

new **Horizons**

Vol 16 No 3

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addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

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

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

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 e-mail Newsletter OUTREACH, the 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

Issue No 93

May/June 2012

On Sunday May 27 many Christians will celebrate 'Pentecost'. Here's the little-known origin of the celebration

Pentecost - or 'Whitsunday' - is generally celebrated as the time for mass baptisms. Dressed in white - hence 'Whit' Sunday - the year's crop of children will flock to church for baptism. Why *this* day?

On the first Christian Pentecost some three thousand Jews accepted Jesus as their promised Messiah - and were baptized. But it was the events of fifty days earlier which persuaded them to defy the wrath of their friends and family to commit to follow Jesus Christ.

Divine Power

That awesome event was the resurrection of Jesus. Notes the apostle Paul: '...*This good news is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! As a human, he was from the family of David. But the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death*' (Romans 1:3-4 CEV).

Most of those present at Pentecost—Jews and proselytes—had been in Jerusalem for the Passover when the city was alive with the rumour that Jesus had risen from the dead. They had, perhaps, peered into the empty tomb with

its undisturbed grave clothes. They had perhaps asked, *How did Jesus pass through them?* It was the same evidence that had convinced Peter and John (John 20:1-8).

But the resurrection of Jesus was only another step - though the pivotal one - in the cosmic drama of human salvation.

The Wavesheaf

Let's look at a neglected Bible ceremony which clearly typifies the earth-shattering and world-shaking event of the resurrection. It is known as "*the Wavesheaf Offering*".

During the Days of Unleavened Bread [*ie* the Biblical seven-day spring festival known as *Passover*] there was a ceremony which is of vital significance for Christians.

As the weekly Sabbath during the Festival ended, Temple representatives went to a field on the outskirts of Jerusalem and scythed a measure of the first-ripe grain - the '*firstfruits*' of the crop - which had earlier been marked out by delegates from the Jews' ruling body, the Sanhedrim.

The Law stated that it was to be offered in the Temple "*on the morrow after the Sabbath*" (Leviticus 23:11). It was prepared the evening before. In the prescribed manner, the sheaf

was "*lifted up*" (waved) before the LORD on the morning of the first day of the week, with the appropriate accompanying sacrifice of a lamb, fine flour and oil - a sweet-smelling offering to God.

[*The Sabbath*' here - Leviticus 23:11 - is the weekly rest-day, the seventh day of the week, our Saturday, largely. The annual 'high day' - the first holy convocation is not in this text called a 'Sabbath']

Firstfruits

The significance of the firstfruits wavesheaf offering wasn't lost on the early Church of God. The Law stated "*...you shall bring the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord*" (Lev 23:10). This ceremony was traditionally (the text doesn't specifically link the two) carried out during the *Days of Unleavened Bread*, and was the starting point for the significant seven weeks leading to the *Feast of Firstfruits* - what we call *Pentecost*.

Contrary to what most Christians believe, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday morning, and killed about the time the Jews were to sacrifice the Passover lamb in the Temple. By the end of the weekly Sabbath he had been in the grave three days and three nights - just as He had predicted (Matt 12:40).

And around the time of the cutting of the wavesheaf on Saturday evening - *Jesus was resurrected!*

God's Firstfruits Harvest

Paul's famed 'resurrection chapter' (I Corinthians 15) declares: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v.20). Much of the chapter is devoted to the harvest - resurrection theme.

Here, then, embedded within the Passover and Unleavened Bread observance, is a pattern for calling to mind the astounding events of the last earthly days of Jesus the Messiah.

As Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple, Jesus was himself sacrificed. As the Wavesheaf was being cut outside Jerusalem at the end of the weekly Sabbath he was resurrected. And as the priests lifted up ("waved") the firstfruits offering before the altar on Sunday morning Jesus (perhaps after a night spent in thanksgiving, and intercession for his wayward disciples) ascended to present himself to the Father - 'the firstfruits of them that are asleep' (I Corinthians 15:20; see also John 20:17 and Matthew 28:9).

Why Pentecost?

