

new **Horizons**

Vol 18 No 1

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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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Just why do the churches ‘evangelize’? It may seem a ‘no-brainer’, obvious, the clear purpose of the church. But there is some misunderstanding as to how to implement that purpose.

Certainly we must take the message of Jesus worldwide—but are we directing our efforts, our resources, most effectively? Is the purpose of evangelism ‘getting people into church’, presenting the Gospel as a means of self-fulfillment, solving personal issues, feeding the poor, ‘saving from hell-fire’?

Whatever benefits such approaches might have, they often miss the fundamental purpose of the Gospel, failing to take account of the guidance of Jesus and the apostles. That purpose is to bring to maturity in Christ those who have responded to God’s ‘tap on the shoulder’. How then does this affect the outreach of the church?

Lay the Foundations

Jesus made some powerful statements which impact on our outreach methods. He tells the listening crowd in the synagogue:

- ‘All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will in no way cast out’ (John 6:37)
- ‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who has sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day’ (v.44)

- ‘It is written in the Prophets, “And they shall all be taught of God.” Therefore everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to Me’ (v.45)

And in his prayer at the last meal shared with the disciples:

- ‘I have revealed Your name to the men whom You gave to Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word’ (ch 17:6)
- ‘I do not pray for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours’ (v.9)
- ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear’ (oft repeated)

Why Evangelize?

The apostle Paul adds further insight: ‘you see your calling [ie, invitation], brothers, that not many wise men according to the flesh are called, not many mighty, not many noble’ (I Corinthians 1:26). To the Thessalonians: ‘... you should walk worthy of God, who has called you to His kingdom and glory’. And Peter tells his hearers: ‘...the promise is to you and to your children, and to all those afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call’ (Acts 2:39).

Divine Invitation

There is, then, a specific calling—an invitation from the Father, a ‘calling towards’, a ‘drawing’ to be part of the divine

plan of salvation. So we must ask, Who are ‘the called’? Does that affect our evangelism?

The ‘Called’

Paul bursts the vanity balloon—God doesn’t often invite the noble or the powerful but ‘the weak of the world’ and ‘the base’ so that ‘...no flesh should glory in His presence’ (I Corinthians 1:26-29).

By definition the ‘poor’ in Bible lands were the ordinary man-in-the-street—the farmer, the housewife, the cobbler, the fisherman, the barrow-boy. It was they, for the most part, who responded to the preaching of Jesus and the apostles. Others—the rich, the self-righteous religious class, the secular leaders—were too wrapped in their own cosy

world, too busy, too spiritually blind, arrogant.

It’s not much different in our world. Few such respond to the Gospel call, while those who do are generally drawn from the wider public. The sovereign God out of divine wisdom and perception chooses to invite specific individuals to respond to the words of Jesus—who is the perfect reflection of His own will. Who knows what means the Father may use to draw any man or woman to Jesus, and how long before they take that step.

Action Plan

Modern evangelism, too often,

has a focus on Christianity as a road to prosperity. Or a way to relieve poverty or rehabilitate addicts or homosexuals.

Conversion—'coming to Jesus'—is often viewed as an easy passage to eternity, or as a way to avoid 'the coming tribulation'. Or the focus is on a specific aspect of prophecy—the so-called 'rapture', for example, or the coming earthly rule of Messiah on earth. Whatever the motivation it is wrongly assumed that 'whosoever will may come'.

Co-Heirs With Christ

The apostle Paul, however, certainly understood the concept of the Father's calling, and expended his life in promoting the Gospel. While much of his preserved writing was to combat error, yet his focus—as in his letter to the Ephesian brethren—was on the Christian's role as co-heirs with Christ. Writing to the Thesalonians he says '...*God used our preaching as his way of inviting you to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*' (II: 2:14 CEV).

