

NEW **Horizons**

Vol 22 No 4

July/August 2018

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.

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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 STUDY COURSE**.

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new Horizons

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In our world we ought by now to have become used to the idea that we could, indeed, have been deceived. What about those glowing promises from our politicians. Or, in the supermarket, deceptively displayed packages and products that aren't all they claim. Or 'friends' whom we later discover were merely *using* us. Then there's the friendly persuasion from the insurance giant—which refuses to honour promises of a pay-out or the energy firm that hides cheaper tariffs from loyal consumers.

Yes, deception is very possible in many sectors of our daily life. *Think about it*—you will be able to identify other deceivers!

There is, however, one source that we probably won't consider worth checking. *Religion.*

No way, we reason, would my friendly parish priest or pastor feed me false information. Isn't what he tells me a matter that transcends this life and on into my eternal destiny?

There are, of course, countless unscrupulous fiery televangelists who are just after our tithe (on the excuse of future financial blessing). Most of us (but not all) are up to their tricks and avoid them. Others will divert a freely-given offering into a personal new car or extending a home. (Why do we go on giving to them? Fear?)

But what if your religious leader is himself deceived and believes

his message is spot on and Biblically sound?

The apostle Paul addresses this in writing to his protégé the young and inexperienced Timothy: '*...the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing [deceiving] spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron*' (I Timothy 4:1-2).

Could my Bible-bashing pastor really qualify as a 'hypocrite'? What if he has frequently in his studies had 'a brush with the truth'—a truth contrary to what he had been taught or was teaching—and just ignored it? Isn't it possible, then, that before long he

Deceived? Not me!

is *blind* to that truth, his '*...conscience seared*'?

The perversion of that truth will then be heard from the pulpit, preached with, what is *to him*, a clear conscience.

Such authority figures command our respect. We believe he (or she) knows whereof they speak. We are, unknowingly, *deceived*.

Truth Frees

Truth matters. Certainly there is much in the Scriptures that doesn't deserve argument. *Much does.* So we must be involved with the Scriptures: '*...If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you*

free' (John 8:32).

The onus is on each of us to thoroughly assess what we hear from the pulpit (or the Press!).

For example, the apostle Paul warned his readers in Galatia that there was a 'false gospel' doing the rounds: '*... I am surprised at you! In no time at all you are deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ, and are accepting another gospel. Actually, there is no "other gospel," but I say this because there are some people who are upsetting you and trying to change the gospel of Christ*' (Galatians 1:6,7). It is, in the words of Jesus by the apostle John '*...the everlasting gospel*' (Revelation 14:6).

What message are *you* hearing in church? Is it authentic, the real thing, the one taught by Jesus?

We tend to shut our ears to new ideas—especially changes to our long-held beliefs, perhaps held from childhood from 'our mother's knee'. Once an Anglican, a Methodist, a Baptist *etc* we usually remain so, unquestioningly.

Error Blinds

Paul again: '*...if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world has 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 4:3, 4). That 'god' is '*...the prince of the power of the air, the cont'd p.8*

The ‘Vengeful Psalms’

The so-called ‘imprecatory psalms’ are deemed to show the contrast between the God of the Old Testament and the supposedly new vision brought by Jesus

King David, ‘...a man after God’s own heart’, and other Bible writers appear to harbour a simmering resentment against their opponents. Psalm after psalm calls out for the severest of retributions against them: ‘... My enemies are fierce as lions, LORD God! Shatter their teeth. Snatch out their fangs. Make them disappear like leaking water, and make their arrows miss. Let them dry up like snails or be like a child that dies before seeing the sun. Wipe them out quicker than a pot can be heated by setting thorns on fire’ (Psalm 58:7-9). Not very nice! Examples can be multiplied.

We can, of course, understand their frustration—it’s unlikely that similar thoughts have not crossed our minds at some point! But such a stalwart as King David—venerated by his nation and by most Christians? And did he not have God’s Spirit with him: ‘...Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward’ Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward’ (I Samuel 16:13).

Perhaps we are missing something—after all, this is ‘the Word of God’. Could it be that hidden here is a divine characteristic we don’t yet understand?

