

NEW **Horizons**

Vol 21 No 6

November/December 2017

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 a 32-lesson Bible Correspondence 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

**Churches of God Outreach Ministries
P O Box 54621
Tulsa, OK 74155-0621
USA**

e-mail: information@cgom.org
1-800-611-8080

Editor: James McBride
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

England:

The Churches of God, UK

e-mail: coguk@aol.com

Canada:

**Churches of God Outreach Ministries
PO Box 476
Don Mills Station
Don Mills Ontario M3C 2T4
Canada**

www.canadianchurchofgod.com

or from:

Tulsa, OK 2017

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Male and female are ‘heirs together of the grace of life’. What does that mean?

Simply quoting a text from the Christian Bible can bring down the wrath of Twitterdom. Jesus found it so as he confronted the religious leaders, the twitterdom of his day. As did the apostles Paul and Peter—both martyred for their faithful stand.

But some unpopular and controversial matters are fundamental to a well-run and harmonious society. Overturn these principles and confusion erupts—in society at large, in the church and in our homes.

Certain to burst blood vessels in some quarters is the apostle Peter’s comment: ‘...*If you are a wife, you must put your husband first...he will see how you honor God and live a pure life. Don’t depend on things like fancy hairdos or gold jewelry or expensive clothes to make you look beautiful. Be beautiful in your heart by being gentle and quiet. This kind of beauty will last, and God considers it very special. Long ago those women who worshiped God and put their hope in him made themselves beautiful by putting their husbands first. For example, Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him her master*’ (I Peter 3:1-6, CEV).

Just Peter’s personal opinion—a concept that can be safely ignored in the modern age? An archaic practice from a bye-gone

and obsolete patriarchal society? Or, is it the expression of a fundamental life principle?

[*Note: the apostle continues: ‘...If you are a husband, you should be thoughtful of your wife. Treat her with honor, because she isn’t as strong as you are, and she shares with you in the gift of life’ (v.7).*]

In the Beginning

To address any concept expressed in the New Testament we must understand that it is totally in harmony with the writings of the *Old Testament*. Writes the apostle Peter: ‘...*no prophetic message*

The Battle of the Sexes

ever came just from the human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God’ (II Peter 1:21). The solid rock foundations are laid down there, notably in *Genesis*. Or, as Paul wrote to Timothy: ‘...*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living*’ (II Timothy 3:16). He refers, of course, to the *Old Testament* writings.

Foundation Principles

Delving into the opening chapters of *Genesis*, then, we find these foundation principles:

- Both man and woman are created in God’s image, equipped with His characteristics
- They were created with the potential for an endless life in the flesh
- They had joint authority over

the rest of the material creation

- Together they were responsible to beget and nourish future generations
- Specific—different—roles were also assigned to each
- Adam, as representative head of humanity, was instructed by God on his physical and spiritual role, responsible to pass on this knowledge
- Eve was then made from Adam, one flesh, and equipped for the vital maternal role

The secluded garden in Eden was their idyllic home for an unspecified period, and during which time they regularly encountered God face-to-face and were instructed by Him. *It was not to last.*

Roots of Corruption

Man wasn’t created as an automaton—we are free to choose our pathway in life. We do, however, experience influences from many quarters –from our environment, from our relationships, from our desires.

Pride, for example, can lead to great achievements or to destruction. Look what it did to one of God’s most powerful creations, an ‘*anointed cherub that covers [the mercy-seat]*’ (Ezekiel 28:17, I Timothy 3:6). An exalted being indeed!

It was from this rebellious and fallen being that Eve accepted counsel. Reject *wise* advice, (God’s) as did Eve, and you—and your descendants reap the

inevitable consequences.

The apostle Paul commends the Corinthian brethren for their willingness to listen to his teaching (I Corinthians 11:2). He then enters a discussion of what appears to be a sore point with them: human relationships: the respective roles of the male and the female: ‘...*I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ*’ (v.3).