Evangelism is geared to identifying those who may become such an heir, to rounding up the sheep: '...*My sheep hear my voice*', said Jesus, 'and I know them and they follow me' (John 10:27). Drawn to Jesus, often after many years of adversity, they 'hear his voice', understand his words—and learn to do them: '...*go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you*' (Matthew 28:19–20).

That's no easy path, and Jesus makes clear that '*...few there are who find it*'. The early church made the fatal error of dumbing down the message of Jesus, lowering his standards—intent on drawing in larger numbers, building an 'empire'. The result? In came, uncorrected, the culture and attitudes of the Gentiles, the toleration of heathen practices.

Paul's initial emphasis in evangelism is summed up in his first letter to Corinth: '*...I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*' (ch 2:2). Paul (to Jews and Gentiles) proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah who alone through his death and resurrection is the sole access to reconciliation with the Father. He, Jesus, is the 'door'—the only access point—to participation in the Father's plan for mankind: '*...there is salvation in no other One; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved*' (Acts 4:12).

The apostle's life story clearly shows a pattern of self-sacrifice, of intense energy and dedication in executing the 'great commission'. Traits rarely replicated today! It is global. It is dangerous. It invites persecution, even death.

Those few who '*...have ears to hear*' this message (the 'Gospel') were drawn by the Father to Jesus, changed their lives around, were baptized—and, sin forgiven, became sons and daughters of God and part of the Body of Christ.

As 'new-born babes' they are nourished within the church in the ways of the everlasting Kingdom—trained, writes Paul to the

Ephesians, '*in works of service*' as joint-heirs of the Universe with Christ. For eternity.

No Return

Generation succeeds generation—and still the Father withholds His Son from returning for the next phase of His master plan. Prophetic interpretations by men and women fail and merely generate scepticism. The church and its leadership grows older and feebler, while the focus too often is on material empire building. It is time to dynamically present to the world. Jesus Christ, the awesome Son of God, and his much misunderstood teachings.

The focus of evangelism, then, is to herald God's invitation to the world—to become members of His eternal Kingdom, His spirit Family, persuading those who listen concerning Jesus the Messiah, the world's Saviour.

Left Out?

So—there's a selection process, perfectly reflecting the sovereignty of God. But also His mercy towards those whom He 'left out'. What becomes of them? Lost for ever?

Jesus explains: '*...the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to the resurrection of condemnation*' (John 5:28-29).

After the millennial reign of Jesus and the saints, those 'left out' will return to physical life, at that time the one and only way of salvation opened to all of mankind. **Ω**

THE PATH

by Steven J. Kieler

What is it that makes one want to stray from the path, to wander from the well-worn, tried, and true trail? Is it man's sense of adventure? Could it be his constant quest for greener grass, or discontent? Could it be an overwhelming desire to satisfy the senses or desires?

A picture of some children caught my attention and prompted these questions. Someone had gone through the effort to clear the way from boulders, scrub brush, and overhanging limbs. They have graded the path to make it smooth and safe; yet the children had left the safety of the path. Is there something too inviting about the unknown, a powerful magnetic attraction, a challenge, or is it a seemingly uncontrollable desire to explore.

Solomon wrote of that desire based largely on his experiences. He says in Ecclesiastes 2:17, *"Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."* Perhaps he is saying here simply that 'Much in life is a waste of time because all that man does is useless and like trying to catch the wind.'

I recall the story of the Donner party where those poor pioneers on their way to California were trapped in a snowstorm and many died and some turned to cannibalism to stay alive. We cannot imagine that but the situation was dire. They had strayed from the accepted route because they listened to a man who seemed knowledgeable and persuaded them that he knew a 'shortcut'.

Satan has a lot of shortcuts and side-tracks. They may look really attractive and inviting. This reminds me of the teachings of the Pharisees who developed many shortcuts, like trying to obtain salvation by "keeping the law;" and they added new laws,

dreamed up more regulations, and new doctrines which all turned out to be pitfalls or traps. These included hundreds of ridiculous restrictions like how far one could walk on the Sabbath and other bureaucratic behavior regulators.