The New

Before you argue that ‘Jesus isn’t like that’ or, ‘Jesus loves all’, consider this: ‘... The Son of Man [that’s Jesus] will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all the offenses, and those who practice lawlessness. And they will throw them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of the teeth’ (Matthew 13:41-42). Or, addressing the Pharisees, ‘...Serpents! Offspring of vipers! How shall you escape the judgment of Hell [Gk ge’henna]?’ (ch 23: 33).

And the apostle Paul: ‘...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 1:6-10)

Even the oft-repeated ‘Lord’s

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prayer’: ‘...your Kingdom come’, implies the destruction of all other kingdoms!

Solidarity

The Psalmist gives us a clue to this apparently sadistic attitude ‘...I am a companion of all them that fear you, and of them that keep your precepts’ (Psalm 119:63). And echoing the commandment, he says: ‘...Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate you? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting’ (Psalm 139:21-24).

The Psalmists so rejoiced in the Law of God and in His testimonies, meditating day and night on their deep personal significance, that they perfectly reflected the mind of God in their opposition to all that was contrary to that perfect Law of life: ‘...David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain’ (II Samuel 23:1ff).

As with the Psalmists, every Christian must come to totally abhor every action, every thought that is contrary to the mind of God. We must diligently study the Scriptures to learn what is the divine will—and to avoid deception! **Ω**

Is Heaven *Your* Destiny?

What happens when Christians die? Is 'Heaven' their reward?

For Christians, it's a comforting thought to contemplate a deceased much-loved family member as safely with Jesus in Heaven. Life's struggles are ended and gone is the pain, the daily stresses. Peace at last, and endless opportunity to praise the Saviour. Your pastor or priest assures you the deceased now has his reward for being a fine person, a good Christian.

I used to believe that. Then some questions began to bother me. Can Dad up there in Heaven be truly at peace and happy when he sees the path his wayward son has pursued? Isn't his tranquillity disturbed by Mum's tearful sorrow over his death?

Then I wonder about that old rogue, Uncle Tom—is he also 'up there'? (The Pastor did preach him into heaven.)

What about all our world's distress—the disease, the famine, the violence between individuals and between nations? Is he isolated from all of that, blind? Is that the reward for the Christian? Isn't much of Christian belief based on the idea that our loved ones 'in heaven' are looking out for us? (Some believers pray to them). *It doesn't make sense.*

Texts of Hope

The truth about life after death—as presented in the Scriptures—is liberating. Open the Christian Bible and a different scenario presents. Consider the following texts:

- *'We know that we will die, but the dead don't know a thing. Nothing good will happen to them--they are gone and forgotten'* (Ecclesiastes 9:5 CEV)
- *'[Man's] breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish'* (Psalm 146:4)
- *'The dead are silent and cannot*

praise the LORD' (Psalm 115:17)

- *'If I die, I cannot praise you or even remember you'* (Psalm 6:5)
- *'Work hard at whatever you do. You will soon go to the world of the dead, where no one works or thinks or reasons or knows anything'* (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Asleep - for a while

So, according to Scripture, when we die we are 'dead as a door-nail'. Our thoughts perish and we can't work or think or know anything. And—surprisingly for someone supposedly resident in Heaven—we can't praise God or even remember Him.

Sounds more like the apostle Paul's description of death—a sleep, eg I Thessalonians 4:13,15: *'...For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [ie, precede] them which are asleep'*. The term *sleep* is applied to *death* throughout the Scriptures and is an apt description of the state of our dead.

The implication, of course, is that as in sleep we will wake up! The patriarch Job had something to say on this: *'... we [humans] fall into the sleep of death, never to rise again, until the sky disappears'* That's how it looked on first thoughts. But he adds: *'...If a man die, will he live again? all the days of my appointed time [ie, in the grave] will I wait, till my change come. You will call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands'* (ch 14:14-15).

Paul echoes the same thought: *'...I will explain a mystery to you. Not every one of us will die, but we will all be changed. It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. We will all be changed, so that we will never die again'* (I Corinthians 15:51-52).