So, Jesus fulfilled the typology of the Wavesheaf - the firstfruits of the early grain harvest. Why, then, another seven weeks till Pentecost?

All the offerings and special times that were part of the divinely-revealed religion of ancient Israel had significance for future events - for us. Rooted in that firstfruits offering in spring was another celebration, this time in early summer: *Pentecost*.

God's instruction was that, depending on the beginning of the early harvest, they were to count fifty days - seven complete weeks - from the day following the Sabbath: "Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath...and you shall proclaim on the same day [ie the first day of the week, Sunday] that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it" (Leviticus 23:15-21).

But what did this annual holy day signify?

That first cutting of the sheaf of grain in spring was the beginning of the harvest season. The Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, marked its culmination - a true harvest festival. Bible readers probably pass over some texts related to the Festival without putting them in context.

Firstfruits Harvest

We have noted that Jesus was 'the firstfruits'. But there are others! Hear James : "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of

truth that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

Paul tells us that Christians "have the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23). And in Revelation (ch 14:4), John informs us: "These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb".

In sum, those who 'follow the Lamb' are a firstfruits spiritual harvest. The symbolic fifty days from the first of the firstfruits - the resurrected Jesus - until the 'first resurrection' (Revelation 20:5) represents the entire time since that first Christian Pentecost (Acts 2) until the resurrection of all true Christians at the return of Christ.

There's much more to Pentecost than merely a time for baptism! But baptism - of mature, repentant men and women - is an early and necessary step to being part of the firstfruits harvest of the people of God. **Ω**

Now read...

The Empty Tomb

...the compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the grave

Should You Be Baptized?

...an optional extra—or a necessary step?

Available on our website or in print from any of our addresses

We must all give account of ourselves—to the LORD. When will that time come?

Days of Judgment

Most of the world's population believe in some form of future 'Day of Judgment'. It features prominently in Christianity and in Islam (Yawm ad-Dim). In Hinduism it is a recycling process, each being 'judged' by the quality of the life just lived. What did Jesus Christ have to say?

In our study of the Scriptures it is vital to properly examine the text within its immediate context, and to harmonize it with the rest of God's revelation throughout the Scriptures. Too often this is ignored, and imagination takes over. Let's look at Jesus' position on Judgment Day.

Judgment to Come

Jesus certainly knew such a time was coming—for everyone. He told some accusing Jews: *'...the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [Gk krisis: judgment]'* (John 5:28-29). And it is Jesus who will be Judge (v.22) The apostle Paul adds: *'...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad'* (II Corinthians 5:10).. Everyone, note.

But there's a common misconception that there will be a 'general resurrection' for judgment *when Jesus returns*. It arises from a failure to be instructed by all of Scripture. For Jesus later revealed—to the apostle John—that there will be two major resurrections. Well understood—but with a few blips—is what John calls *'the first resurrection'* (Revelation 20:5-6). It is when the faithful from every generation will be resurrected from their graves to reign on Earth with Jesus Christ at his coming—the

'millennium' (Revelation 5:9-10).

A Second Resurrection

But Jesus said *'...all that are in the graves'*. What of the rest of mankind—the vast majority?

When he revealed the future to John, Jesus clarified the time when he fulfilled the promise that *'... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'* (II Peter 3:9). John relates: *'... the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished'* (Revelation 20:5). There will, then, be a mass but orderly resurrection of non-believers. God works out His plan over time—a thousand years with us is gone in a flash with Him.

All those resurrected—from every nation, every faith and none—will be presented with the good news of salvation through Jesus the Messiah. It's their opportunity to come to repentance without the malign influence of Satan. They will be judged by the *'...faith once for all delivered to the saints'* as recorded in the books of Scripture (v.12).

Another Judgment

So—Christians are now being judged (I Peter 4:17), and the dead will be judged after the Millennial rule of Messiah. But there is yet another period of judgment—throughout the

thousand years of the Millennium. Jesus addresses this in his dissertation on the end-time.

