christian family. Any calling falls on deaf ears. But there are other factors blocking a response:

- In the first place, the cultural norm is that we inhabit a near godless society. For a couple of centuries there has been an outright assault on the Bible and its timeless values, with God faded into the background. The apostle Peter speaks clearly: *'... And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of'* (II Peter 2:2)

- 'Godless', though, is inaccurate—for *'... if our gospel is*

veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them' (II Corinthians 4:4). Our society—its economic, social, legal, educational and even religious systems—is saturated with the evil principles of *'...the god of this world'*

- Further, the Gospel message—though opposed by many—was initially accepted by thousands of those who heard. Their background was exclusively first-century Judaism, and those Gentiles who embraced Judaism, 'proselytes'. They lived and breathed the Jewish way of life with all its worship forms. Their major obstacle was that they had to accept that Jesus was the Christ, the long-promised Messiah, that ritual was replaced by his sacrificial death
- Contrast that with potential believers today. Christianity is associated with Sunday observance, with Easter, with Christmas. These practices were unknowns to the first Christians—and were never meant to be introduced. Indeed were counselled against—by none less than the LORD. So, today, when faced by the real

Scripture teachings the majority reject the invitation, choosing to stay securely in the arms of the world

- Some will take tentative steps towards conversion—for example through the *Alpha Course* or other evangelistic outreach. They come to belief in Jesus as Saviour, but draw up short when they face the hurdle of true Bible teaching
- In general, those likely to respond are those with needs—the successful see no need for God. We are not called because of our wisdom or our power or our family connections, says Paul, but solely by His gracious intervention in our lives (I Corinthians 1:26f). But why does God ‘choose’? Why distinguish one above another, whether nation or individual?

Chosen With Purpose

All that the sovereign God does is within the parameters of His grand design, His purpose for his *kosmos*. Abraham is an example (Joshua 24:3), as is Jacob (Romans 9:13).

The nation of Israel was also chosen: ‘...*the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure*’ (Psalm 135:4). The Father exercises His sovereign will, noting national and individual character.

Christians, too, are ‘chosen’: ‘...*you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*’, wrote Peter to the brethren (I Peter 2:9).

But His choice isn’t arbitrary. Note the words of Jeremiah, addressing the erring Israelites—and equally applicable to everyone: ‘...*And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your*

heart’ (Jeremiah 29:13).

So, be aware of your need for forgiveness and mercy and then seek Him—the only source for the means of reconciliation, Jesus.

God’s Foreknowledge

Down the centuries monumental effort has been expended by individual Christians—even to the point of death—to reach out with the Gospel. They sought to persuade—an effort to change minds, to convince. But if God has pre-determined some to be saved, why bother?

Wrote the apostle Paul to the Ephesian brethren: ‘... *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*’ (ch 1:4). Not, note, chosen to be saved but ‘...*that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love*’. That we should, in other words, come to be like Him, to acquire the ‘family resemblance’ in our character—the image of Jesus His Son.

Paul adds: ‘...*For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*’ (Romans 8:29).

Those, note, whom He —‘foreknew’.

The Future is Real

To God, the future is as much a reality as the past and the present! He is the ‘I AM’ (Exodus 3:14). He is ‘...*the same yesterday, today, and forever*’ (Hebrews 13:8), and He ‘...*inhabits eternity*’ (Isaiah 57:15). The Creator lives outside time.

God predetermined to work to

‘...*bring to glory*’ those who did indeed ‘...*search for Me with all your heart*’. He observed their mindset and enrolled them in His plan to provide the opportunity of eternal life as a member of His Kingdom.

In our human form we are mere clay, created from the common elements of the soil beneath our feet: ‘...*now, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand*’ (Isaiah 64:8).

The Father draws such to Jesus (John 6:44). Upon repentance and baptism they are justified—considered innocent—through his sacrificial death, through his shed blood (Romans 5:9)

[Note: the opportunity for eternal life will be extended, in God’s time, to all who have ever lived. See the articles **When Someone Dies** and **Tabernacles: mankind in the flesh**—available on-line or in print.].