Nor can we neglect what Jesus said: *'...Marvel not at this: for the hour is*

coming, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they whose actions have been evil to the resurrection of judgement' (John 5:28-29). So—a future resurrection from their graves. And for everyone. Unnecessary, mind you, if you are already in Heaven!

In sum: true believers living and dead will receive their reward at the same time—at the 'last trumpet sound'. Or as wrote Paul: *'...When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory'* (Colossians 3:4). He appears on Earth at that trumpet blast! Given this clear teaching of Scripture it is strange that virtually all of Christendom embraces the false notion surrounding death, that upon our demise we go straight to either Heaven or to Hell (or, for some, into Purgatory).

The Source

Strange—but perhaps not surprising. For the whole world, according to Jesus, is deceived (Revelation 12:9). Paul adds: *'... the god of this world has 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). And most of Christendom has embraced Satan's foundational teaching!

Way back in Eden, Satan—the 'father of lies' (John 8:44)—deceived Mother Eve, telling her *'...you shall not surely die'* (Genesis 3: 4), God had informed the pair otherwise (ch 2:17). And like Eve most people today—of any faith—believe the lie. 'Die—but live forever, either in heaven or in hell'.

Jesus, you will recall (John 3:16), contrasted those who perish (the unbeliever) with those whose life will continue endlessly (the believer) Death or life. Extinction or life unending. Opposites.

But isn't that man 'King David *'... a man after mine own heart'* (Acts 13:22), in Heaven? Well, hear how the apostle Peter *cont'd p.8*

A Survival Kit for Troubled Times

Steve Kieler

I'm sure you all know what a prepper is — a survivalist. It is one who prepares for an emergency. So survival, according to those who research and practice those skills, depends quite a bit on preparation. Do you know how to prepare? What would you require? What if you were lost in the wilderness; Would you have the tools to survive?

It would require four basics for sure: shelter, clothing, food, and water although the climate or environment' (the situation) may require some specific tools or skills.

Perhaps there is a parallel to physical preparedness, to economic, or even moral or spiritual crisis. I believe it is apparent that we could be facing any or all of these crisis. In particular, the moral fabric of the nation is unravelling; we are in a wilderness; a spiritual wilderness, this 'wilderness of sin'.

Your Survival Kit

What will you need "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity (emptiness) of their mind," (Ephesians 4:17-18) They (the worldly minded) are not prepared, not aware of their surroundings, their situation or what to do about it; nor do they seem to care. Their interests are on 'bread and circuses.'

Vs18: "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"

Those who live by the world's (or

their own) stand-

ards are totally oblivious of what is really happening, or why. For the most part, they lack the knowledge of civil or religious law or its purpose. Someone once said that it is impossible to understand much without the insights written in the Bible. That seems to ring truer every day.

We need to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of right and wrong. It requires that we replace our ignorance with facts and truth, the right way to behave. And, of course, we should, as much as possible, separate ourselves from the wayward ways of the heathen.

The apostle Paul explains it this way: "That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:22-26).

If we haven't already, it's time for a change of focus, attitude and thought for a calm, cool, and collected head in this brave new world of corruption and lies ('fake news). A new way and content of thinking is in order.

First lets inventory our 'data bank'. We need to have knowledge but first clean up the mind from past errors, filthy communication, impure thoughts and replace with facts, truth, and righteousness. Just a reminder:

facts are not necessarily what you believe!

A New Depth of Knowledge

There are many sorts of knowledge; scientific, religious, historic, medical, etc. and those can be acquired many ways. Then there is a level of knowledge that seems to dwarf all knowledge in its reception and grandiosity; it is found in 1 Corinthians 2:9-14:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Of course we must do our part in seeking and properly using such knowledge, continuing to add to that tree of God's wisdom by constant prayer and study.

The (pagan) nations pray to a wooden, powerless God. "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of cont'd p.8

A God of Detail

Many a Bible reader, having begun with *Genesis 1:1*, has been turned aside from further study once they open the book of *Leviticus*. What they are missing!

Such superficial readers are put off by the seemingly tedious and endless detail. Yet it is in the detail that we unmask the very purpose of the Creator for mankind.