Prior to the return of Jesus man's destructive nature reaches a climax, with billions dying in wars, disease, famine, global environmental disaster. Isaiah tells us there will be *'...few men left'* (Isaiah 24:6). The pitiful few remaining will be pioneers in a new world with the task of rebuilding a shattered planet guided by Messiah and the resurrected saints from all ages.

That new world order will function perfectly under the benign rule of the Spirit-led Kingdom of God. Hear the prophet Isaiah: *'...And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let*

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on in corruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:53)

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' (ch 2:3).

Jerusalem will be the governmental hub of a united planet, with Jesus as King of kings and LORD of lords—one political system, one religion.

There will be *'...one LORD, one faith, one baptism'* (Ephesians 4:5). Idolatry—the worship of anything other than the One Creator God in the manner He has prescribed—will be no more (Isaiah 2).

During the thousand years, the surviving remnant of mankind and their descendants will inhabit a world ruled by divine law. We know the detail of that Law—for it is revealed in the Creator's Manual for living, the Scriptures. It embraces civil law and is underpinned by the one true faith as revealed from man's begin-

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

ning. All of mankind will experience the benefits of submission to the will of the Creator. All will worship as one.

One Faith

Gone will be the Satanic intrusions that divide us. Gone will be destructive religious diversity. Instead: ‘...it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the LORD’ (Isaiah 66:23). That reign will be benign—but firm, as symbolized by a sword and an iron rod (Revelation 19:15).

The prophet Zechariah takes up the theme: ‘...In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. [The offer of salvation] ...And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land’ (Zechariah 13:1-2). [The only ‘prophets’ will be the resurrected saints, all strange worship (Ramadan, Christmas, Easter etc) will cease, and Satan will be restrained (Revelation 20: 1-3)]

Zechariah fills in the detail: ‘...every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles’ (ch 14:16). The seven-day Feast of the Passover, too, will be feature in our worship (Ezekiel 45: 21) The weekly and annual festivals will be observed worldwide.

It is this context of one universal faith that Jesus presents criteria for judging during his millennial reign.

Millennial Reality

It’s a mistake to assume that at a stroke everyone alive throughout the

Millennium will become ‘converted’. In Matthew 25:31ff Jesus shows us that there will be some who will mistreat those who are ‘in Christ’ - true believers.

Indeed God’s Law—and its penalties—will still be needed (Isaiah 2:3). The LORD makes salvation available—but doesn’t pressure acceptance. Even as the thousand years draw to a close there will be opposition to God’s way: ‘...when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth’ (Revelation 20: 7-9). And successfully (v.9).

Note the context of these words by Jesus. The time setting is ‘...When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory’ (v.31). That has not yet happened. (At that time the faithful will have joined Jesus in the first resurrection.)

His words are a response to the disciples’ query concerning the end of the age. Who are involved? ‘...before him shall be gathered all nations’ (v.32). At that moment these people—‘all nations’—will be the survivors of the end-time troubles, gathered from all nations—and their descendants over the next thousand years.

Messiah will judge them: ‘...he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats’ (v.32). As with those in the

general resurrection after the Millennium, they will be ‘...judged out of those things which were written in the books [ie, the Scriptures], according to their works’ (Revelation 20: 12).

It’s a process that will continue throughout the millennium. Clearly those who will be rejected (v.41) will not have ‘the heart of a Christian’ in their relationship with those in Christ (vv. 42-43). They may comply with the millennial culture (Zechariah 14:16-19)—but it is external and not from a changed heart.

Inherit the Kingdom

The righteous, during the millennium, have a different outcome, for at some point in their life Messiah will accept them into His Kingdom: ‘...the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ (v.34). As Jesus had spoken earlier: ‘...He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me’ (Matthew 10:40-42).