To the modern ear—contentious! Yet Paul merely expresses the ‘wisdom of the ages’, a reflection of God’s original guidance to our first parents. He repeats the instruction to Timothy: ‘...*Women should learn in silence and all humility. I do not allow them to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet. For Adam was created first, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and broke God’s law*’ (I Timothy 2:11-14).

The apostle notes elsewhere that ‘*there is neither male nor female*’ (Galatians 3:28) in matters of faith. He praises women for their role in instructing the young in the Scriptures (eg II Timothy 1:5, 3:15) for their service as deacons (Romans 16:1) and encourages the older women to teach the younger females (Titus 2:3,4). Women also had an accepted role in ‘praying and prophesying’ in church (I Corinthians 11:5) - the instruction to ‘...*keep silence*’ had limitations (I Corinthians 14:34).

Diversity

Not, then, a misogynist! He nevertheless acknowledged that there are fundamental differences in God’s design for the sexes. He bases this, not on culture nor on education but on divine revelation—on God’s guidance at our creation.

Male and female, then, are joint-heirs of God’s grace. They are equally in God’s image. They have the same destiny. They have, however differing roles.

Adam, notes Paul, was *first* created and from earth’s elements, while Eve was formed from Adam’s side. She was necessarily different, Adam’s genes being re-shaped for a related purpose—restructured in anatomy, in her physiology, in her emotions and in her psychology. Maternal (I Timothy 2:17)! Woman is man’s ‘help’, his companion and in no way inferior (Malachi 2:14). (*God is our help; He is in no wise subordinate to us!*)

Prior to forming Eve, God instructed the first man in his proper role, and explaining the foundation principles he should live by. In the process of naming the animals Adam came to understand the vast gulf between himself and the lower creatures—and that he needed companionship at his own physical and intellectual level, a role fulfilled by Eve [Gk. *zoe* ‘Life’ *LXX*] whom he also named, prophesying her essential and vital function as ‘...*the mother of all living*’ (Genesis 3:20).

Deception

Paul embraces God’s statement that Eve was deceived and that Adam knew what he was doing (Genesis 3:13-14). As events demonstrate Eve was more liable to deception—and so more likely to mislead (I Timothy 2:14), a message sussed out by the ‘serpent’. Hence the apostle’s objection to women in a general teaching role within the church. (Eve was representative head of womanhood.)

It is, then, *God* and not the apostles who designate the respective—and different—roles for the male and the female. Paul reflects this: ‘...*I do not allow a woman to teach nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived*’ (I Timothy 2:14).

Eve usurped this divine order, while Adam failed to exercise his God-given leadership responsibilities. The result is the age-long ‘battle of the sexes’—contention that has seeped into the church. **Ω**

“...*a piece of bone*”

Are we more than the sum total of our tissues?

That’s the contemptuous description, inflicted on us by the President of the Royal College of Genealogists, Professor Lesley Regan, of an unwanted embryo or foetus, comparing it to a bunion. Her perhaps laudable desire is to remove the stigma of criminality from those who abort a child—not that charges are often brought.

Since the UK 1967 Abortion Act millions have died by abortion of the foetus. In the United States the 1973 Act of the United States Supreme Court struck down every federal, state, and local law regulating or restricting the practice of abortion.

There are an estimated 56 million induced abortions worldwide *every year*, among women of childbearing age.

Redundant Tissue

In the opinion of Professor Regan, to abort is just like trimming unwanted bony growth from a bunion. It’s a view not shared by the Psalmist: ‘...*When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother’s womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there--- you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began*’ (139:14-16).

Bio-mystery

As science delves ever more deeply into human biology it increasingly stands in awe at the complexity of life, the genius of the myriad interactions even within a single cell *cont’d.p.4*

Trumpets...a memorial

The Day of Trumpets highlights the most dramatic—and traumatic—period of end-time events.

Trumpets is one of the ‘holy days’ God set before His people to observe annually: ‘...*In the seventh month [our September/October], in the first day of the month, shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation*’ (Leviticus 23:24). It is here billed, without explanation, as a ‘memorial’, a commemoration of an earlier event.