This detail permeates the whole of Scripture. Take, for example, the construction of the ark by Noah. The type of wood is specified. The overall dimensions [still fundamental to modern boat-building] are spelled out, as is the location of the doors and windows with their dimensions. And the number of floors. How to waterproof the construction, too.

Then there's the *Tabernacle* which would be the centre of God's worship on earth, where God would dwell: '...According to all which I am going to reveal to you, the plan of the tabernacle, and the plan of all its vessels, even so you shall do' (Exodus 25:9). Several times God tells them to '...see that they are made by their patterns which you were caused to see in the mountain' (v.40).

Several chapters in *Exodus* are devoted to detailed descriptions of the Tabernacle and its contents—materials, dimensions, methods, the official garments for ministering priests. And in *Leviticus* follows the intricacies of the various sacrifices—what should be allowed, how to sacrifice and their timing on the calendar date throughout the year *etc.* Every dimension, every material, every procedure is carefully explained.

All was carried out - by Noah, by Moses—with due diligence.

Some five hundred years later towards the end of his life King David desired (but was forbidden by God) to build a more permanent structure,

a Temple, for His worship. He delegated the task to his son Solomon whom God had set aside as his successor.

The same principles apply, for David was guided by God's Spirit in its construction: '...David gave his son Solomon the pattern of the porch, and of its houses, and of its treasuries, and of its upper rooms, and of its innermost rooms, and of the house of the mercy-seat; and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, for the courts of the house of Jehovah, and for all the rooms all around, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the things dedicated; (1Chronicles 28:11-12). And, v.19: '...All was in writing from the hand of Jehovah. He caused me to understand all the work of the pattern'.

Annual Festivals

Looking further afield we see the imprint of God's hand in His round of annual festivals. Again, all are of huge significance and subject to detailed planning.

The heavenly bodies themselves, fresh from the hand of the Creator, set the pattern: '...God said, Let luminaries be in the expanse of the heavens, to divide between the day and the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons (Heb. *mo'ed*), and for days and years' (Genesis 1:14-18). The same word *mo'ed* is used of the festivals: '...These are the feasts (Heb. *mo'ed*) of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons (*mo'ed*) (Leviticus 23:4). The Lord's festivals are rooted in the very creation

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unsigned articles are by the Editor

itself, in the precise detailed location of the heavenly bodies.

Sacrifices

There are seven of these festivals, clustered around the three harvest seasons of *spring, summer and autumn*, each with its associated sacrifices.

These 'boring' sacrifices are detailed in Leviticus 23 as they applied to Israel. It's that intricate system that induces sleep in the casual reader—but so detailed it has drawn numerous Bible students to write myriad books expounding their vital significance.

And how vital they are to the *Christian's* life! For each and every one is part of an interlocking panorama of the person and mission of Jesus Christ, the world's one and only Saviour, and revealing him in his many-faceted characteristics.

Prophecy

The Bible prophecies at first glance are a tangled web of inter-related strands—again, it's the detail that unravels it.

The detail has thwarted the efforts of countless Bible students down the centuries—and to this day—to predict 'the end'.

Yet some of that detail *is* clear. Where Jesus would be born: '...Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel (Micah 5:2). The time of his appearance among us, for example: '...when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman. (Galatians 4:4) His three and a half year ministry and mid-week death at Passover: '... he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease' (Daniel 9:27). His suffering (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 *etc.*)

The Scriptures are a golden treasure chest stocked with precious jewels of truth, and inviting us to examine it with care—and to *do it* **Ω**

PARALLEL TIMES

History, it is claimed, repeats itself. But not always in the same way

Unravelling the prophetic themes of the Christian Bible can be a challenge. So many strands. So many principles of interpretation. So many historical scenarios. And so much baggage carried by the Bible student. That theme mentioned above—*'history repeats itself'*—is one factor which will apply in the end time.

It is helpful to our understanding on that basis to link the prophecies of the prophet Daniel (Old Testament) with those of the apostle John in Revelation (New Testament). Together they identify the main players in a modern context.

Kingdoms Overthrown

In Daniel chapter seven, Daniel had a vision from God that encompassed all of history from then till now. In vision, God revealed that there would be four kingdoms—from Babylon (6th c. BC) until *'...one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days'* (v.13) having deposed all previous kingdoms (v.12).

