

new Horizons

Vol 14 No 5

September/October 2010

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



inside...

What Does God Require?

The Big Society

Are We All Equal?

God's Righteousness

Tabernacles: man's day

In the Beginning: Sabbath

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

New Horizons is published by the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries*, an association of independent churches, to make known the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God

It is distributed free on request, being a co-operative voluntary effort financed by the members and friends of the *Churches of God*. We also welcome the financial support of all who benefit from our publications and who wish to labour with us.

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

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Tulsa, OK 2010

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If we comply with God's revealed Law—is that enough?

Steven Kieler
I know that I, and probably many of you, just did what was necessary to get by when a little extra effort - attention to details - could have made the difference between mediocrity and excellence. It may have even earned us a greater reward, a gold star, an attaboy, a bonus, a "well done thou good and faithful servant."

But here we are, thinking about 'extra credit' when it is questionable whether we are even doing that which is required of us. God commands certain things like keeping the commandments. But what of all the other details, those little things?

For those just coming to the knowledge of God and his ways and laws, please don't be intimidated by this article. We all must continue to grow in knowledge and obedience to God (For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Rom 3:23). He will not give us more to do than we can handle.

We quickly recall the verses from Micah and Daniel when we hear the word "require."

He has showed you, O man, what

is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)...And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of thee, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 10:12)

There are six things to ponder in just those two verses. Those six things are easily quantified but there is a word, so easily overlooked, that we must regard.

What Does The Lord Require Of You?

Did you notice the word "require"? Sure, we keep the Sabbath and Holy days, and the Ten Commandments, but it would appear that these six things are also more than just good ideas or suggestions; *require* doesn't mean it's voluntary; it means mandatory.

Action Verbs

And, while we are on the subject, what about all those directive action verbs: *go, do (or do not), keep, give, let, stop, watch, bless, etc.* Are they also required? Some of the 'little things' may not cost you your salvation, that's a relief, but it may prevent you from moving to perfection for we are told:

"Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Notice

the action verb *be*. Is that a suggestion (it's a good idea) or a directive (do it)? True, there has been only one perfect human being; nevertheless, we are directed to strive for that perfection. So, how is it working for you?

Details, those little things, mean a lot. On the negative side, it's what got Uzzah, Ananias, and Sapphira killed. It caused Jonah to be swallowed by a fish and check out all the little things and the ramifications in Luke 12:46-48:

"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looks not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Setting the Sights

Certainly, keeping the commandments is a step in the right direction but there is a plethora of other directives, laws, statutes, commands, charges, judgments, precepts, testimonies, and words of the covenant to bear in mind. As I get older (don't we all), I begin to realize that I'm not going to get all my work done to accomplish all my goals.

As a matter of fact, my list of things to do expands faster as my efficiency in doing things de-

clines. Then, as I review all the tasks I am instructed to do in the Bible, added to my personal jobs, I realize that many things have been neglected and the need to prioritize becomes more urgent.

What are some things that you could do to make a difference, even give you a promotion in God's kingdom? Perhaps make you ruler over *ten* cities instead of *five*.

Not that we should strive for power, dominance, or wealth. That is the way of the world. But we should desire to rule with Godly attributes crowned with love. To implement those character traits of God in the Kingdom we must begin to develop them now.

The Measure

How can we evaluate our progress and position? How faithful and righteous are we? Can we compare ourselves with each other? Wrote the apostle Paul:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (II Corinthians 10:12).

The point here is that people tend toward 'group think'. We tend to think and act like those in society, especially those with whom we associate, for good or bad. Our gauge becomes: *I am better than he or them because of this or that*. We can only be wise if we compare ourselves with the only true standard of righteousness - God's Word. Nevertheless, we can make observations on a person's admi-

rable qualities, those good fruits, and judge whether they are in line with Godly wisdom and then emulate that behaviour.