Methinks that what really gets us into quicksand is not looking ahead and not looking back. Let me explain. Primarily we must look before we leap. Few consider the unintended consequences, and find themselves mired in mud.

Secondly, we may forget the way back or, more specifically, to mark well the return if we should stray too far. Wasn't there a story of a boy and

Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path
Psalm 119:105

girl who took a hike and marked the return path by dropping bread crumbs. Alas, they (Hansel and Gretel) failed to anticipate a problem; the birds came and ate the bread crumbs, and they were cut off from their life-line.

Again, Solomon gives wise advice that relates to both dangers. (Ecclesiastes 8:2-5) *"I counsel you to keep the King's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go out of His sight: stand not in an evil thing; for He does whatsoever pleases Him. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What are you doing? Whoso keeps the command-*

ment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment."

That reminds me of an old saying: "Mine is not to reason why; mine is but to do – or die." God says in Isaiah 1:18: *"Come now and let us reason together..."* We can 'reason' with God, plead our case; but, if there is a difference of opinion, guess who is being unreasonable and who is being reasonable!

Straying from the right and good path is not just kid stuff, at least not exclusively. My hope is that even we big kids can find things of value that will help us to find the way and keep on course. *"And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left,"* (Isaiah 30:21).

This is why we must place more emphasis on all those scriptural instructions that tell us what to do and how and when to do it.

The path, the way, is narrow but clear; to stay on it God, in Jeremiah 7:23, puts it in a perfectly clear directive: *"But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people: and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."*

This sounds incredibly simple and easy; and it is. All we have to do is decide, with as much wisdom as we can muster, what to do. Then ask God to bless our course of action. That summarizes the advice of wise King Solomon, *"A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps"*. (Proverbs 16:9)

With wisdom we will usually make correct decisions but, if things happen to go awry, we continue our life, placing our trust in God and doing what He commands, He will make even our poor decisions to turn out well in the end.

Keep your eye on the right path. Ω

Festivals 2014

Lord's Supper	April 14*
Unleavened Bread	April 15-21
Pentecost	June 8
Trumpets	September 25
Atonement	October 4
Tabernacles	October 9-15
Eighth Day	October 16
* Observed previous evening	

unsigned articles are by the Editor

It's a sad day when a loved one dies. Will you meet again? Is there life after life? What happens when you die?

Most adults have experienced the awful trauma of losing a loved one. An accident, a prolonged disease, or sudden illness blights the lives of the loved one's family and a wider circle of friends and colleagues. Tears well up in private and public grief. An awesome and unfillable gap breaches the orderliness of humdrum life. There's the gnawing pain of loss. Silence shrouds life's business.

Why? is often our first question. Why has this beloved person been taken? Death was so undeserved! Why, when so young? Why, when there was so much good being done? Why, when so beloved by all? The questions—seemingly unanswerable questions—crowd in thick and fast.

Less often asked is: *Where to?*

Few like to pose that one!

It's easier when a dear one has led a godly life; easier when you can't find anyone who can in all honesty say a contrary word, when the life has glowed with joy and helpfulness and faithfulness and sound wisdom and encouragement; when life's winter follows a productive harvest of good deeds and love and generosity. Then you can rejoice when the minister says that the loved one is "with the Lord" and is happier than conceivably possible. Then you feel you can say *Amen* when he tells you that the loved one is even now beholding the face of

Jesus in heavenly splendour.

Infant Reward

But what if it's an infant who has barely drawn his first breath that's being lowered in the cold earth? Where are the good deeds to praise? Where the life of accomplishment? Where the belief?

Or, what if everyone knows the person of mature years has lived a life of selfishness, of greed, or miserliness? What if the individual was untrustworthy or an inveterate liar? Or a callous murderer or unrepentant child molester? Are you comfortable to hear such a person, beloved or not, "preached into heaven"?