Successive empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome—dominated and then faded, only the last surviving, currently represented by the *Treaty of Rome* nations gathered in the European Union. The return of Jesus Christ will end their rule for ever: *'...there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his king-*

dom that which shall not be destroyed' (v.14). Daniel picks up the story, predicting the path of the Roman Empire.

A Weird Animal

The creature he saw was *'...diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows'* (v.19-20). A crystal clear snap of Rome through the last fifteen hundred years!

The prophet gets detailed. Those ten 'horns', from whose midst the 'little horn' emerges are ten kings (kingdoms) to arise out of Rome—fulfilled historically. He then describes a *different sort of 'king'* arising within the Roman Empire and coming to dominate it. Indeed the latter overthrew three of the ten kingdoms [v. 24, Heruli (493AD), Vandals (534), Ostrogoths (553)]: *'...I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things'* (v.8).

The Wilderness Church

But just how 'different'? He is describes as initially low-key but gaining power and arising within the Roman Empire. More—he meddles with God: *'...he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws'. That is,* he occupies the discipline of

religion within the confines of the Roman Empire—at that time, Catholicism, all else being suppressed.

So, a religious power with authority to depose kings, to defy God with strange doctrines, to change God's 'times and seasons', violently persecuting the people of God and driving them into 'the wilderness' for a thousand years.

Times

Daniel 7:25, 12:7
Revelation 11:2,3, 12:6,14, 13:5
all seven point to 1260 days/years

The 'saints' were the *'church in the wilderness'* (Acts 7: 38), and God revealed to Daniel for how long this persecution of His people would continue: *'...and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time'* [see side panel]. On the Bible basis of a day for a year this is 1250 years.

The death certificate of the Roman Empire is usually signed off as around 539AD. For the next twelve hundred and fifty years the Papacy—which amply fulfils the criteria for the 'Little Horn'—violently dominated the Western world's political and religious systems. The incumbent was then Pope Virgilius. It continued until the ousting of the Papacy at the extreme end of the eighteenth century.

In 1798 Napoleon's General Bernier entered Rome and declared a Roman Republic, requiring Pope Paul VI to forego all temporal authority. He refused and was arrested, dying soon after in exile.

'...In 1929, Prime Minister Benito Mussolini and Cardinal Pietro Gasparri signed an accord whereby the Pope had to pledge his own political party's support to Mussolini in exchange for the return of his papal seat and power.'

To all intents and purposes the Papacy was 'dead', having lost all political authority: The persecution and murder of 'heretics' drew to a close.

Since the Papacy's revival the power of the 'Holy See' has burgeoned. Most national leaders have publicly acknowledged the Pope as a world leader and hang on his every word. He, head of the world's smallest political State, has embassies in every nation and has addressed the United Nations assembly. His influence is global and subtle.

Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled—but there are some anomalies.

End Time

There comes a time when the Father says 'Enough!' and sends Jesus to our planet to take control (Acts 1:7)—perhaps imaged by Daniel. The prophet continues: '*...I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire*' (v.9). The apostle John describes the coming of Jesus in almost identical terms (Revelation 1:13-15).

But Daniel indicates that the persecution of the faithful is continuing until Jesus returns: '*...the same horn [the Little Horn, the Papacy] made war with the saints, and prevailed against them until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom* (ch 7:22).

Clearly, as of writing, the presence on earth of the 'Ancient of Days' is yet future. We can therefore conclude that the events described by John in Revelation are a *recurrence* of what happened in the Middle Ages, under the auspices of the revived Papacy.

This event, however will be short-lived, though at the same time it is the worst period of persecution ever: '*...he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall*

'...there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. Revelation 13:5-8

wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time (v.25). That is, for 1260 *literal* days—not years, as in the mediaeval era by the Inquisition.

Mankind, when the end comes, will have sunk into the abyss of violence, cruelty and self destruction piling past atrocities into insignificance: '*...This will be the worst time of suffering since the beginning of the world, and nothing this terrible will ever happen again. If God doesn't make the time shorter, no one will be left alive. But because of God's chosen ones, he will make the time shorter*' (Matthew 24:22-23). Just a relative few are destined to survive physically into God's new world (Isaiah 24:6).