Judgment is universal. For Christians it is this life, now. For the survivors of the terrible end-time destructiveness and their descendants it is the Millennium. For those now blinded by Satanic deception it is the years following the Millennium. As recorded in the book of Hebrews: ‘...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (ch 9: 27). **Ω**

Holy Days 2012

Pentecost	May 27
Trumpets	Sep 17
Atonement	Sep 26
Tabernacles	Oct 1-7
Last Great Day	Oct 8

Further reading:

Tabernacles...
... mankind in the flesh
history in a nutshell
God’s Holy Days
the surprising alternative

Will is to Blame

What is the root of all our problems? Government? The Devil? The cause is closer to home

Steven Kieler

Some say it's big government, or this or that political party or one of scores of conspirators or conspiracies. Some may think it is Satan and surely he is a master manipulator, and purveyor of perversion, taking advantage of us at every opportunity. Flip Wilson used to say, humorously, *The devil made me do it!* "Everybody wants a fall guy but who can we really pin it on?"

Everybody wants a scapegoat but finally we can identify the real culprit for sure and we will even reveal the name. Enough pussy-footing around – his name is – Will -- *aka* Free Will (not to be confused with Free - Willy). Will is to blame.

Here is what we know about this nefarious character; he is ambidextrous (right or left). When he uses his right, everything works together for good but his left – well that comes from the Latin "sinister" meaning: evil, threatening. We can joke about right hand/left hand or right brain/left brain but the 1981 study, while having a bit of truth, was quite overblown.

Will might be to blame, but that doesn't let you off the hook. Because we all have Free Will in us; God made it that way. We have potential to use good or bad will. Now we proceed to investigate and understand the difference and how it works (or doesn't work).

So we forge ahead.

The Left

On the one hand, the left, here is a phrase repeated at least ten times in the bible: "*his own eyes*" or "*their own eyes*". It is always in a negative sense; let me give you two examples:

'You shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes'. Deuteronomy_12:8
'...*There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness* (Proverbs_30:12).

So, what does the phrase "*in your own eyes*" encompass? It is how you see yourself, in the negative context. It is self justification. I want to see all my thoughts as right so I have a strong bias. What you see, think, feel, want, do, just everything your conscious self can imagine. There, that pretty much covers it. Paul puts it this way: "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to **will** is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*" (Romans 7:18)

I have just finished reading about David in the book of Samuel. When David relied on God,

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unsigned articles are by the Editor

turned to Him for advice and counsel, things went well. When he sought his own will, he paid a great price. That also applied to Saul and others, of course. It even kept Moses out of the promised land.

Paul introduces another problem in Romans when he says: "*for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not*" (ch 7:18). He is saying: I know what is right and wrong, I know the law, I want to keep it, I want to do what is right but I don't know how to process it, to convert it to good action.

The Right

So, on the one hand we have seen what doing things that are right in our own eyes creates. On the other hand, the right, there are seven verses that concern 'in God's sight'.

For example:

Deuteronomy 6:17-18 *You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded you. And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers* Deuteronomy 6:17-18).

"And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because you have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel" (II Kings 10:30).

The Contest

We have two problems. Have you heard the phrase “a test of wills”? It's a contest between our will and God's will. Always has been. That's why we are told to pray: “YOUR will be done”.

How often should His will be done? How often do you do that? Yearly, monthly, weekly, daily? Hmm, do you see a problem here? My sister Ann once said to me: “If I feel myself trying to be in control I only find out quickly that it is not necessarily God's plan.” That's why Proverbs 12:15 says: “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counsel is wise.*”

But we tend to go to those 'counsellors' that agree with us. The Lord said in Isaiah: “*Come, let us reason together.*” He is to be our counsellor. Before you go to Him you might as well resign yourself. He's right and you are wrong: “*Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.*” (Proverbs 3:7,6)

Strength

The second problem is, call it what you like—*power, strength, pride*. Jesus states it perfectly, simply and unequivocally: “*And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness (II Corinthians 12:9)*”.

Thinking about what Jesus had said Paul continues in Verse 9: “*...Most gladly therefore will I*

rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Then you could also say that when he was strong he was weak. We need to be as weak as Paul so that we may be strong in the Lord.

We should be very afraid to make important decisions of any great consequence without counsel and prayer and, if the situation warrants, fasting.

We are so full of ideas and opinions. Don't we spend an inordinate amount of time doing what “is right in our own eyes” without the counsel of God? Well, we all have free will; Which will we exercise from now on? Our own—or God's?