Prophetic Times

For most Bible students, of course, *Trumpets* primarily conjures up images of the resurrection of the people of God, gathered from all ages, at the yet future return of Jesus: Wrote the apostle Paul ‘... *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump[et] of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Paul’s words reflect the message Jesus himself gave: ‘...*He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the heavens to their ends*’ (Matthew 24:31). Dramatic indeed—and yet future.

The apostle adds a further detail: ‘... *we shall all be changed. In a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet; for a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible*’ (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). The apostle notes that this is the ‘last’ trumpet—implying there are others preceding it. The final trumpet or ‘woe’ is again sub-divided as the ‘seven last plagues’.

The *Day of Trumpets* provides us with a glimpse of what to expect, though much remains obscure, coming clear only as it happens! We must

each remain vigilant, daily putting on God’s armour which alone will see us through the bad times (‘...*the evil day*’) ahead.

Part of that armour is the observance of God’s annual holy days including this *Day of Trumpets*. It enables us to focus on the unfolding of the prophecies. It is also a *memorial* of one of the most significant events in all of mankind’s history.

Seven Seals

Predicted in the Scriptures for the end time is a globalized world—a world overtly at rest but a world in gross spiritual darkness, all opposition, especially of Christians, having been brutally eliminated, and dominated by a universal religio-political power.

It is pictured as a scroll with seven seals, and as each is broken open it reveals an aspect of mankind’s self-inflicted festering wounds (Revelation 6), culminating in worldwide devastating political, economic and physical disruption (vv.12ff).

Paul, clearly, was privy to the detail spelled out by Jesus through the apostle John in the book of

This sequence of ‘sevens’ provides a structure for John’s description of end-time events. It amplifies the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24

Revelation. John relates that the seventh seal has seven phases, called ‘trumpets’ each symbolic of

horrendous end-time events. Jesus related this prophetic insight to John who records the detail for us. It amplifies the end-time scenario he revealed to his apostles just before his death—see Matthew chapter twenty-four.

Seven Trumpets

Attempts have been made—notably by nineteenth century Bible commentators—to link these with historical events. This

may well be so, but these *Trumpet* judgments, clearly, are also closely linked with the return of the Messiah to reign as King of kings. They will be features of the end-time.

The unfolding of mankind’s history has been since the beginning in the hand of God, our Creator. He has chosen responsive individuals to further His plans for all of mankind, and around 1500BC He freed the descendants of faithful Abraham and Isaac from Egyptian domination.

The LORD by His miraculous interventions led them to Sinai to establish them as a nation and to recall to them the laws followed by Abraham (Genesis 26:5). It was a momentous and awesome and impressive moment for Israel, a day to be remembered annually by this festival. For the Israelites saw the Creator descend on the mountain, and experienced His awesome power and majesty.

A Memorial

So awesome was this moment to be that God gave them three days to prepare themselves for it:

‘...Go to the people and tell them to spend today and tomorrow purifying themselves for worship. They must wash their clothes and be ready the day after tomorrow. On that day I will come down on Mount Sinai, where all the people can see me. Mark a boundary around the mountain that the people must not cross, and tell them not to go up the mountain or even get near it. If any of you set foot on it, you are to be put to death; you must either be stoned or shot with arrows, without anyone touching you. This applies to both people and animals; they must be put to death. (Exodus 19: 10-13)

Moses adds this eye-witness account: ‘...*Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai*’. *cont’d over*

Certainly an event to remember!

And an appropriate reminder was the sound of the trumpet: ‘...*On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud appeared on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast was heard. All the people in the camp trembled with fear*’ (v.16).

Still To Come

This same Jesus the Messiah who appeared to Israel on Sinai will in the Father’s good time, return from Heaven as King of kings and LORD of lords—the supreme political and religious power. The Psalmist notes ‘...*God is the King of all the earth*’ and adds, ‘...*God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet*’ (Psalm 47).

As with Israel’s kings His coming will be announced by the blowing of trumpets: ‘...*Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint[ed] him there king over Israel: and blow with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon*’ (I Kings 1:34).

Writes Isaiah: ‘...*it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem*’ (Isaiah 27:13).