I happened upon a song that makes some interesting points. It is "*The measure of a man*" by Kevin Sharp. I have abbreviated it as follows:

*I judge a man by the gold on the inside I'm not fooled by the glitter on the outside.
That ain't the measure of a man*

*It ain't how far you go It ain't how much you make, Son, it's what you give Not what you take
It's being strong and true To those counting on you
It's lendin' a hand, makin' a stand
That's the measure of a man*

*I give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay
I'll stand behind every word I say
I'll seal a deal with a shake of a hand
If I'm a few rungs short of the top of the ladder
When I meet my maker what will it matter
That ain't the measure of a man*

Self-analysis

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." (Revelation 11:1)

There is a comparison here to Ezekiel's mandate to measure the temple. This is literal but has symbolic overtones as we are considered the temple today. I Corinthians 3:16-17 *"Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God*

destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

"Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body." (John 2:20-21)

Jesus, referring to himself, was the temple, and the physical temple was illustrative of the way. He is the way, the rod, the measure, the standard with which we are to measure ourselves, also considered a temple in I Corinthians 3:16. How is He perfect? Here are three verses to illustrate:

Psalm 86:15 *"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious"* (Gracious H2603: to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow; have mercy (on, upon), have pity upon.), *"longsuffering, and plentiful in mercy and truth."*

Psalm 116:5-8 *"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. 6: The LORD preserves the simple (seducible, foolish): I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you: For thou have delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."*

Joel 2:13 *"And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents him of the evil."* (Same wording as Jonah 4:2 - the prophets read each others writings?)

That would be a great place to start our journey to perfection.

The Reward

Now that we are on our way, we can focus on our reward. It would be a smooth ride if it weren't for the speed bump in **Luke 17:**

cont'd p.8

Plato's Republic, Shangri-La, Utopia, New Deal, City of the Sun, New Atlantis, Welfare State—and now, The Big Society. All praiseworthy aims, but is the dream merely 'pie in the sky'?

No-one would deny the universal desire for the kind of society envisaged by such concepts. Our world is beset by enough challenges to engender a longing for peace, security, prosperity, happiness and such material blessings as pure water for all, abundant harvests worldwide, perfect health. And our politicians should be encouraged to continually seek out the underlying principles that would usher in such a society.

The desire for a Golden Age permeates all ages, all faiths, secular realists and dreamers. Begun with the best of intentions, however, such envisaged Golden Ages often end as base metal. From those with religious origins we could cite David Koresh's ('Branch Davidians') Texan misadventure. Or the 1978 Jim Jones (the 'Peoples' Temple') debacle in Guyana. Perceptive observers are more rooted in reality. As said Lord Macaulay: '*...An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia*'. But that doesn't ease the universal itch!

Key Clue

Given this urge it is worth enquiring as to why, after thousands of years of civilization and accumulated knowledge, we still fail to attain to our longed-for utopia. But reduce the challenge to its basics and clues leap out.

Our world is composed of families of varying size and complex-

ity. But take the average—two adults and two children and even the best regulated is far from fulfilling the utopian dream. An apparently idyllic family can suddenly be disrupted by serious illness, accident, marital discontent and divorce—and, in these troubled times, loss of income.

Never mind the seething mass of dysfunctional families. Increasingly, families disintegrate, spurn moral and spiritual values, undervalue education.

Clearly, the 'dysfunctional' element abides in all of us. Even the recently-elected UK Government for all its expressed desire to install a squeaky clean administration yet sinks to spin and betrayal of its principles.

Yes—it's our human nature that's faulty. Having abandoned the divinely inspired way to life, we are on a downward moral spiral and now reap the consequences. As said the prophet Isaiah '*...the way of peace [Heb. shalom: prosperity, welfare, health, rest] they don't know*'.

New Golden Age

But human nature won't change unaided. Only our transformation through a direct and continuing relationship with the Creator will work in us the necessary change. It's called *repentance*.

Several ancient sources hark back

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

THE BIG SOCIETY

to an era of peace and harmony, a 'Golden Age'—in fact, that brief period before our first parents chose to ignore the Law of Life and were excluded from their utopia in Eden.

Adam 'had it all'—direct face-to-face communication with the Creator, a perfect environment, extensive material and spiritual knowledge and wisdom, at peace with the world—and the promise of living in such circumstances endlessly. The perfect 'utopia'.

Yet, having all of that he failed a simple test of his willingness to submit to his Creator and Provider. *Paradise lost*.

Ever since, we have multiplied the misery, added sorrow upon sorrow, drifted far from the divine way of life both secular and spiritual, ever further from the longed-for utopia, the Big Society.

Festive Commemoration

But the Christian Bible predicts that in God's perfect timing that lost Golden Age will return. In Bible terms it's called *The Millennium*—a thousand years of peace under the benign rule of Jesus the Messiah, the '*...desire of all nations*'. Under His guidance all mankind will embrace that essential change of human nature. Utopia will at last be established. Paradise regained.