The Image of Christ

Having from His place in eternity identified—long before they are born!—those inclined to seek Him, He calls them to fulfill His predetermined plan—that they conform to Christ’s image: ‘...*even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love*’ (Ephesians 1:4).

Having remained faithful till we die (or until Jesus returns) we will be ‘glorified’—become like him, and resurrected ‘... *unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away*’ (I Peter 1:4). These are ‘...*called and chosen and faithful*’ (Revelation 17:14).

What a wonderful plan! What an incentive to resist the strong currents of worldliness that seek to destroy us, and to hold fast to the salvation so freely given to those a loving Father has invited to share His glory. **Ω**

Autumn Festivals

Trumpets September 19
Atonement September 28
Tabernacles October 3 - 9
Eighth Day October 10
See pages eight & nine

Do you get the feeling that nobody knows what they're talking about when it comes to economics? Are you confused about the bulls, bears, and bonds, OMB, GNP, SEC, S&P.

Steve Kieler

On and on it goes as the experts, all with their opposing ideas, pour forth their endless theories and solutions.

The Bulls and the Bears

As is usually the case, the argument is not what the argument is about. In other words, the discussion today is about finances but the problem is the economy. Now we must answer the question: what are we really talking about when we talk about "the economy?"

Stock market reports and trends, economic growth tracking, and things like inflation rates are merely charts or graphs indicating not just the value of your portfolio or the bills in your wallet but it's an excellent barometer of the activities and health of the nation - and your own.

Economics is really very broad yet quite simple. Let's see what we can discover. First, let's understand what we are talking about; economics is not just about money. It is about all those things that really drive, for good or for bad, the wealth and health of the nation and, for that matter, your own welfare.

What is economics?

Many words can be combined to make another new word. The Greeks did this by joining *oikous*, which means house, with *nomous*, meaning manager. This compound word, *oikonomos*, literally means 'manager of the house' and is where we get our word "economics," it even sounds similar.

Now a "manager of the house" certainly manages finances as in Luke 16:1 (steward) and Romans 16:23 (chamberlain). But, more impor-

tantly, the abilities and qualities of a manager of the house (economist) include faithfulness and wisdom (Luke 12:42). Additional qualities of a bishop, as the steward, are listed in Titus 1:7-8. They include being blameless, not arrogant, self controlled, no drunkard, not pugnacious, not greedy. And, on the positive side, he must be, *verse 8*, a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.

Finally, he must have right motivation - doing the right thing for the right reason (1 Corinthians 9:17). The word, *oikonomos*, in this verse, is strangely translated "dispensation." Nevertheless, the point is, many people do the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason. Their logic may be classified as either '*the end justifies the means*' or '*the means justify the end*'.

Bear in mind this wisdom is given to and for the "manager of the house" and that house may be the White House, God's house or your own house.

Drivers and how they drive

Money or finances just represents the value of things both tangible and intangible. Money managers can only shift assets from one account to another in hopes of gaining a profit or, in today's fiasco, to avoid loss. Shifting money from one investment to another may be advantageous - or may not be. Regardless, shifting dollars does not create wealth; it redistributes it. Money is only a medium of exchange. It represents the value

Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons may be from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms

we place on work or produce or products.

What drives the financial economic numbers up or down. We are required to work honestly and responsibly with the things entrusted to us. Luke 16:11 reports: "If therefore ye have not been faithful (trustworthy) in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the *true riches*?" This alludes to a connection between faithfulness and mammon (trusting and riches). Being trustworthy is showing loyalty to the master or boss and to the laws and ethical standards as he puts forth. If the servant deals wisely and fairly the household will prosper.

Certainly industriousness increases wealth but bear in mind that all the materials we have, the precious metals, water, land, fuels, were there from the beginning of creation. We can only make those things useful by discovering, mining, forging, combining and otherwise adding value to them. These are good "drivers" for our economy.

But there are "bad drivers" in our economy also. How do they affect our prosperity?