The awesome experience of Israel is relevant for the days *ahead of us!* For Jesus Christ will return—this time to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4-5). And not only so, for, ‘...*He [God] will send His*

angels with a great sound of a trumpet’ (Matthew 24:31).

The apostle Paul tells us: ‘...*the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with a commanding shout of an archangel’s voice, and with God’s trumpet. And the dead in Christ will rise again first*’ (I Thessalonians 4:16). He adds: ‘...*the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*’ (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

But for those who have committed their life to Jesus a different fate: ‘...*For you [Christians] are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard in-treated that the word should not be spoken to them any more....But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect...Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire*’ (Hebrews 12).

The *Day of Trumpets* is certainly a memorial, an awesome reminder of the power and majesty and glory of God, and also sheds a blinding light on the days to come. Ω

Our free booklets summarize the Bible festivals:

God’s Holy Days Key to Revelation

Available to view or request on-line at www.cgom.org

And they do: for just short of two hundred thousand (a recorded 190,046 in 2016) are aborted annually in England and Wales alone; and worldwide, those fifty-six million.

Thousands of the childless couples fruitlessly haunt Adoption Clinics for a child to nourish and cherish. Yet Government opens the nation’s doors to immigrants while encouraging the death of our workforce of the future.

Moral Decay

Meanwhile, the nation sinks into the swamp of moral torpor. Secularism reigns supreme. Sexual promiscuity goes unchecked, encouraged by the school curriculum, by the entertainment media and by falsely so-called ‘celebrities’. Adultery is tolerated as an acceptable lifestyle. STD’s often blight the hopes of conception, with many becoming sterile following an abortion, often with subsequent miscarriages and mental health challenges.

But what do you expect? With God and His perfect plan for our lives (laid out clearly in the Scriptures) jettisoned—sin goes unchecked. Christian values—once instilled in our children at home and in the now almost redundant Bible and Sunday schools—are viewed as useless relics of a past age.

It is time to nourish and cherish the most precious gift of all—human life. Ω

A piece of bone ...cont’d from p.2

—and especially the reproductive cells. For the union of just two living cells has the potential to rise to human greatness during a lifetime—and ultimately to immortality.

Surely such a precious ‘piece of

tissue’ cries out for respect!

But blinded by the shackles of evolutionary biology many see such a miracle as merely a piece of tissue on which to experiment, or to destroy wholesale, or for convenience.

next column

The Christian hope is the resurrection from the dead. Who will take part in that ‘first’ resurrection? Will everyone—all two billion—who profess Christianity? Will you?

The apostle Paul tells us: ‘... if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable’ (I Corinthians 15:16-19). No matter what life throws at us—and Christians are not immune to trouble—we are assured of a return from the grave to live for ever—and with no physical challenges to battle. But *who* will experience that momentous event?

Saints Awake

Let’s look first at when that resurrection takes place. The Bible is clear that when we die we are—as says Paul in the above quotation—‘...fallen asleep’. Our resurrection follows the wake-up call: ‘...the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed’ (v.52). The apostle John tells us: ‘...This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years’ (Revelation 20: 5-6).

The ‘first’ resurrection (there are others!) thus takes place after the return of Jesus and at the beginning of his thousand-year reign over our planet. It is when the ‘firstfruits’ harvest is gathered into the Kingdom of God. Writes James, the brother of Jesus: ‘...Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures’ (James 1:18). Paul, too: ‘...[Christians] have the firstfruits of the Spirit’ (Romans 8:23).

Law of Life

The apostle Paul encountered a

group of sceptical Greek intellectuals in Athens: ‘...when they heard of

the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear you again of this matter’ (Acts 17:32). On another occasion, before Governor Felix (who was well-versed in the affairs of the Jews), Paul’s discussion about resurrection evoked fear in the Governor (ch 24:25). And to this day there is scepticism and fear and disbelief surrounding the concept of a resurrection. From among the dead, despite the undoubted resurrection of Jesus himself. Yet resurrection is perfectly logical, and has the firm foundation of biological law.