Our present environment was created by the one ever-living God in six symbolic days, and followed by a 'day' of rest **cont'd p.7**

Are We All Equal?

The ‘fruit’ of the recent UK ‘New Labour’ Government indicates that they had an obsession with ‘equality’. The new Coalition Government is committed to unpick the tangle of legislation and to restore sanity. (Small chance!)

‘Equality’, however, is not confined to the secular, for it is a major topic in modern theological circles. It reduces to: *Are men and women fully equal?* The on-going dissent in the Anglican community concerning women bishops should cause us to pause for thought.

The Source

The Scriptures are rightly cited as the sole source for Christian belief. They have, however, been overlaid with a large helping of tradition—non-Biblical additions accumulated over the centuries. A return to clear Bible teaching is called for.

We argue here from the position that the Scriptures—both Old Testament and New—represent God’s mind on all matters religious. And we believe the ‘bottom line’ is that leadership in the church is *male*.

Often cited are the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians: ‘... *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one [masculine—‘one man’] in Christ Jesus*’ (ch 3:28)

The absurdity of applying this to

We are indeed ‘...*one in Christ*’—but we remain man or woman, a slave or free, nor in Christ do we change our racial origins.

Different Roles

The pattern of human relationships is clearly set out in the early chapters of Genesis and remained unchanged through the age of the patriarchs, of Israel’s Judges and Kings—and into the early church of God.

God treats all His children—male and female—as individuals and the offer of salvation extends to all on the same terms. We—male and female—were created ‘...*in his image*’ (Genesis 1:27) But in the beginning each was assigned a *different role*, differing functions.

‘Man’—God includes both male and female in the generic term (Genesis 5:2)—was created in the divine image and likeness: ‘...*let them have dominion...*’ (ch 1:26, 27). Both were ‘blessed’ and instructed to reproduce and to have dominion over all of the material creation.

Delegated Authority

Just as any enterprise would collapse if it lacked overall direction (the ‘chairman’), so the role of ‘shepherd’ of the human creation was assigned to the man. As the ‘first-born’ (Luke 3:38), he was taken to the pre-planted garden (LXX *paradisos*) in Eden with instructions to ‘...*tend and keep it*’ (ch 2:15), and warned about the perils of forsaking divine guidance (v.17).

the respective Adam was delegated the authority roles of men and to ‘name’ the animal creation, women in the thus emphasizing his leadership church is plain. role (vv.19-20). Anciently, to ‘name’ was a sign of authority.

In all the animal creation Adam was unable to discern a suitable companion, perhaps having noted there was male and female (Genesis 6:19). So from his own DNA a ‘help’ was created for him with whom he could communicate and share. He again exercised his leadership by prophesying her role as ‘...*the mother of all living [humans]*’ (ch 3:20), and naming her Eve (*Gk zoe*—life).

As Adam’s ‘helper’ Eve—women—should exercise a supportive role in the joint project of preserving the material and spiritual creation until the ‘seed’ should come to fully restore it (ch 3:15).

In that perfect world, then, male and female had different and complementary roles—and were equal in their relationship with God. But Adam—the male—had the responsibility of general oversight.

And Now...

This isn’t just ‘Old Testament stuff’ but is reiterated in the New Testament both by Jesus and by Paul. And properly understood it is a liberating concept rather than restrictive. Those who take the position of full equality too often will downgrade the teachings of the apostles—notably Paul. All, however, refer to the foundation statements revealed in Genesis. Jesus, for example, confirms the Genesis recognition of monogamy as a perpetual *cont’d p.7*

John Morton (NZ)

God's Righteousness

God does not need the law - He is righteous without it. His righteousness is an attribute that sets the standard for human behaviour. The law which defines the standard is a witness of that righteousness, "*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*" (Romans 3:21). The prophets also bear witness because they foretold that God's righteousness was to become manifested in man.

Created in God's Likeness

Man is not righteous by nature, "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*" (Romans 3:10). According to the Genesis account the nature of man is a mixture of good and evil. It was corrupted by Satan who could not accept that man, created less than the angels, was destined to be greater (Hebrews 2:6-11).

God the Father and the one who later became Christ (John 1:1-3) had created man after their own likeness, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" (Genesis 1:26). They formed man physically in their resemblance, yet to be completed in spiritual likeness.