Divorce, unwed mothers, welfare, greed, crime, war and many other things have a negative impact on the monetary system. For example: divorce sets the stage for maintenance of two households and usually two jobs to maintain the households. This exerts pressure on the unemployment line, especially in high unemployment areas. It is also very obvious that wars are an extreme expense in armament's, casualties, and destruction. Isn't that especially sad as war is avoidable, - if the economist is doing his duty? As Proverbs 16:7 says: "When a man's ways please the

Economics Made Simple

LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." The monetary charts and the value of money are merely records of the effect of the "drivers."

Drivers education

The present economic/financial system got its start in recent times by J.M. Keynes, advisor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He is known as the father of deficit spending.

E.F. Schumacher records this in his book *Small is Beautiful* on page 24. "In 1930, during the worldwide economic depression, he (Keynes) felt moved to speculate on the "economic possibilities for our grandchildren" and concluded that the day might not be far off when everybody would be rich. "We shall ", he said, "then once more value ends above the means and prefer the good to the useful." "But beware," he continued, "the time for all this is not yet. For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little while longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight."

This clearly fits today's revelations about how the "managers of the house" are operating. Isaiah might respond to Keynes philosophy thus: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20

History and current trends show which direction the wide spread cheating, stealing, and greed will produce. There are several brave financial and industrial businessmen who are publicly admitting that. I was told personally by one large business and one social organization

that the companies ethics statement does not apply to the board. Need I ask again which direction the monetary system is moving?

A right turn

Obviously, if the economist (manager of the house) is not maintaining the house, the house begins to decay and soon becomes economically irreparable. It is as a house built on sand. Matthew 7:24-27 is relevant here:

Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Is our economy built on the "sayings of mine" (Christ)? If not, then GREAT will be the fall of it. But how about your house? Will it endure? Timothy records this wise advice:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of

Request also

**It's the Economy...
...are they stupid?**

Be a Good Steward

God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

1 Timothy 6:6-11

lesson here is that if you are harried and stressed about things, perhaps you should lower your expectations of what you think you need and give thanks for what you have; be satisfied. Psalm 37:18-19 "*The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*"

Congratulations; you're an economist

There is yet another instruction in 1 Timothy 5:8: "*But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*" Let me paraphrase that: *If a man does not provide for his own family, he has become less trustworthy than an unbeliever.*"

It is a dereliction of financial and moral/ethical duties to neglect ones own economic responsibilities and, repeating Luke 16:11 (paraphrased)... *If you can't be trustworthy in today's unrighteous economic times, how can God trust you with the true riches tomorrow?*

Monetary health is merely a reflection of the qualities of those things that drive the economic engine; production, honesty, self-control, sobriety, etc. You may have to adjust your spending and saving habits to fit the changing economic climate . You, men and women, may even have to change your economy, the way you manage your house, business, or your children to adjust to God's economy. If your managerial skills are in order, the financial foundations are secure. So let's strive to get our economic house in order; the financial blessings will follow. **Ω**

Do 'Christian' nations need the ultimate penalty— death?

Violent dictators and murderers have stalked the earth at least since Cain and Nimrod thousands of years ago. Perhaps most - but certainly not all - have escaped the hangman's noose. Some - like Mussolini - have met a grizzly end at the hands of their once oppressed subjects.

King Nebuchadnezzar (he ruled the area known today as Iraq in the sixth century BC) for his sins was literally turned out to pasture and lived like an animal for seven years. Saddam Hussein believed he was the reincarnation of that ancient king - and spent half a billion dollars rebuilding in his image. He was executed.

The 'chattering classes' of today's world are horrified when such wicked men swing. Should Christians be equally horrified? Is the death penalty for heinous crime contrary to Christian principle?

The premature death of any human being is tragic - a child torn from loving parents, an accidental death, a life taken by violent hands. A memorial service for someone with a fine reputation built over years of dedicated endeavour is a cause for celebration. As King Solomon wrote: *'A good name is better than precious oil; and the day of death, than the day of one's birth'* (Ecclesiastes 7:1). But what of 'the wicked'?

What of a callous killer or one of those violent dictators? Society recognizes that in the interests of justice and security such should be removed from opportunity to kill again. The sentence is what is in dispute, and as often as not it is an all-too-short term in prison, with unrepentant murderers, paedophiles and rapists back on the streets seemingly in no time. It is evident that 'rehabilitation' rarely works.