Further, have you ever heard the preacher announce that someone has reaped the fruit of an evil life and is even now screaming in agony in the flames of hell? In evangelical circles it's the only

who have lived, have done good works, and have died—and the missionary didn't reach them in time to tell them salvation comes only through Jesus Christ? Where are *they*? After all, they *never had a chance* to accept or to reject salvation! Yet the Scriptures inform us that God wants all mankind to come to true repentance.

And can we really believe that a loved one whom we believe to be in heaven can't see the agonies of those in "hell"? Can't hear the screams of pain? Has *forgotten* that a loving spouse (or an innocent infant son or daughter) never "accepted Jesus"—and, supposedly, went to the other place? Where is the untrammelled joy in that?

And can we believe that our omnipotent and totally loving Father in heaven can ignore their cries?

Can permit them to suffer throughout all eternity? (Imagine holding a loved one's hand in a match-flame until it expires—and that's only a few seconds!)

Certainly God is also a just God, a righteous God. But am I more righteous than Him? After all, I give my children more than one chance to "get it right"! Do you give up when your child fails to walk at his first attempt? Perhaps some of us never will get it right in this life, but does that mean we are fit only to burn forever and ever? Surely God has infinitely more patience, more love!

Source of Belief

These are logical questions and situations. They are questions that most of us don't face—*won't*

When Someone Dies

available alternative—yet, usually unannounced in the "respectable" funeral service!

Then there are the in-betweens—most of us. We've done a bit of good. And there's been a dash of courage, a flash of generosity, a streak of loyalty. But no claim to be a "born again Christian." No profession—in a long lifetime—of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord. And probably lots of activities we would rather our friends didn't know about! What of these folk? Where are they after death?

Failed Missionaries

How about the countless billions

face! Yet they are questions that are firmly and clearly addressed in that source of Christian belief, the Bible.

The fact is, even for most Christians, much of our belief about death and the hereafter *doesn't come from the Word of God*. They are unproven hand-me-down ideas from childhood. Yet, for Christians, the Bible is supposed to be the sole source of our belief. And what we find there—if we are indeed willing to take an unbiased look at it—is infinitely more satisfying than the concepts outlined earlier in this article.

Bible Facts

So let's take a look at the clear Bible teachings. Recall what Jesus said: *live by every word of God!* As Christians we must be willing to see what God is saying to us. And—dare I say it—not simply accept unquestioningly the powerful assertions of a minister (however well-liked, however charismatic, however caring and sympathetic) at a funeral oration.

There are some clear and simple Bible statements we need to examine and reconcile:

- God *only* has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16)
- There is a spirit in man (Job 32:8)
- The spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7)
- The dead know nothing; the memory of them is lost (Ecclesiastes 9:5)
- All in Christ shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:52)
- ... at the “...*last trump*” (1 Corinthians 15:52)
- The rest of the dead will live again at the end of the thou-

sand years (Revelation 20:5)

Each of these statements demands a complete article! Each can be supported by a whole body of Scripture. It can readily be seen, however—since we are looking only to the Scriptures to inform us of God's teachings—that when that beloved one dies, the human spirit is safe with God until resurrected, when consciousness will be revived.

Resting in Peace

What does this mean? Simply that when someone dies—whether they were good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, child or senior citizen, Christian or Hindu or animist, born-again or not—whatever their status, they will, when they die, remain *at rest* until resurrected—given new life.

The Bible leaves no doubt as to when these resurrections (the Bible mentions several) take place. Paul tells us it is “*every man in his own order*” (1 Corinthians 15:23). He tells us that Jesus was the first to be resurrected in this sense. Then there's a “pause” until His return.

It is at this specific point in time (the return of Christ)—represented in Bible prophecy as the “*last [seventh] trumpet*”—that the dead in Christ, in whom dwells God's Spirit, arise from

the grave, their spirit united with a resurrected spirit body. Notice Paul's words: “...*For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and this mortal nature must [at this point in time] put on immortality*” (vv. 52-53).