Ω

Enigma...cont'd from col 3

To make sense of this life and to live forever *everyone* must forsake what God says is sinful, and turn to what is pure and holy.

There's no way other than through Jesus the Messiah - for anyone who walks God's earth - to become part of the Family of God.

Ω

You are invited to request the free article:

The Law of Life

Enigma...cont'd from p.8

With the indwelling Spirit of God to strengthen us, a new pattern of behaviour can take hold. Wrote the apostle John: “*If we confess our sins he is so faithful and just as to forgive us our sins - and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I John 1:8-10). There is hope for *all* sinners! Sin isn't confined to sexual misbehaviour.

All of us have character defects, and as Christians we are to strive towards victory over them. Jesus addressed in principle the heart of the issue of human sexuality: even harbouring *the thought* of adultery is sinful, he says (Matthew 5:27-30). That applies, too, to homosexuality and *all* other human frailty.

Homosexual thought and practice can be - and has been - overcome. As with all sin, it can be forsaken and forgiven through Jesus. There is hope.

Hope!

To enter that Family relationship with God is a matter of choice. God calls on all of mankind to choose the way of life He has revealed. It's time to resolve mankind's sexual enigma by a return to the basic principles of human relationships which are the foundation for life - for now, and for the endless ages of eternity.

But God requires holiness of life. Wrote the apostle Paul: “*Be not misled; neither profligates, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor partakers in homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the avaricious, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor robbers shall inherit God's Kingdom*” (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

The apostle doesn't stop there. He continues: “*And some of you were just that; but you were washed and you were made holy and you were made righteous by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*” (v.11). *All* sin can - upon repentance - be forgiven through Jesus Christ.

cont'd col 2

It's all in the genes. No, it is a lifestyle choice. Is there an answer?

The Enigma of Human Sexuality

How we live out our sexual lives increasingly preoccupies not just the media but also the armed forces, governments - and the church. Once upon a time an individual's sexstyle was personal, private. And if "aberrant" was swept into the closet.

Not any more. A debate now rages within the worldwide Anglican communion as to whether it is appropriate to appoint homosexual priests to the office of Bishop. The Australian Uniting Church has voted to permit the ordination of practicing homosexuals. And the British Prime Minister has thrown his weight behind homosexual marriage.

We humans are intensely sexual - our survival depends on it! Whatever comparative statistical analysis may say about 'then and now', sex and all its beauty and all its abuse is now paraded in bold headlines.

Sexual Decay

A century ago statistics on marriage and divorce were not headline news. Or the level of sexually transmitted disease. Or the number of child abductions, cases of child abuse, rape, pornography. Such are now flaunted as if sex were a new discovery. Television is barely watchable, eyes are averted at the news-stands, certain newspapers avoided - at least by so-called 'moral prudes'. And hopefully by those who wish to follow the precepts of Jesus Christ.

The openness, however, certainly hasn't stemmed the tide of what used to be termed immorality and its sickening consequences. Britain, according to a Parliamentary Committee, is in the middle of a 'sexual health crisis'. Rates of gonorrhoea and chlamydia have doubled in six years, syphilis has soared almost 500%. Over a million are being treated by sexual disease clinics. 'Sex' pervades our culture. What was once 'evil' is now

'good', and 'darkness' has become 'light' - just as the Old Testament prophets predicted (Isaiah 5:20). adultery, fornication, homosexuality. It was all there.

Because of the abuse of human sexuality, sexually transmitted disease is almost epidemic, resulting in snowballing widespread infertility. (Health professionals firmly link much infertility with promiscuity - especially in the teen years.) AIDS is destroying millions worldwide, as is the vile practice of abortion - almost 200,000 annually in the UK, an estimated 17 million since?????

Immature kids ignore or don't realize that sex leads to unwanted pregnancy with consequent burdens on themselves, families and society. And, encouraged by government and the media, the building block of a stable society, marriage, is in process of decay. Indeed more than half of children of British-born mothers are now born outside marriage.