The physical body coupled with human nature is a temporary stage in the process of developing spirit beings that will be like God. The human mind requires time and experience to be spiritually perfected prior to the final stage of receiving eternal life. Although Satan's attempt at sabotage has caused a lot of pain and suffering for man it has not forestalled God's plan. In order for man to be

fully created in the image of God, human nature, corrupted or otherwise, needs to be renewed by the pure righteous nature of God. That is the standard that He set and nothing less is acceptable.

In order to achieve His purpose God has provided the means to success through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very essence of God's nature which is implanted within an individual upon repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). In this way the individual receives the pure righteousness of God, "*For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth*" (Ephesians 5:9).

When planted in the human mind the Spirit develops as it is exercised by obedience to the law to reproduce those same righteous attributes in man. It opens the mind up to the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-16), working to perfect those attributes until the individual is fully formed in the likeness of his/her creator, "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*" (Ephesians 4:13).

We are the Work

STUDY THE WORD
Be sure to enroll for our free 32-lesson Study Course. It's a key to what is for many a 'Book of Mystery'

unsigned articles are by the Editor

This is the work of God being performed by Christ through whom God the Father creates all things (Ephesians 3:9 and 2:10). The prophets foretold that God's Spirit would be made available to all of mankind, "*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh*" (Joel 2:28). Also, "*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.*" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The law is a witness of God's righteousness because it defines the standards to be manifested in man through God's Spirit as predicted by the prophets.

Christ did not come to do away with the law as many would have you believe! He came to fulfill law and to make it possible for the law to be fulfilled in man, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*" (Matthew 5:17-18).

The scribes and Pharisees went to great lengths to keep the law, but Christ said that their righteousness was not sufficient for salvation, "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the*

scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (v.20). It was not sufficient for salvation because the law on its own could not produce the pure righteousness of God.

Although the law defines the standard to be achieved it still requires the attributes that can only come from having God’s Spirit to be perfected by obedience to the law. The scribes and Pharisees lacked that Holy Spirit.

Process of Conversion

There is a process of conversion, from the human nature to the divine nature. That is why Paul talked about being transformed by the renewing of the mind, “...*be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that*

good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

And about becoming a new man created in righteousness like God, “...*renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:23-24).

In the image of God, “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”* (Colossians 3:10).

All things have been created so that man can be resurrected to the glory of God through the renewal of the physical by the spiritual to eternal life:

“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many

redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”

(II Corinthians 4:14-3:1).

This is the purpose and work of God through His son Jesus Christ by whom He creates all things. That is your destiny - to be created in the image of God and perfected in his righteousness as witnessed by the law and the prophets. You are the work of God - *you are the work!* **Ω**

In the Beginning...the Sabbath

The Genesis record of the period from Adam until Moses is strangely silent about the institution of the weekly Sabbath. Was it not, then, observed?

It is recorded of the patriarch Abraham that he ‘...*obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws’* (Genesis 26:5). Did he observe the weekly Sabbath? On the face of it there is no reason to exclude it—but is there any evidence?

The process of creation was orderly—Day One, Day Two *etc.* And ‘...*on the seventh day God*

finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it: because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made’ (Genesis 2:2-3).

The seventh day was *blessed*. It was *hallowed*—set apart. God rested, and mankind rested.

But note that Adam, before that rest day, had done no work. The Sabbath—his first full day—was given for physical rest but also as a day to reflect on, to worship, the Creator.

Seven Days

Why seven days? There’s no astronomical reason for it. The *day*, the *month*, the *year* are all determined by physical events (Genesis 1:14). The week, however, is artificial, yet that concept of a recurring period of seven days—the ‘week’—was handed on to succeeding generations, and marked universally.

Time and Place

Look now at another Bible record—worship. Adam’s sons acknowledged the Creator through offerings—brought ‘...*at the end of days’*. Despite expulsion from the Garden there was a time and a place for formal worship—and because of the need for rest from toil, a short recurring **cont’d**

Equal...? *cont'd from p.4*
institution ordained by God (Matthew 19:4-6), with its implication of male leadership—the man leaves the parental home and establishes a new order (Genesis 2:24).

Paul, too, points to the primacy of Adam in re-stating the Genesis record that man was created first (I Timothy 2:13), and as the ‘firstborn’ therefore carried responsibility. Eve was taken from his side and not created from dust. She has a different but complementary role (‘help’).

The Bible, then, is consistent in promoting the essential equality of man and woman in the Christian context. It also firmly makes clear that in the intimacy of the family and in the church there are God-given roles which when sensibly applied lead to peace and harmony.