That's the time gloriously celebrated in the famed Handel's *Messiah!*

The spirit of every righteous person since Adam has—according to Scripture—been preserved in God's care since death, and will remain in His care until the resurrection. *But they have not been conscious of the passage of time!* More than six thousand years in some cases!

Yet—get this—in their minds they will at the moment of their deaths seem to be instantly with Christ! The intervening millennia will appear to have been obliterated—just like the effects of an anaesthetic!

But what about *unbelievers*?

What of the “Heathen”?

The Bible clearly informs us that *all mankind* is to enjoy this rest. *Their* human spirit, too, is preserved by God. Whether a righteous Abraham or Paul, or an “ignorant savage,” or an evil Hitler, or the average unconverted man-in-the-street—all will remain in the grave oblivious of the passage of time *until their resurrection*.

Jesus took time to instruct the Jews in this very matter. He told them: “*The hour is coming when all that are in the tombs will hear*

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His [the Son's] voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

This same author (John), in fact, tells us when these two events will occur. He writes: "...*they [martyrs] came to life again [were resurrected] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:4). This is in perfect harmony with Paul's statement that "*the dead in Christ*" (together with Christians then living) will become immortal at Christ's coming, at the last trumpet sound.

Thus, in one instant the whole universe will burst in joy as the family of God is resurrected to be with Christ! It is at that time—the Second Coming of Christ—that our beloved "*dead in Christ*" will receive their just reward (Revelation 11:18).

And the rest of mankind? John enlightens us: "...*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years [the Millennium] were at an end*" (v.5). Isn't that clear!

A Second Resurrection!

If we really want to believe what God tells us in His word we can't escape the conclusion that at least *two* resurrections—separated by one thousand years—lie ahead of mankind. The *first* for the people of God, the *second* for the rest of mankind. (In his book *The Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, John Pye Smith mentions ancient authors proving that this concept of a "second resurrection" for "all

the rest of mankind" was agreed by the ancient Rabbinical writings.)

In this "second resurrection" all those who have not responded in this life—the good, the bad, the indifferent—will be restored to physical flesh and blood life. In their former existence Satan had successfully blinded and deceived them (Revelation 12:9; II Corinthians 4:4). But with this evil rebel safely out of the way for ever (Revelation 20:10), they will (just like Christians now) be judged out of the things written in the Scriptures.

The Book of Life will then be opened—sufficient evidence that God's grace for salvation will be freely available for them! Note again the word given to the apostle John: "*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand [resurrected] before God, and the books were opened [of the Bible]: and another book was opened which is the Book of Life; and the dead [now resurrected] were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works*" (Revelation 20:12).

It is '*...the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ*' (Romans 2:16).

In other words, all those men, women and children who have

To accompany this article you are invited to request the following:

**After the Resurrection
Is Heaven Your Destiny?
God's Grand Design**

never heard of Jesus Christ or who were not during their lifetime responded to God's invitation (*read*, for example, John 6:65) will at that time have their very first real opportunity to be converted and to receive the Spirit of God.

An End to Evil

Only after this final grand chance of salvation will "all hell break loose" in the evangelical use of the term! For only those *who fail to then repent* and accept God's gracious offer of eternal life will suffer "...*the second death*".

Their bodies will then be consumed in a 'hell-fire' that is so fervently hot it will completely obliterate the remaining evil on earth (Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8), ushering in a "new heavens and a new earth."

In God's grand design for mankind, every man, woman, and child ever born in whatever age, in whatever part of the world, and no matter what their religion or their life-style, will be given—in God's perfect timing—the glorious opportunity to freely choose life for all eternity. Ω

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.

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www.cgom.org*

‘Prophecies will fail’, wrote Paul. How can that happen?

At the end of each year we expect to hear various ‘prophets’ predict events for the coming year. And we expect *them* to fail—for they usually do. Then there are those who explain, often in detail, the precise fulfilment of certain prophecies in the Bible. They, too, fail. But those prophecies by the Bible prophets, by the apostles, by Jesus? Surely there cannot be anything more certain.