Sexual faithfulness excludes much heart-break. Infertility often results from 'sleeping around', especially among children - one in seven underage girls are infected with chlamydia ('the silent disease'). A new case every ten minutes! Disregard of this divine principle has serious consequences. Yet government agencies actively promote teen 'sexperimentation'.

'Alternative lifestyles' are promoted as of equal value. Homosexual and lesbian liaisons now receive the full package of benefits available to married couples.

Age-old Problem

Undoubtedly sexual dysfunction has plagued mankind since we were evicted from Paradise. There always was violent rape, infants were incinerated (not in a hospital as today, but inside an idol as a burnt offering),

Sex Guidelines

But it was in Eden that the guidelines for human sexuality were first set before mankind. By our Creator. And perfectly tailored to the beings He had just created to perfection. Any deviation from the divine guidelines for human sexuality will inevitably end in tears! We function best when we stick to those ground rules. Imagine a world where infidelity is unknown: no adultery or 'shacking up' or promiscuity. And no foul sexual disease, no divorce (or divorce lawyers), no pornography, no paedophiles.

Principles of Life

In respect of our sexuality God revealed vital fundamental principles, based on a single male-female partnership committed for life.

A man and a woman are to stay in partnership for life. Think of the grief avoided by this act of mutual self-discipline. Properly tended, a marriage can last until death, and can be joyous. But the widespread notion that marriage is just a temporary convenience leads to easy divorce with consequent 'serial marriage'. Many marry simply for the fancy wedding!

In homosexual relationships 'monogamy' is rare. While a few such long-term partnerships exist, yet over forty percent of homosexual men have hundreds of partners during their - usually - shortened lifespan resulting from illness.

Covenant-bound couples were created to produce offspring.

God issued the self-limiting instruction: *'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth'*. The trauma and expense endured by naturally infertile married couples witnesses to his human de-

sire to procreate. (Jesus recognized, of course, that some few individuals would correctly choose to remain single and celibate.) Same-sex liaisons no matter how loving or long-lasting frustrate this divine instruction. If homosexuality were universal - and an estimated one percent only of mankind is homosexual - it would end the human race in a generation.

Divine Image

Only heterosexual relationships align with the divine plan for mankind. Our physical time-limited human condition is merely the 'clay model' which the Creator is shaping into His divine image - individuals who will live forever as a part of the divine Family. God reveals Himself as 'Father'. Jesus is His first-born Son. Men and women can become His children, brothers and sisters of Jesus and joint-heirs with him of the created universe.

God, in other words, is a Family. This relationship is reflected in His church, which is 'the Bride of Christ' (Ephesians 5:25-32). We were created 'male and female' - perfectly designed only for a heterosexual relationship. The divine instruction was that each pair is to 'cleave to one another', partners - male and female - contributing to a unified whole, and neither complete without the other.

Battling Bishops

Debate over homosexuality has raged within the Anglican community worldwide for well over a decade. A 1991 confusing statement made a distinction between homosexual practice in the general church populace and among the 'clergy'. It was deemed okay for the former, wrong for the latter. A line was drawn: homosexuality is acceptable but its practice is sin - if you are a bishop.

Sparked by the appointment of an openly homosexual priest as a bishop - he was this year banned from the

Lambeth Conference - big clerical guns have been placed in battle order to defend both abstinence (evangelicals) and practice (the 'liberal wing' of the church). Schism has been threatened, especially from overseas bishops (Nigeria, West Indies, Indian Ocean). Both factions claim Biblical authority for their position!

But Is It Sin?

However Paul's words (Romans 1:26-32) are interpreted by those who seek solace in an interpretation contrary to their face value, there can be no doubt about the original divine instruction in the Old Testament. Said God: "*When a man lies with a male as with a woman, both have committed something perverse; they will certainly be put to death*" (Leviticus 20:13). As Paul tells us: "*The wages of sin is death*".

Remember - the only 'Bible' known to Paul and the first Christians was what we know as the *Old Testament*. The *New Testament* was yet to be written.

Indeed the foul diseases and curtailed lifespan (up to twenty years below

average) of practicing homosexuals bears witness to the destructive perverseness of the practice.