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Global Effect

Notice, too—another anomaly—that this is a *global* calamity: '*...all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life*' (Revelation 13:8). The persecution by the authorities, unlike as under the auspices of the Papal Inquisition, will affect all who refuse to submit to him..

The apostle Paul addresses this in writing to the brethren in Thessalonica: '*...the man of sin, the son of perdition, who sets himself against, and exalts himself above, every so-called 'god' or object of worship, and goes the length of taking his seat in the very temple of God, giving it out that he himself is God* (II Thessalonians 2:4)

The apostle had warned that a great apostasy from the truth was even then under way, over ensuing centuries becoming the dominant 'Christian' church; a church dominated by pre-Christian pagan philosophy and vile practices. Now he tells them—reflecting Daniel's prophecy—that a leader would arise claiming divine attributes. He would be enthroned in 'the temple of God'—historically the church, in future perhaps a re-built Temple in Jerusalem.

It is well-known that the Papacy has usurped not only the titles owned solely by Jesus but also the authority to change God's laws and to substitute heathen practices for God's revealed way.

Duality

As noted, history, it is claimed, repeats itself. But not always in the same way. Human behaviour doesn't change much and the same patterns repeat—with variations—through the centuries. Characters change, locations change, languages change, but much stays the same.

Ancient Babylon, as Daniel and Revelation tell us, has imprinted its stamp on the twenty-first century. Bible believers (indeed everyone!) must be vigilant. The church of God will again taste that wilderness experience. Ω

Heaven ...cont'd from p.4

addressed his Jewish audience six weeks *after* the resurrection of Jesus: ‘...[David] is not ascended into the heavens’ (Acts 2:34). Note also the comment of Jesus to Nicodemus: ‘... No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there’ (John 3:13). Not Enoch, not Elijah, not even Noah or Abraham—or King David: ‘... These all died in faith, not having received the promises’ (Hebrews 11:13).

Not the End

No—when we die we are well and truly ‘dead as a doornail’. We do indeed ‘rest in peace’. Those we leave behind need have no fears as to the fate of a loved one, secure in the knowledge that in God’s time the righteous will be raised from the grave to everlasting life (Colossians 3: 4).

In His carefully-designed plan the people of God will be raised to reign with His Son *on Earth* (Revelation 5:10) for a thousand years, free from the malign influence of that father of lies, Satan (Revelation 20:3).

It is that time when the Messiah, the risen Jesus, will rule the nations in a godly manner. And after the thousand years? Eternity in the service of our Father God.

The Rest of the Dead

That’s for Christians—those in whom, in this life, is the Spirit of God. But what of wayward Uncle Tom? Or of the billions who never even heard the Gospel? Or babes in arms? Or all those on whom the message fell on spiritually deaf ears? Well—that’s also in God’s Master Plan.

The Creator is well aware of human weakness. He understands that having from the beginning rejected His way of life that we have submitted rather to the rule of ‘the god of this world’. They are not ‘the forgotten dead’ but will be raised to physical life with opportunity to become a part of the Family of God. The Spirit of God will be available, then, to all who are willing to change. **Ω**

Survival ...from p.4

the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.” But our God *can* save. He gives us His wisdom and knowledge to be a prepper, to prepare to save ourselves (Isaiah 45:20). [The whole chapter of Isaiah 45 is worth a good read.]

The Manual: Conclusion

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” (Acts 2:40)

That word, untoward, describes this world and its ways perfectly; it means a twisted and warped people. The advice given by the apostle Paul to the Colossian church is sound and sums up the advice to all preparers everywhere:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him ’... (Colossians 3:12-17)

God’s word, the Bible, is a survival manual; hopefully you have read it and will be prepared before you find yourself stuck in a muddy road with a tow truck 100 yards away - - - and Satan is driving it. **Ω**

Deceived?...from p.1

spirit now working in the children of disobedience’ (Ephesians 2:2).