Paul addresses such arguments—calling their proponents ‘fools’, lacking sense. He calls on natural processes to explain what he sees as the obvious. Take a look around, he says: ‘...A seed must die before it can sprout from the ground. Wheat seeds and all other seeds look different from the sprouts that come up. This is because God gives everything the kind of body he wants it to have. People, animals, birds, and fish are each made of flesh, but none of them are alike’ (I Corinthians 15:36-39 CEV).

He draws the analogy with human death and life: ‘...So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body’ (vv. 42-44). A transformation occurs. A seed looks nothing like the mature plant dictated by its DNA, yet maintains all the mother plant’s characteristics.

The Human Spirit

The seed is ‘created’ within the mother plant, and will reproduce it. Its reproductive energy (growth potential) is protected by and drawing sustenance from its surrounding

The Resurrection

...will you be there?

shell and activated by the water in the soil. It follows strict biological laws of reproduction, each after its kind. Each seed enshrines the DNA of its parents.

Similarly, there is within each human being a ‘spirit’: ‘...there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding’ (Job 32:8). The human spirit records the blueprint of all that we are, physically, intellectually—and, scarcely, morally. It is sustained by the living body in which it resides, and is inactive without a body.

To use a modern analogy: the human spirit is like the ‘hard drive’ in a computer. Apart from an energy source and operating instructions (the software programme) it is inert—to all intents and purposes dead, or certainly ‘asleep’. The apostle, of course, uses the analogy of ‘sleep’ for those who have died (eg I Corinthians 15:6, 18), as did Jesus of Lazarus (John 11:11).

Upon death of the individual the spirit is preserved until the resurrection: ‘...the dust [our dead body] returns to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it’ (Ecclesiastes 12:27). In the book of Hebrews we are told: ‘...It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (ch 9:27). Everyone is raised from the grave to face the Judge of all.

At the time of the first resurrection all God’s faithful since Adam who have died before that moment and whose spirit is preserved in God will receive a body appropriate to their status in Christ (I Corinthians 15: 41). The physical body of everyone in Christ alive at that time will be transformed into a spiritual body: ‘...There is a natural [Gk *psuchikos*] body, and there is a spiritual [Gk *pneumatikos*] body’ (v. 44). The spirit body of Jesus, note, had both flesh

and bones (Luke 24:39). A real body. Writes John: ‘...it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him’ (I John 3:2).

Paul clarifies: ‘...who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself’ (Philippians 3:21).

Who Qualifies?

Who, then, will experience that glorious first resurrection?

Just because you ‘go to church on Sunday’ or on a census form you say ‘Religion: *Christian*’—does that qualify you to live for ever as a member of the God Family, or, as most Christians think, qualify you for ‘heaven’ (Ephesians 2:19)? Or, do your ‘good works’ qualify you?

Consider the apostle Paul’s words in Romans 8:11: ‘...if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you’. Notice the ‘*if*’. For that’s what qualifies us—we must be ‘...in Christ’ and he in us. Paul again: ‘... you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his’ (v. 9).

It’s the experience which many Christians, mistakenly, call ‘born again’. It is conversion—turning from man’s ways to God’s ways. It follows repentance, *real* repentance and baptism: ‘...godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, a repentance not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world finally produces death’ (II Corinthians 7:10).

Death, note—not free transport to heaven. It is a response to the Father’s invitation. Once we have made that change and been baptized we can receive that in-dwelling Spirit. A very real act of God, unit-

ing our spirit with His.

A Transformed Life

That action of the Almighty God initiates a process of change in our lives, a transformation as we become a ‘new person Christ’: ‘...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.’ (II Corinthians 5:17). Change in how and when we worship, change in our day-to-day behaviour as we learn to conform to the pattern of life exemplified by Jesus. A real *change of heart*.

Each of us, Christian or non-Christian—if we desire to be part of that resurrection—must examine ourselves to discern whether or not we have truly and personally made that change.