What do the Christian Scriptures teach us about 'crime and punishment' - especially of violent killers, child abusers and rapists?

Life for Life

Opinion makers—and not least Christian opinion makers including the leaders of the Anglican and Roman churches—lobby vigorously for an end to 'capital punishment', the death penalty. One English Bishop calls it 'humiliating'. Political leaders create 'collateral damage'—*ie*, civilian deaths—in their often unnecessary 'just' wars but hypocritically reject the death penalty. They won't rest until it is banned in every nation.

For such, the imposition of death for murder or rape is seen as a reversion to barbarous 'Old Testament' practice. The implication is that it is obsolete and that we are now 'more civilized'. That despite the Government-approved annual mass slaughter of the as yet unborn.

Every civilised nation has its criminal justice code, and surely not even the most spiritual of any faith would doubt its necessity. Totalitarian governments may multiply laws to the point of tedium and frustration (for us), seeking to control every aspect of life—but the need for a penal code is all too obvious.

Divine Image

And death for serious offences is indeed a law found in the Old Testa-

Life Without Death

ment: *'Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed'* was decreed by God in man's earliest days. (And that was centuries before Moses)

And why? *'For in the image of God made he man'* (Genesis 9:6). They are God's words, His prescription for orderly human society. Israel's justice system built on this, with death for a number of crimes against the person. Government failure to deal properly with crime in accord with Biblical teaching leads to the breakdown of society (Ezra 7:25-26, Ecclesiastes 8:11)

God alone has the authority to take a human life—or to delegate that responsibility to appointed judges:

The 'Ten Commandments' provide the foundation principles for all such codes, as they were for ancient Israel's Constitution. Very few rulers would deny them a place, and the Christian Scriptures are no exception. As the apostle Paul states - it is God who has delegated this obligation to mankind.

His reference, of course, is to normal civilised government - not to the psychopathic despot who murders and tortures his own citizens. Vengeance indeed belongs to God, and Romans 13 tells us *how* the wrath of God is poured out on the ungodly! It is done through His appointed agents -- His "ministers" -- who do not bear the sword in vain.

'.... Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will thou

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unsigned articles are by the Editor

then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shall have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil' (Romans 13:1-4)

The Bible perfectly reflects human nature. God's Word recognizes that most of us are in general law-abiding and supportive of our criminal laws (they are for our personal benefit) needing only a general statement of what is and is not permissible.—but coupled with an assurance that justice will be done by the appointed authorities.

The Bible also recognizes that there are 'the wicked', and has imparted the authority to appoint judges to pass appropriate sentences on the law-breaker. Exodus 20-23 provides examples of even-handed justice and natural equity.

The New Testament also reflects the necessity of the ancient Law.

Wrote the apostle Paul: '*... We know that the Law is good, if it is used in the right way. We also understand that it wasn't given to control people who please God, but to control lawbreakers, criminals, godless people, and sinners. It is for wicked and evil people, and for murderers, who would even kill their own parents. The Law was written for people who are sexual perverts or who live as homosexuals or are kidnapers or liars or won't tell the truth in court. It is for anything else that opposes the correct teaching of the good news that the glorious and wonderful God has given me. (I Timothy 1:9-11 CEV).*

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

The divine Law includes the ultimate penalty—death—for some such offences.

The same Law also builds in the option of mercy in appropriate circumstances at the discretion of the judge, who - whether he understands it or not - is answerable to God.

Crimes against the person - murder, rape, kidnap, sexual deviation, filial violence and disrespect *etc* - merit the ultimate penalty, death. These defile the very image of God in man and are, in God's eyes, the greatest of all crimes and must be publicly seen as such.

Carried out by the State capital punishment deters personal vengeance, revenge, blood feuds - and removes the wicked from the earth until resurrected for judgment (John 5:28-29).

