

# NEW **Horizons**

*Vol 22 No 6*

*November/December 2018*

*addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow*

---



*inside...*

**What is God Really Like?**

*Life Before Birth*

**Cradle to Grave...and beyond**

*Are You 'Born Again'?*

**The People of God**

*The Way*

**From the beginning**

**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 STUDY COURSE**.

The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of Independent fellowships and scattered brethren.

We cordially invite all independent fellowships of whatever size - and individuals - to associate with us in this worldwide ministry. Our *Statement of Beliefs* and a *Publications Catalogue* is available from any of our addresses or from our web site **www.cgom.org**. We are pleased to offer you, without charge, any of our publications.

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

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

If you would like a copy of our *Statement of Beliefs* or a *Publications List* please request it from any of the addresses listed or go to our website: **www.cgom.org**

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

**e-mail:** [information@cgom.org](mailto:information@cgom.org)  
**phone:** 1-800-611-8080

**Editor:**  
James McBride  
**e-mail:** [coguk@aol.com](mailto:coguk@aol.com)

**England:**  
The Churches of God, UK  
Unit 14356, PO Box 4336  
Manchester M61 0BW  
England  
**e-mail:** [coguk@aol.com](mailto:coguk@aol.com)

**Canada:**  
Churches of God Outreach Ministries  
PO Box 476  
Don Mills Station  
Don Mills Ontario M3C 2T4  
Canada  
[www.canadianchurchofgod.com](http://www.canadianchurchofgod.com)

or from:

Tulsa, OK 2018

*New Horizons* is distributed without charge, and is financed by the gifts of associates and friends of the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries*. Readers are invited to obtain a free subscription by writing to any of the addresses listed. You are under no obligations, and no-one will call uninvited.

# new Horizons

Issue No 132

November/December 2018

## Does God have favourites? Is His justice even-handed? Does He treat everyone equally?

The short answer to our query is *Yes*, He *does* have a favourite, a favourite child—though that doesn't mean He doesn't cherish others. For God is at the same time even-handed.

As Bible readers will know, the nation of Israel is special to God. Of the daughter of Zion the LORD says '*...he that touches you touches the apple of his eye*' (Zechariah 2:8), though He is not particularly happy with them. Still, God has set a hedge of protection around Israel—a hedge that is being hewn away by their neglect of the divine Law.

God, however, has issued an 'injunction' against a certain class of humani-

ty. We know (John 3:16) that He does indeed 'love *the world* [Gk. *kosmos*] - enough to offer His loved Son to provide a way for fallen humanity to be restored. That's because by our actions as a race we have spurned the one path to living for ever to fulfill our potential.

### Path to Life

Since creation the option has been there for us to tread the path that leads to that perfect life. Apart from a few, we turned our backs and have ever since groped in the dark—with dire consequences.

There followed dysfunctional families, violence, murder, prom-

iscuity, theft, perjury and the drive to acquire the possessions of others. All because we reject the perfect way presented us at our beginning. We have carved gods from our imagination and fall down before them.

### Divine Intervention

Mankind sank into the moral mire century by century, and in due time God intervened by sending the perfect reflection of His own character—His Son, Jesus the Messiah: '*...when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law*' (Galatians 4:4). His teachings as they permeated our world ameliorated human depravity wherever they were proclaimed.

## What Is God Really Like?

remnant clinging to its foundation principles, while his moral teachings continue to bear positive influence. That moral message has in recent decades been undermined as Christian teaching faded, hence our widespread national decline.

### Life on Offer

It's clear from the Scriptures that salvation is on offer to all: '*...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone believing into Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*' (John 3:16). The apostle Peter notes that God is: '*...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repent-*

*ance*' (II Peter 3:9).

Not many, however, avail themselves of God's gracious gift. Those who encounter it (hearing, reading, conversation *etc*) and move to investigate are drawn by God to the world's one and only Saviour, Jesus: '*...No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*' (John 6:44). But not many follow through, for '*...many are invited [Gk *kleros*] but few are chosen*' (Matthew 22:14). It is the latter who are in a special relationship with God, covenanted to his service through the shed blood of the Saviour. Through that awesome sacrifice they are deemed 'righteous'.

Now the 'sons and daughters of the Almighty', they have full access to the benefits of the Covenant and are grafted into that favourite nation, Israel. Their responsibility is to comply with the terms of the Covenant with Israel. As did ancient Israel they affirm: '*...all that the Lord has said we will do*'.

God is especially protective of the relative few in covenant with Him. As His children He nourishes and cherishes them and those who remain faithful till death will inherit spirit life in His Family. But what of the rest—the vast majority of mankind? the majority of mankind has been mired in religious confusion, and '*...at that time you [non-Israelites] were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and*

without God in the world' (Ephesians 2:12).

After man's creation it wasn't long before he rejected the Creator and invented a variety of strange and weird 'gods': '... 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' (Romans 1:21-23). God then left us to our own devices, to find our own way, to reap the fruits of rebellion, to learn that it is His way or no way.

### Need for Change

In His succinct summary of the moral Law, the LORD states: '...I am Jehovah your God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third and on the fourth generation, to those that hate Me' (Exodus 20:5). That is, all disloyalty to Him and His way is classed as *hatred* toward God.