Jeremiah records God’s words: ‘... I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me’. *you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you’* (ch 29:13-14). Ω

World of Spirit

It is a fallacy to assume that the word ‘spirit’ (Heb. *ruach*, Gk. *pneuma*) always implies *indestructible*. God alone, who *is* Spirit, is such. Animals, for example, have a ‘spirit’ (*ruach*) - but they are not immortal (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

The disembodied spirits of Satan’s ‘angels’ will in the end be destroyed, as will any human who finally rejects the grace of God (Revelation 21:8).

Because those who are ‘in Christ’ have their human spirit in union with God’s Holy Spirit they, too, will be immortal (Romans 8:11).. The ‘angels of God’—His messengers—are spirit, with spirit bodies. They will remain as God’s servants for as long as they stay faithful.

Don’t think of a disembodied spirit in terms of form and shape. Multiple thousands can inhabit one receptive human (Mark 5:13)!

In sum, there are four ‘grades’ of spirit. God’s, angelic, human, and animal. Each has its own characteristics, and abides by its own laws.

Worship Me! ...cont’d from p.7

Sabbath, often under intense persecution and martyrdom by the then established paganized church. While acknowledging that the seventh day is the Biblical Sabbath the Reformers failed to return to it.

The present Pope has encouraged Sunday observance (calling it ‘Sabbath’, *para* 237) in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*—a measure enthusiastically taken up by trade unions and some governments.

In sum, we cannot allow our vigilance to slip. It is for each Christian to ‘grow in grace’ as we strive to incorporate in our daily life the character of Jesus, *and* to freely worship God in the only manner He has revealed—on His holy Sabbaths. 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.

Be sure to take a look at www.cgom.org

There’s widespread misunderstanding as to what happens when we die. For a brief explanation you are invited to request the articles

When Someone Dies After the Resurrection God’s Grand Design

free from any of our addresses, or on-line at www.cgom.org/articles

Worship Me!

To know how and when God wants us to worship Him is a pearl of great price

In parallel to the vital and essential transformation of our moral behaviour and our outlook on life is how we ‘walk with God’, *how* and *when* we worship Him. He reveals Himself as ‘jealous’ and has consistently throughout the Scriptures made clear His pain when His people stray from His clearly-defined path—a path designed for our welfare, for our spiritual safety. God defines deviation from this path as *idolatry*.

To Israel God warned: ‘...*You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, for Jehovah your God is a jealous God in your midst, lest the anger of Jehovah your God burn against you, and He destroy you from off the face of the earth*’ (Deuteronomy 6:14-15).

God’s Signature

Such idolatry distorts our vision of Him, and indeed led to the exile and dispersion around the globe of His people, Israel, and to a seventy-year enslavement of the tribe of Judah (the Jews).

They had all but abandoned their observance of the Sabbath, the weekly day God set aside for us—for *all* mankind—to observe for our benefit. Indeed the observance of this seventh day of the week (Saturday) is *God’s signature*.

Having been set aside for all mankind *at creation* (Genesis 2:1-3) the Sabbath identifies Him as the one and only God and Creator of all things (Exodus 20:8-11). All other forms of worship are idolatrous.

When Israel became a nation God covenanted with them to observe it: ‘...*It is a sign forever between Me and the sons of Israel; for in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed*’ (Exodus 31:17).

Before Moses

The Sabbath, on the seventh day, was embedded in mankind’s culture from our beginning, having been appointed by God at creation. Thus we find the patriarch Abraham (c.1700BC) ‘...*obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*’ (Genesis 26:5). The godly line through Seth, Shem *etc* retained God’s original guidance.

At that time each people group (eg nation, tribe) lived with its own legal system which was derived from those same divine instructions handed down the generations, but largely ‘pick and mix’, and often rebelliously adopting a different week length.

The Israelites had been for centuries immersed in, and had absorbed, the pagan practices of their captors, Egypt. The true Sabbath had been all but forgotten. With the Exodus from Egypt God established them (Abraham’s descendants through Isaac) as a model nation, with the perfect set of laws. Said the LORD (c.1500BC): ‘...*No other nation,*

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no matter how great, has laws so just as those that I have taught you today’ (Deuteronomy 4:8). The weekly Sabbath was central to their national Constitution and critical to maintaining the true faith.