Hence the apostle Paul's urgent warnings that Christians must avoid such relationships - for their eternal salvation is at stake: "*...No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others. Some of you used to be like that*" (I Corinthians 6:9-11 CEV).

Male and female homosexuality is 'contrary to nature', Paul asserts (Romans 1:26) and an 'error' (v.27). It has not been identified in our genetic inheritance, though factors in the womb *may* have affected sexual orientation. Like other deviations from 'normal' it is a thought pattern that can become fixed habit, spilling over into practice. Says James: "*Each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lusts. Then, when the passion has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it reaches maturity produces death*" (ch 1:13-15).

Homosexuality is, in the divine perspective, *sinful*. It is *not* to be contrasted with heterosexual behaviour but with defects in the latter - as, for example adultery, paedophilia, bestiality, narcissism, transvestism or promiscuity in and out of marriage. All are perversions of divinely intended sexual behaviour. There may be some individual predisposition to these - but they have to be conquered. And there is victory through the power of God's Spirit.

But that is why Jesus Christ came, that our sin, whether it is envy or greed or adultery or promiscuity - or homosexuality - can be repented of and forgiven through the love that God has for us - expressed in the awesome sacrifice of His Son.

cont'd p.6

CALLING ALL INTERNET USERS!

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

**Be sure to take a look at
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MiniStudy**THE FEAR OF DEATH**

'...and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Hebrews 2:15)

'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matthew 10:28)

Death. It's awesome to know that it is one certainty in store for all. Rich, poor, powerful, weak, master, slave - all of us face it. It's a rare person who doesn't at some moment contemplate his or her parting from this world. It can strike fear in the soul. And, at least subconsciously, fear of death affects all. We need to understand why.

- Death, except for a particular class, is certain. As sums up the Christian Scriptures: *'... it is appointed unto men once to die'* (Hebrews 9:27). We are born, we live, we die. The writer later states of the righteous: *'...these all died'* (*ch* 11:13). We all go *'...the way of all the earth'* (King David). In youth we don't give death a thought: we are invincible. Death is for others. But as we head for our *'threescore years and ten'* all too often an icy fear grips us. Not even the atheist is immune
- If we have lived a decent and full life surely we should not be afraid when the Grim Reaper approaches. Yet the fear of death hangs over every battle-field, every hospital. We do all in our power to avert that moment when death knocks at the door. (only *in extremis* do we say 'do not resuscitate'.) We wake to the warning signs of an impending heart attack - and fear strikes: *'I may die'*, and we go on a crash diet. A friend succumbs to cancer, and stubbing out our cigarette we think *'that could be me'*. We use every device, every pill and potion, every 'magic formula', to put off that inevitable evil day
- Then there's the uncertainty most have about life *after* life. What happens then? *'...after this the judgment'*. Will I be good enough for 'heaven'? Or, is 'hell' my deserved fate? And if so - what does that mean? Milton's *Inferno* isn't at all a pleasant prospect! The universal concept of 'hell-fire' (Gk. *Ge'henna*)- common to all major faiths - is indeed frightening. This cultural falsehood contributes strongly to our fear of death
- But that's not all. For the death of every human results from a self-inflicted death sentence on our species, *homo sapiens* (Genesis 2:17). Our species is unique - set apart from the animal kingdom by divine purpose. (The lower species don't sin; they die as a matter of course - even before Adam sinned.) Our first parents chose to reject the 'Law of Life', compliance with which would preserve life indefinitely. The result? Death affected themselves and every descendant until this day: *'Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned'* (Romans 5:12)
- Satan (the first sinner) binds many to a lifetime of a fear of death. Through his death Jesus annulled - for those who commit to him - the power of Satan to entice man to sin (Hebrews 2:14-15). Whether or not acknowledged there's an instinctive understanding that death follows sin. Wrote James: *'...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death'* (James 1:14-15)
- But in Christ that fear of death dissipates, driven out by his perfect love. Wrote the Psalmist: *'...precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints'* (Psalm 116:15). The people of God through the millennia have faced death in hope - the certainty of a future resurrection from the dead to unending life Ω
 - *Further reading: When Someone Dies*

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