To reject capital punishment, with appropriate safeguards, flies in the face of the teachings of Scripture. Those who embrace true Biblical Christianity are few among Earth's billions. As wrote Paul, they are law-abiding. But society in general requires the rule of law with appropriate penalties—up to and including the hangman's noose. It is God's remedy—anciently and for every age.

Water it down, ignore divine wisdom, and we are doomed to experience a broken society. **Ω**

Why Britain is 'Broken'

It doesn't take a spiritual giant to observe the parlous state of our world—and, notably of Great Britain.

On a 'table of nations' we fail lamentably. Britain is tops for drunkenness—especially among the young. Tops, too, in teen promiscuity, STDs and pregnancies. Add in child murders, abortions—around 200,000 annually—greed and corruption in national political leadership, in business and in the world of finance. Then there's the filth foisted on us daily in the media. (And don't we lap it up!)

Britain, of course, has never been perfect. But check the appalling standards of education, the destruction of family life, the broken marriages, feral youth. The decline in national standards is clear. Urgently, we need to ask, *why?*

Sadly, it's the 'frog in the pan' syndrome. The decline has, for decades,

been creeping inexorably upwards—widely unnoticed except by a few

secular prophets.

Belief Ancient and Modern

It is a truism that there has been a decline in Western Christianity since World War II. A weak Church has been overcome by the secular tide, eclipsed by a flood of alien religions—and even welcomes them.

Our situation parallels that of the dying days of ancient Judah. Then, idolatrous practices swept aside the true faith, descending even to human sacrifice. It merited the just judgment of the Creator. His protection was removed, leading to national exile in Babylon. As today, the leadership despised the true faith and embraced foreign imported religions—labelled 'an abomination' by God.

Bad enough that in Christianity Sunday

has long replaced the divinely-ordained seventh-day Sabbath. Now, in the name of ecumenism, the church embraces these foreign faiths, welcoming them as equal partners in the worship of the God whose name is *Jealous* (Exodus 34:14).

Decline—and Fall?

It is generally rejected, but the true cause of our precipitous decline lies in the rejection of true religion. Together with a few other nations, Great Britain has inherited the mantle of ancient Israel. We have been the recipients of unbounded and undeserved divine blessing but have exhausted the treasure-house of divine favour—and, perhaps, His patience. His support has been withdrawn.

Key to the blessing is adherence to the '*...faith once delivered to the saints*'. Israel abandoned it for the false faiths of surrounding nations—and indeed imported them to Britain, as exemplified by the ancient Druids. The coming of Christianity to these shores **cont'd .p.8**

Why this on-going failure to lead the nations to a lasting peace?

Honest appraisal of man's attempts to produce lasting peace leads only to despair. We all want it. We try our utmost to achieve it—negotiation, trade, treaties, war, political union. But somehow every 'peace process' sooner or later crashes off the tracks. It reflects God's observation of human nature: '*...The way to peace they have not known*' (Romans 3:17). Permanent peace will, however, come. But the process will not be easy.

Heart Change

Central to the process is human nature. To be precise—a change of that nature, and that's a project the Creator has been working on for thousands of years. You might think He could just impose it by divine fiat. Zap us into submission. But haven't we ourselves learned that doesn't work? Think slavery. Think communism or fascism. Think, even, of certain religious sects.

Real lasting peace requires cooperation and a willingness to pay the price. Jesus spoke of two ways—a broad one along which flows the vast tide of humanity, and a narrow and difficult one along which few pass. He said: '*... Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it*' (Matthew 7: 13-14 CEV). Man has from the begin-

ning chosen the first, and it leads inevitably to destruction of every high-minded aspiration we may have.

The key is transformation—change at the very core of our being. We can of ourselves tweak our personality and character to a degree, but radical root and branch change is a divine act by which God implants in us His nature, His Spirit. But only in the willing, in those who find and walk that narrow way.

Ambassadors of Peace

That's the same path walked by a select few from the beginning, and it is these whom God is preparing as His ambassadors of peace. The Father has set a time limit—its expiry date He alone will determine (Acts 1:7)—on human activity, and has outlined for us in the Scriptures of truth what has been called 'the crisis at the close'. Men may scoff (II Peter 3:3-4), but that plan will unfold as surely as day follows night.