To reinforce its importance penalties for failure to observe the Sabbath were imposed on the nation. To deliberately flout the Sabbath law, said the LORD, was a capital offence (Numbers 15:32). Faithful observance returned blessing.

Christian Observance

God still has the same signature! The early church continued Sabbath observance on the seventh-day, as is recorded in the New Testament. Some elements in the church (Pharisees—Acts 15) sought to continue the rigid enforcement of the unwritten restrictions the Jewish religious leaders had imposed on the Sabbath laws which Jesus had vehemently taught against.

Christians continued to observe ‘God’s creation signature’ but *how* (not *when*!) it was observed becomes a matter of personal discernment stemming from individual faith as enlightened by the Scriptures. Not a legality but observed joyfully and willingly by faith through grace.

Fraudulent Signature

In succeeding centuries the church became overwhelmed by the pagan environment in which they lived and the seventh-day Sabbath was, led by the church in Rome, replaced by the then prevalent observance of Sunday—the signature of sun worship.

Isolated scattered groups of Christians continued over the centuries to observe *cont’d p.6*

GOD'S SEAL

Emerging from the mists of time is the custom for a dignitary—Monarch, President *etc*—to authenticate a decree or official document with a ‘seal’. The insignia is embossed on a hard substance (*eg* clay, wood) and the imprint is made by pressing into soft wax, thus sealing the document. The seal usually includes three elements: *name or title, jurisdiction and emblem*.

Embodied in its use is the individual’s implied authority to issue the decree. When a new governing body assumes power the seal is used to authorize all new laws or Acts—because it now has that authority (elected or stolen!).

Seal of God

The LORD, too, has His ‘seal’. It is the *mark of His authority*, and is clearly defined for us in the Scriptures. The LORD spelled out His laws to Israel for that new nation’s Constitution. It was a summary of those moral principles that have existed since man’s beginning—laws observed by the faithful (*eg* Genesis 26:5): the ‘Ten Commandments’. Their observance is His mark, His seal.

The elements of God’s seal are written into the *fourth* commandment: ‘...Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy; For in six days the LORD [name] made [title: Creator] heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is [jurisdiction], and rested the seventh day’ (Exodus 20:8-11).

He repeats the instruction: ‘...Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath through-

out their generations, for a perpetual covenant. **It is a sign** (Heb. *oth*) between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed’ (ch 31:16-17).

The prophet Ezekiel adds: ‘...I gave them my sabbaths, **to be a sign** (a banner, evidence) between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them’ (ch 20:12). God’s seal—the seventh-day Sabbath—identifies *Him* (JHVH) as God. It tells us which God we are to worship—*ie*, the One who is identified by *the seventh-day Sabbath*. All other worship is idolatrous.

Perfect Precepts

Acceptance of these ‘laws’ (Heb. *torah*: precepts) was Israel’s part in the covenant between them and God (Exodus 24:7). As long as they adhered to them the LORD would bless and protect them: ‘...My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips’ (Psalm 89:34).

These precepts were written into mankind’s core being at our creation and carried an automatic ‘curse’ [consequence] when disregarded (*eg* Deuteronomy 27:26). This lesson was driven in to Israel by means of penalties administered through its legal system.

Changed Laws

The *torah* reflects the perfect will and mind of God for us. It is unchanging as He is unchanging: ‘...I am the LORD. I change not’ (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8). Indeed throughout the coming millennial reign of Jesus this same *torah* will govern all mankind (Micah 4:2). But dark clouds have since envel-

oped the Christian world obscuring the light shed by the Messiah two thousand years ago. As predicted through the prophet Daniel, out of the failing Roman empire a ruler would emerge who will: ‘...speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times [seasons] and laws [decrees]’ (ch 7:25).

A succession of leaders (‘...diverse from the first’—religious, not secular) has, extending over the centuries, introduced such changes. The papacy has absorbed traditional pagan beliefs that fly in the face of the divine *torah*. The ‘...feasts of the LORD’ (Leviticus 23:2) were replaced by pagan festivals (Easter, Christmas, *etc*) and the weekly Sabbath law changed to Sunday—all on the usurped authority of the papacy. As history testifies, the papacy has persecuted and martyred the faithful ‘saints of the Most High’.