Not just the Old Testament but also the New provide specific predictions, mostly with reference to the ‘end time’. Jesus (Matthew 24 *etc*) lays out for us a clear scenario for the days leading to his return. Paul (Thessalonians) writes of a ‘falling away’ and the appearance of a ‘man of sin’. While John relays from Jesus, in an entire book (Revelation), prophecy after scary prophecy.

Then there are the old prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos *etc*. Prophecy occupies nearly a third of the Scriptures. Who can say any of these are not inspired? That they could fail?

In a sense, prophecies do fail—that is, they come to pass and are no longer relevant. There are many such examples. Then there are the endless man-made *interpretations* of the prophecies—their failure to materialize too often fail to make their predictors hide in shame. Back they come, with more!

Why Prophecy?

Prophecy excites Bible students. Complicated charts are churned out to predict the manner of fulfil-

ment, or the timing, or even pinpointing specific individuals—the pope is a favourite—and the future of nations. Attempts are made to link individuals with 666, or they assert the meaning of ‘the mark and number of the beast’.

Yet for all its frequent misuse prophecy is a vital part of the Word of God—His revelation to us of His plan. God, who exists outside of time, says:

‘...Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure’ (Isaiah 46:10).

Divine Purpose

God will, in other words, ensure that His ultimate purpose will be fulfilled. He *will* ‘...bring many sons to glory’. No matter how long it takes, or how many die in the process, or how many times He has to vary that process. We are carried along, like a boat adrift on a river, towards His unchanging goal, while individually free to make our own petty choices—do we row, or just get carried along with the current.

Jehovah explained this to the prophet Jeremiah: ‘...At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pro-

When Prophecy Fails

nounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jeremiah 18:8-10).

History Lesson

At one point in history, for example, God took away all of mankind except one family, that of Noah. He has entirely removed corrupt nations, while others He has benefited to serve His purpose.

The experience of Jonah is an example. The city-state of Nineveh had become violently corrupt, fit to be destroyed—and unable to fulfill God’s as yet unrevealed purpose for it. It was given opportunity to change, and Jonah was sent to give God’s warning: ‘...Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ (ch 3:4). And the outcome? ‘...And the people of Nineveh believed God. And they called a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. Who knows? He may repent, and God may have pity and turn away from the glow of His anger, so that we do not perish’ (v.9).

Well, God did: ‘...And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And God was compassionate over the evil that He had said to do to them, and He did not do it’ (v.11).

Request the free article:
Tabernacles: humanity in the flesh

Why Christ Must Return

Is it possible, then, that all mankind will change, repent and be in submission to God? Everyone? Would Jesus not then have a need to return?

The Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, predict a torrid time ahead for mankind—*unless we repent*. It's a time of seismic disturbance in the sky and on earth. A time when mankind will express the worst of human nature, a time of persecution of the righteous and of massive loss of life. A time of rank evil when a remnant of mankind will shake their fists at God. But would they, perhaps, repent, turn from their wickedness?

Should that happen God has a plan.

Since creation, God the Father has been 'harvesting' faithful souls from among mankind, men and women who will reflect His will, His way of life. People like Enoch, Elijah, Sarah, Abraham, David, all from the millennia before Jesus first came. And since then, all faithful Christians. They are hand-picked, chosen and prepared to fill a specific office when His spirit Kingdom will reign on earth.

When the first tier of His spirit government is complete the Father will send Jesus to reign over all of mankind—at a time He deems appropriate. And even if there were to be global repentance He will demonstrate to the surviving remnant of mankind the template for godly government, a godly, harmonious society per-

Evil Conquered

The malign influence of Satan will, during the thousand years, be neutralized (Revelation 20:2-3). This fallen angelic spirit, had been given authority over Earth but sought to dethrone Almighty God. He successfully plotted against and defeated God's new creation, the Adamic race, thus retaining his authority (Matthew 4:9). Ever after, as '*...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience*' (Ephesians 2:2), Satan, has tutored man into his evil way.