The *real* Gospel has over the centuries become buried under an avalanche of false teachings. Even in the days of the apostles teachers had introduced a deluge of heathen philosophies and practices which overwhelmed the church of God and supplanted the pure teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

Jude (a brother of Jesus) had this to say: ‘...when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’ (v.3). The teaching of the apostles is the gold standard – doctrinal innovation is anathema. Peter adds: ‘...For we have not followed cunningly devised fables’ (II Peter 1:16).

Lost Truth

The early church all but abandoned these principles spiraling downwards into the morass that was the mediaeval church. It held its malevolent violent murderous sway for a thousand years, persecuting the tiny remnant of those who clung to those apostolic teachings.

Our readers, however, must not be complacent, for many of the same errors remain uncorrected—despite the Reformation. Indeed since the turn of this century major denominations have placed themselves under to authority of the Pope and that same perverse doctrinal system, a system designed to, in the years ahead, enslave all faiths, and to once and for all destroy the one and only church of God—the body of true believers. **Ω**

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MiniStudy**WHY DOES GOD KILL?**

'Don't you understand? I am the only God; there are no others. I am the one who takes life and gives it again' (Deuteronomy 32:39 CEV)

'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16)

All of us live with death - it is inevitable. But isn't it a puzzle that a loving God claims to *kill* His creation? And has done so time and again? How can we reconcile that fact with Jesus' claim that he came to *save* the world?

- The Old Testament record makes clear that JHVH did indeed kill - sometimes on a massive scale. All mankind but one family of eight, for example, was destroyed in the Flood (Genesis 6). *Why?* In short, God has a set purpose for the pinnacle of His creation, mankind, and is not disposed to jeopardise that plan. He will remove all obstacles - human or spirit - that knowingly oppose it
- Having created man and instructed him in the way of life, the Creator had initiated His plan, having made it plain to all (Romans 1). We blew it. Rather than follow the *Manual* we devised our own operating system, and as with any misused device it didn't work. Over the centuries man deviated further and further from the Way - to such a degree that eventually *'...GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'* (Genesis 6:5). The result? All of mankind but for one righteous family was 'purged' in a worldwide flood - to save the plan
- Lessons were not learned, and before long the different families were scattered (*ch 11*) - again to save the plan. But corruption once more set in. The 'righteous' became ever sparser, and the LORD again had to work with one family - that of Abraham. In his days the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had become degenerate: *'...this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me.'* (Ezekiel 16:49-50). Clearly a corrupting influence: *'...therefore I took them away ...'*
- God had given ample time for the nations to embrace the one true faith. The Amorites - perhaps the leading Canaanite tribe in occupation of Palestine - sank deeper and deeper into perverse lawlessness, despite the righteous witness of Shem, of Abraham, of Melchizedek. They continued four generations before being expelled and all but eliminated by Israel (Genesis 15:16). There may well be parallels in our day
- Nothing will stand in the way of the fulfillment of God's loving purpose. Here's what the Psalmist tells us: *'...You [God] warn the nations and destroy evil people; you wipe out their names forever and ever'* (Psalm 9:5 CEV). And: *'...the LORD preserves all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy'* (145:20). Solomon adds: *'...I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me'* (Proverbs 8:17). God will when necessary remove individuals, communities, nations who stand in the way. He warns, He is very patient, He is merciful. God is love. But when we persistently 'throw a spanner in the works' - He acts
- Jesus is generally perceived as expressing love for all mankind (John 3:16 *etc*). He is not, however, the 'gentle Jesus' of childhood's bed-time stories. In the days of his flesh, he was fearless when opposed, courageous in face of death. And he 'told it like it is': *'.. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth'* (Matthew 13:42). The words of Jesus himself! And through the apostle John he adds: *'...hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'* (Revelation 6:16-17)
- God's purpose is that not one of us should ultimately perish, that we should change, and He patiently gives us time to so do (II Peter 3:9). Some flatly refuse, preferring their false faiths and corrupt life-style (Revelation 9:20-21, 16:9-11). They will experience the *'wrath of the Lamb'*. That's *Jesus*
- In both Old and new Testament the Godhead is presented as loving, gracious, merciful (II Chronicles 30:9 *for example*). When the Father and Jesus kill it is to protect and advance their master plan (Romans 11:36) **Ω**

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