As Daniel indicates, the papacy’s time is limited (vv.25-26). Until then it is increasingly assuming world-wide authority both secular and religious, universally imposing its own ‘mark’ of authority, its very own seal.

The coming of Christ will end this vile system: ‘...But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him’.

We must be diligent if we are to avoid deception. **Ω**

MiniStudy

The Reality of Hope

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Peter 1:3)

In modern speech the term *hope* usually has a negative edge. *'I hope so'* you exclaim, thereby signifying some doubt about the outcome. Not so in the Christian Scriptures. *Hope* in the Scriptures is one of the most positive of virtues.

- It's often said that we are '*a world without hope*', that mankind is doomed to destruction—by his own hand or by the anger of nature. Individuals, too, often fail to cope with what life throws at them: '*it's hopeless*' they say when the black cloud of depression settles around them
- Hope (Gk *elpis*) in the Bible, however, has a positive ring - assurance, confidence. It is one of the three great and enduring and uplifting virtues named by the apostle Paul: '*...and now abides faith, hope, charity, these three*' (I Corinthians 13:13). And like the other two, hope can be nourished, strengthened. It's not a vague aspiration but a reality, a matter of substance. It's a '*living hope*'—*alive, vibrant, active* (I Peter 1:3)
- It is closely linked with the symbolism of the *Feast of Weeks* - the Biblical seven week period of the spring harvest, which culminates in the *Day of Pentecost*. These seven weeks were initiated by the harvesting—by the priests—of a sheaf of barley on the Sabbath evening associated with the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* in Israel. This was prepared and 'waved' before the LORD in the Temple the following morning (Sunday). It signified the nation's gratitude for the fruits of the earth, their hope of an abundant harvest. None of the new grain harvest was to be eaten before this annual ceremony
- There is, however, a deeper meaning. For that wavesheaf offering was but a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on that Sabbath evening after three days and three nights in the grave, and His presentation to the Father on Sunday morning - the first of the firstfruits spiritual harvest: '*...now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep*' (I Corinthians 15:20). Jesus is the first one ever to have been raised from the dead in a spirit body [Request the articles: ***The Empty Tomb*** and ***Three Days and Three Nights—Why?***]
- Man is a material being energized by the human spirit. When we die we are 'dead as a door-nail'. No life after death—*except by means of a resurrection*. This is the great and uniquely Christian hope of those who '*...follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb*' (Revelation 14:4). They are themselves '*...a kind of firstfruits*' (James 1:18). But *everyone who has lived* will in God's time come out of their grave. Jesus tells us that '*...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 [judgment]*' (John 5:28-29)
- For Christians especially, hope lies in resurrection. It is a certainty. No matter how long dead, no matter how they died—all in whom is the holy Spirit will, at Christ's coming, burst from the chains of death to unending life in a perfect spirit body. Paul informs: '*... [I] have hope toward God... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*' (Acts 24:15). Indeed if this were not so Christianity itself is no more than a lie (I Corinthians 15:12-22)
- In Christ we become '*sons, heirs of God*' (Galatians 4:7). As we are '*... children, then [we are] heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*' (Romans 8:17). That's the '*glory of God*' for which we live in certain hope (Romans 5:2). We may suffer for the faith—but: '*...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*' (v.18). The people of God throughout the ages have often suffered extreme privation, but they remained faithful and are assured '*...a better resurrection*' (Hebrews 11:35)
- Hope, however, is not limited to Christians for, as Jesus said, *all* will be called from the grave. That means hope for every man, woman and child who has lived, however dire their circumstances. After the thousand year reign of Jesus and the resurrected saints the 'rest of the dead' will be raised from the grave for a term of being 'weighed in the balance', and being faced—with utmost clarity—with the opportunity to embrace the Gospel of Christ. They, too, may then experience the '*hope of the glory of God*'—to be part of the divine Family. Those who then reject God's gracious offer of eternal life will die, all hope lost. This is 'the second death' (Revelation 20:14)

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