Pivotal to that plan is the return of the risen Christ. At that time all those who through the ages have followed the narrow way, and remained faithful—'*...called and chosen and faithful*'—will burst from their graves in spirit form to serve with Him the cause of true peace. People of faith such as Abraham and Sarah (eg Luke 13:28, Hebrews 11). The apostle Paul describes it: '*...So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is*

The Pathway to Peace

sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body' (I Corinthians 15:42-44). And they '*...will be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years*' (Revelation 20:6).

These faithful from every age—including our own—are destined to work with Jesus as 'kings and priests': '*...you let them become kings and serve God as priests, and they will rule on earth*' (Revelation 5:10 CEV). No longer material flesh and blood but now in new spirit bodies.

Traumatic Birth Pains

Those 'thousand years' will be a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity, mankind at last at rest. The birth of that new age, however, will be traumatic. Faced by the prospect of execution at the hands of a world-ruling despot, billions will choose to worship him—the conscious rejection of God's call to repentance. Billions will perish (eg Revelation 9:21).

A remnant from all nations, however, will heed and be led by the returning King of kings into a new life to re-build the devastated earth, supervised by God's army of Spirit-born saints and angels: '*... And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities*' (Isaiah 61:4). They—men and women from all nationalities—will live out their physical life on earth, but now with changed priorities as they serve the King and re-

populate and re-build the planet guided by Jesus and the now resurrected and immortal saints from all ages.

Having resisted the reigning world dictator in those ‘last days’, they will turn to the LORD despite horrific persecution. He says: ‘...*Here is the new agreement [covenant] that I, the LORD, will make with the people of Israel: "I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people"*’ (Jeremiah 31:33 CEV). Over ensuing generations earth will be transformed to its pristine state. The Gospel will be proclaimed, and God’s perfect Law will ensure peace and prosperity for all: ‘...*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, 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 the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*’ (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Some such—descendants of the Israelites—will be led by the returning Christ into Palestine: ‘...*Trees will grow on you mountains of Israel and produce fruit for my people, because they will soon come home. I will take care of you by plowing your soil and planting crops on your fertile slopes. The people of Israel will return and rebuild your ruined towns and live in them. Children will be born, and animals will give birth to their young. You will no longer be deserted as you are now, but you will be covered with people and treated better than ever. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will bring my*

people Israel home’ (Ezekiel 36:8-12 CEV).

But notice also that Isaiah includes ‘...*all nations*’ in this new era—the ‘Gentiles’.

Traumatized by the events at the ‘time of the end’ and with their populations decimated the remnant will—for the most part—gladly turn to the King of kings, willingly submitting to His rule. Note that God gives a warning should they refuse Him: ‘...*Afterwards, the survivors from those*

nations that attacked Jerusalem will go there each year to worship the King, the LORD All-Powerful, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters [Tabernacles]. No rain will fall on the land of anyone in any country who refuses to go to Jerusalem to

Britain... cont’d

—however distorted—became the foundation of our generally equitable and just society.

That foundation is fast crumbling. Without God’s supportive intervention we are assailed by insoluble challenges. We struggle economically. We struggle on the battlefield. We struggle in face of widespread ill-health, sexual perversion, unwise, lying and ineffective leadership.

Be Strong

Faithful Christians daily face a sea of disbelief throughout society. It’s vital that we stand firmly anchored to the Rock that is Christ, doing the Father’s will, resisting the temptations that beset us. For the prize is to those who remain faithful, who ‘...*overcome to the end*’.

Having committed our lives to Jesus and ‘The Way’, salvation is ours: ‘...*now* are we the sons of God’ (1 John 3:2). With God’s Spirit indwelling Christians, we are even now inducted into the divine Family. None but ourselves can take that away! Ω

Summary

- Horrific end-time events will leave both Israelites and Gentiles with reduced populations and in a traumatized state
- Jesus returns accompanied by the resurrected saints from every age, now made immortal
- He will be ‘...*king over all the earth*’ (Zechariah 14:9)—not ‘heaven’!
- Israelites (still ‘flesh and blood’) will be led back to Palestine to re-build their inheritance
- Gentiles will, mostly willingly, submit to Christ’s rule
- Over the following few generations earth will become productive and peaceful under the wise guidance of Jesus and His saints—the ‘millennium’
- Everyone, no matter their previous religious belief, will have opportunity to experience the joy of salvation through Jesus, and on the same terms as today

1000 years...