Misapplication

Far from giving the male an authoritarian role in the family (and in church), Paul emphasizes:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: ...Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband
(Ephesians 5:25-33)

Adam’s—man’s—God-appointed role of headship in the human family (and church) is intended to reflect the priceless values displayed in the life of Jesus. It is a gross distortion of the Scriptures to view it as a role of selfish

Relative Roles

The apostle Paul addresses an issue among the brethren in Corinth—that of what we may today call ‘women’s lib’ or ‘equal rights’.

In the assembly there was some confusion—a relic of their culture—as to the relative roles of men and women, with the latter, apparently, opting for equality. Outwardly this was manifest in their outward appearance: the sporting of male hair-cuts.

It was by no means a cultural matter, but one that drives to the spiritual heart of public worship. Elements of both Jewish and heathen practice influenced them—it was the habit of both to cover their heads in worship (*cp* the modern *kippah* and *turban*). It’s a practice Paul points out as demeaning in face of God’s original intent. The apostle draws on the initial revelation (in Genesis) as the sure foundation for his exegesis.

Creation Order

Both male and female were created in God’s image. Man, however, was created first from the elements, but woman was then made from his existing dna. This order of creation, says Paul, must be expressed in our outward appearance when we worship together.

Men, therefore, should have shorter hair as a sign of both their submission to the Creator and of their headship of the human family. As Adam covered up their shame by a ‘fig-leaf’ so a male covering in public worship is symbolic of shame in what is our open relationship through Christ with the Father (I Corinthians 11:14).

On the other hand, women openly express their God-appointed role as ‘help’ to man by means of the ‘veil’—that is, their longer hair (v. 15). (To this day women—religious or secular—rightfully pay careful attention to their hair!)

domination and control.

As ‘head’, man is required by divine mandate to oversee both family and church. Paul, again:

The Big Society ...cont’d

and refreshment. Similarly, mankind is now enduring its ‘working week’—to be followed by that thousand year ‘Sabbath rest’ under the Lordship of the returned King of kings and LORD of lords. We remember and commemorate God’s great plan of creation and restoration as we weekly observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

In a more focused way, God invites us to annually observe His seven day *Festival of Tabernacles*—a time celebrated from earliest times and by the nation of Israel, by Jesus and by the first Christians.

This autumn (based on Israel’s agricultural year) ‘harvest festival’ has various applications—see our *MiniStudy* on p.9—including this extended period of human existence under the benign leadership of Jesus.

Our time of probation is drawing to an end. Having rejected God’s way and substituted our own we are in danger of self-destruction. We may try to perfect human society but only respect for the divine Law—God’s Instruction Manual—coupled with a change of heart through our restored relationship with the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus can lock in permanent change.

Only then will our utopian dream become reality. **Ω**

*‘...Look after yourselves and everyone the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be like shepherds to God’s church. It is the flock that he bought with the blood of his own Son’ (Acts 20:28). **Ω***

Lord Require? ...cont'd from p.2
“But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say to him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward you shall eat and drink? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.” (Luke 17:7-10)

And here's the clincher: *“So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”* (v.10)

There may be fringe benefits and promotions above just doing our duty but we should just do what is right for the sake of doing what is right. It's a truism that *“Virtue is its own reward.”* A bonus to that virtue is just icing on the cake.

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- *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27)
- *“Therefore shall you keep my commandments, and do them”* (Leviticus 22:31)
- *“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:12)

It's so easy to reach a certain plateau and rest there. Sorry, but for a Christian the struggle continues till the very end *“...but he that endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matthew 10:22)

Can there be any more challenging yet encouraging words than those?

Ω

Sabbath ...cont'd

numerous Christians to this day—all rejoiced to remember, every seventh day, the mighty acts of a loving God who created us in His image, and in Jesus made it possible to restore that image and truly become part of the Family of God. Ω

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p.8 Sabbath ...cont'd from p.6
 time of seven days is most likely.

This seven-day unit is prominent in Genesis, especially in the record of the Great Flood when 'seven days is a recurring theme' (see Genesis 7 and 8). The Scriptures, later, pin-point the seventh day as *a day of rest and worship*.

Because observed universally by the people of God its observance goes unrecorded in Scripture—Old and New Testament. But God's revealed laws—including, surely, the commemorative day for communion with Him (Exodus 20:8-11)—were, as noted in regard to Abraham, observed by the faithful. Noah, for example, is also recognized as righteous, and in submission to the perfect will and guidance of the Creator (*ch 7:1*).