Jesus described him as '*...the prince of this world*' (John 12 31), and Paul named him '*...the god of this age*' (II Corinthians 4:4).

Jesus Christ alone overcame him and himself qualified as King of kings and Lord of lords. Since his resurrection from the dead Jesus has given man opportunity, through his indwelling Spirit, to join the ranks of those who overcome Satan's influence.

fectly reflecting the divine way of life based on His perfect Law, and in co-operation with the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

But, failing such repentance, having foreseen the deepening, obdurate degeneracy of mankind—the result of millennia of the rejection of His perfect way of life—and perceiving that mankind could

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destroy himself the Father will send His Son to establish godly government over the remnant who survive the turbulent last days.

As writes the prophet Isaiah, there will be '*...few men left*' (ch 24:6).

Harvest Home

Throughout the following thousand years the harvest will continue—as the relatively few who survive the end-time chaos hear and respond to the Gospel message.

To conclude the divine plan, we are told by Jesus: '*... the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to the resurrection of condemnation*' (John 5:28-29). That time is at the closing of Christ's thousand-year reign: '*...the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished*' (Revelation 20:5).

All of us must give account of our behaviour in this life. But all will at that time, following resurrection, be given opportunity to become part of the spirit Kingdom of God. His chosen spirit Family will be complete.

Bible prophecy is certain. It will come to pass as predicted—unless mankind embraces the way of life outlined by our Creator in His perfect Law, and turns to the one and only true God through Jesus Christ: '*...neither is there salvation in any other name*' (Acts 4:12). Ω

MiniStudy***Why Don't You Believe?******'if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those that are perishing'***

Throughout time only a tiny minority of mankind have committed themselves to the one true God. Even today, with an estimated two billion calling themselves Christian, the vast majority are that in name only. Given that there is but one route to living forever—the sole purpose of our time on the planet—*why?*

- There's a vast supermarket of religious beliefs from which to choose, each peddling its own wares. Why does Christianity proclaim itself as the one and only way to salvation? The apostle Peter stakes the claim: *'...there is salvation in no other One [Jesus Christ of Nazareth]; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved'* (Acts 4:12). Isn't that sheer arrogance? Don't other faiths have an equal claim? What does Christianity have that is special?
- For Christians, 'God'—Jehovah, YHVH— is supreme, almighty, unique. As such He is consistent, unchanging. His Word, preserved in the Christian Scriptures of Old and New Testaments, abides forever. As Creator He has authority. Uniquely among the so-called gods He is love. The God of the Bible is not in competition with Allah or Krishna or any other name—for they are but human constructs, aided and abetted by the 'god of this world'
- 'Religion' can be defined as our relationship with the deity. Contrary to the false notion that religion evolved ever higher, man began in perfect harmony with his Creator, only to lose that spiritual intimacy through self-will: *'...that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse'* (Romans 1:19-20)
- Having abandoned the foundations of the revealed faith *'...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things'*. Hence arose the degenerate mythologies of ancient times—practices that disfigured the true faith of early Christianity and today passes for the faith of Jesus Christ
- So why can't modern man with his presumed intellectual superiority see through the myth and embrace the true faith? The apostle Paul explains: *'...if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them'* (II Corinthians 4:4). Satan—not a myth!—has influenced mankind since that first act of self-will. He has, through vulnerable accomplices, infiltrated all of society—social norms, education, politics, economics. And not least religion
- Confronted by the Father with the good news of eternal life, we are invited to choose that life. If you respond to His 'tap on the shoulder' the Father will draw you to Jesus the Messiah—the only path to eternal life: *'...No one can come to Me unless the Father who has sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day'* (John 6:44). Put off His repeated call to turn to His Son and eventually He leaves you alone. The challenge by the LORD through Moses is just as valid today: *'... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life'* **Ω**

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