The Eternal God left an annual reminder of His plans in a recurring series of seven annual ‘holy convocations’. They are in three seasonal groups. Those in autumn refer mainly to the outworking of the divine plan in the end-times.

- **Trumpets** September 19
- **Atonement** Sept 28
- **Tabernacles** October 3-9
- **Eighth Day** Oct 10

For further explanation request
**Tabernacles: mankind in the flesh
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MiniStudy**Why the Holy Days?**

'Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning' (Matthew 5:17 CEV)

Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim or Hindu believers love their annual holy days. Christmas, Passover, Ramadan/Eid, Divali - all are joyfully celebrated by the faithful. (It is said that the atheist holy day is April 1st!) They mark special events and are believed to have been decreed by their respective God. Why do many an increasing number of Christians observe what are widely viewed as 'Jewish days'?

- The Bible holy days are listed in Leviticus 23, and are observed annually by thousands of Christian believers. Indeed they are the only days recorded in the Scriptures - Old Testament or New - to have been decreed by the God of the Bible, JHVH, the LORD, and observed by the first Christians
- Although considered (often disparagingly) as 'Jewish' these annual holy days were introduced to the new nation of Israel (c. 1500 BC) as '*...appointed seasons of Jehovah, holy gatherings which you shall proclaim in their appointed seasons*' (Leviticus 23:4). *God's* days, note - not 'Jewish', not traditions concocted by mankind!
- Perhaps surprisingly, only one of the days observed in modern Christianity - *Pentecost* (also called *Whitsunday*) - is mentioned in the New Testament. Others (Christmas, Easter, saints' days *etc*) were imported from dubious sources into Christianity long after the time of Jesus and the apostles. They obscure the Creator's plan for mankind
- Each of these '*appointed seasons*' has direct reference to and clarifies some aspect of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. They are 'shadows' cast by the real events they portray. *Passover*, for example, is a reminder of the LORD's deliverance of His people - anciently from Egypt and, now, from the slavery of our sin. The *Unleavened Bread* festival emphasises our continuing need to live a holy life free from hypocrisy and error. *Pentecost* is the on-going mission of the holy Spirit through the church. The *Day of Trumpets* has direct reference to the tumultuous time just prior to the return of Messiah, while *Atonement* looks forward to the reconciliation of mankind with the Father. The seven-day *Festival of Tabernacles* depicts man's temporal nature - an ever-present reminder of our frailty, that we are 'clay' being shaped for perfection by a loving God, while the *eighth day* looks forward to eternity
- As with the weekly Sabbath, in observing these divinely-appointed days '*...there is great reward*' (Psalm 19:8-11), and our annual observance reinforces God's Word to us. They provide '*food in due season*'
- The holy days were appointed by God. So - *must* we observe them? In ancient Israel they were indeed required observances - though often neglected. Certainly important, for King Jeroboam self-servingly set up an idolatrous festival (I Kings 12:32) and was ever after branded as perhaps their most sinful king: '*...he made Israel to sin*'. (*ch* 14:16). God expected their observance - so long as all else was in order, and done from the right motives. As Christians no amount of law-keeping will save - only the sacrifice of Jesus, freely embraced, can do that. But as Christians we '*...live by every word of God*' as magnified by the teachings of Jesus, and we '*...worship in spirit and in truth*'. We joyfully do what God says—it is for our eternal benefit
- It is said of Abraham '*...the father of us all*' that he '*...kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*' (Genesis 26:5). This was some four centuries *before* Moses and 'the Law'. He obeyed - as should Christians - because of his faith, not because the Law demanded it. The festivals are '*statutes*' - *eg* Leviticus 23:21. (There are indications that the three harvest festival seasons were observed from creation) Ω

Request the free booklet: God's Holy Days

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