Unbroken Sequence

The Sabbath was *'...made for man'*, said Jesus (Matthew 2:27), the perfect gift of our Creator to sustain us physically, to identify Himself as the one and only living God, to nourish His people spiritually and to remind us of His might acts in creation.

Abraham lived just a few centuries after the Flood, and was a contemporary of Shem, son of Noah. He could have been instructed firsthand by him. The direct transmission of the true faith passed from Adam to Noah to Shem and on to Abraham.

Given at the birth of mankind the seventh-day Sabbath has continued to be observed in unbroken sequence down the millennia.

Enoch—who *'...walked with God'*, righteous Noah, the nation of Israel, Jesus, the early church of God and

cont'd previous column

MiniStudy

Tabernacles: man's day

'it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles' (Zechariah 14:16)

'we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens' (II Corinthians 5:1)

The Christian Scriptures make clear that beyond this fragile transient existence lies a new state—a spiritual state. But as humans we have a temporary existence. No matter how healthy or wealthy we have all 'got to go'. The annual *Festival of Tabernacles* is symbolic of man's brief sojourn on earth, and embraces several layers of meaning.

- Since earliest times, and universally, worship of the deity has, unsurprisingly, focused around the harvest seasons—spring summer, autumn. Our physical life, though short, depends on earth's bounty. These times of divinely-appointed worship are rooted in the very physical creation: *'...God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years'* (Genesis 1:14). Note that word 'seasons' (Heb *mo'ed*). Among its varied meanings is 'festivals' - so translated 19 times, elsewhere frequently referring to the place of meeting
- The *Festival of Tabernacles* is an autumn festival as given by the LORD to ancient Israel: *'...The set feasts [mo'ed] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my set feasts' [mo'ed]* (Leviticus 23:4, 34). It was enduring and was observed by Jesus and his contemporaries (John 7:2, 10)
- On the surface, *Tabernacles* is simply that—a harvest festival at God's appointed time. On the calendar then widely in use it began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month—in autumn. The festival lasted seven days, and during it the Israelites lived in temporary dwellings ('booths', *sukkot*). This adds another layer of meaning, and represented their sojourning for forty years in the wilderness, living in tents, tabernacles
- There is, however, larger symbolism. The festival emphasizes man's temporary existence, both as individuals and as a species. The apostle Paul refers to the human body as a 'tabernacle' (Gk. *skenos*, a tent, II Corinthians 5:1), a temporary—often fragile—structure. Peter refers to his death as *'...putting off this tabernacle'* (II Peter 1:14). *Tabernacles* is a reminder that all human life is temporary—as is our tenure of earth
- The seven days of the festival may reference the whole time of mankind in the flesh. Symbolizing the temporary nature of man's domination, in God's plan there are 'seven days'—each of one thousand years—during which man 'does his own thing', egged on by Satan. We trundle along oblivious to the divine laws of life, and suffer the consequences. The seventh day of the week—the Sabbath—specifically represents the final thousand years. It is generally acknowledged that human civilisation has so far spanned around six thousand years
- The three harvest festivals follow a pattern—a pattern of resurrections. In spring, Jesus the *firstfruits* (I Corinthians 15:20). Then follow *'a kind of firstfruits'* harvest, followers of Christ who will be resurrected at the end of the 'sixth day' (It is termed *'the first resurrection'* (Revelation 20:4,5). Autumn sees the *final harvest* - the last opportunity for humanity to become part of the divine family. The final day of *Tabernacles* symbolizes the consummation of the divine plan—the 'Great White Throne judgment'
- Jesus the Messiah and the resurrected saints will equitably govern earth for the next thousand years—known widely as 'the millennium' (Revelation 20:4). It is the time when man's defective rule is set aside, superseded by the perfect government of God—as portrayed in the Scriptures. It is a time of peace; all military academies will be abolished'. Justice will be administered worldwide firmly and fairly and with mercy- and to divine standards (eg Micah 4, Isaiah 2 & 11). With Satan restrained (Revelation 20:1-3), with but one universal true faith, with perfect government—the Gospel of salvation will be freely open to all. The final day of the feast represents the resurrection of *'the rest of the dead'* (v.5) raised from the dead to a physical life- and their first real exposure to the Gospel, the veil of deception removed (Isaiah 25:7)

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