Fall into this 'hatred' category and you isolate yourself from the covenant blessings, entrance to which demands a 'heart change'—repentance, a godly sorrow acknowledging to yourself that you have been walking contrary to the divine will as expressed through His Law (Heb. *torah, instruction*).

In sum, there are two ways of life: 'love' God—or 'hate' God. Love Him through submission to His will as revealed in the Christian Scriptures, or *hate* Him by living your life in disharmony with that will.

### Divine Nature

In context of 'the day of judgment', the apostle Peter says: '*...The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*' (II Peter 3:9).

His desire is to bring all of us to repentance so we may be '*...no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*', and for those who remain faithful to become part of His eternal Family.

Peter, again: '*...According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*' (II Peter 1:3-4).

### Choice

God is indeed 'jealous', protective of His holy Name, of His love for mankind, of His revealed way—a way that guards us from eternal death—and buffers us from life's vagaries. We live *His* way (love) - or we live a way of our own choosing (summarized as *hate*). Two ways. *Our choice*.

The LORD is, however, loving, compassionate, merciful. But He's 'jealous'. He 'hates' all that interferes with this process of conversion, His plan to enlarge His Family. In pursuit of His purpose He has destroyed nations, promoted nations and individuals, restrained or tolerated philosophies and false religions.

He may not be how you perceive Him to be! **Ω**

## First Steps

Standing behind those false gods and in the shadows is 'the god of this world'. By his deceptive influence he has hidden from mankind the true good news of God's plan of salvation; '*...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 4:4).

Satan exerts every effort to hide God's truth from us, but to those who begin to seek that truth God opens a door, drawing them to Christ. In him alone is our past life in opposition to God—our *sin*—forgiven. It is a conscious decision to embrace his sacrifice and to dedicate heart and mind, body and soul, to his way of life

Baptism—the next important step—symbolizes our 'death' to our opposition to God and prepares us to receive His enabling Spirit without which there is no eternal life: '*...we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life*' (Romans 6:4).

Baptism symbolizes the forgiveness of our sin: '*...arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*' (Acts 22:16) — preparation for the receiving of God's holy Spirit through the laying on of hands: '*...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*' (ch 2:38).

Request or read:

### Should You Be Baptized?

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/ShouldYouBeBaptized.pdf>

## Life Before Birth

**It is thrilling when a new-born infant enters the world. Emerging from the darkness of the womb and in a sense already nine months old he or she invokes joy in parents and friends. Perhaps to become the genius who solves a previously unsolved challenge for humanity.**

But hold it! That life did not begin with the union of an egg and a sperm nine months before birth, nor with the parents nor with the grandparents. Go back fifty generations and that newborn's life was there. Indeed no matter for how many generations—right back to that seminal moment when ‘...the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul’ (Genesis 2:7). No amount of genetic manipulation can transform inanimate matter—wood or stone or water or slime—from dead to alive! The ever-living Creator, in whom alone is inherent life, can impart life to every creature that has breath.

Man—unlike the rest of creation—is a unique creation designed ‘...in the image of God’ (ch.1:26) with divine attributes and destined to become part of the divine Family, to be truly ‘...My sons and daughters says the Lord Almighty’ (II Corinthians 6:18). Human life is precious in God's eyes!

He has a care for each of us from the moment of conception. Writes the Psalmist: ‘...You have possessed my inward parts; You wove me in the womb of my mother...My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret; when I was woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my embryo; and in Your book all my members were written the days they were formed, and not one was yet among them’ (Psalm 139:13-16).

The patriarch Job states: ‘...You formed my body with bones and sinews and covered the bones with muscles and skin. You have given me life and constant love, and your care has kept me alive’ (Job 10:11-12).

## Innocent Blood

Wise King Solomon has this to say: ‘...These six things does the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood’ (Proverbs 6:16-17). Society condones—applauds, even—the horrendous practice of the taking of innocent lives before they emerge into the light of day to contribute their God-given talents to the service of mankind.

It is a man-made curse on our so-called civilized society. Note this warning: ‘... it shall come to pass, if you will not hearken unto the voice of the LORD your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you’ (Deuteronomy 28:15). He adds (v.18): ‘...Cursed shall be the fruit of your body’. We have neglected those guiding principles handed to us at creation and now suffer the consequences.

Note God's message through the prophet Malachi:

*The LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously: yet is she your companion, and the wife of your covenant. And did not he make one? [Genesis 2:24] Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth’ (Malachi 2:14)*

Or, as in a modern translation: **‘Didn't God make you one body and spirit with her [your wife]? What was his purpose in this? It was that you should have children who are truly God's people. So make sure that none of you breaks his promise to his wife’.**

## Respect Denied

Among the activities that God abhors, says Solomon, is ‘...the shedding of innocent blood’. That's why God explained to Noah: ‘...Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man’ (Genesis 9:6).

Respect for human life is a fundamental Biblical principle. It's a principle modern ‘civilized’ societies have thrown overboard, first neglecting the elderly, setting killers free, then encouraging the killing of children in the womb. Next follows experimentation on the aborted fetus and euthanasia. A downhill slope.

Inevitably, this moral slide spreads as disrespect for life and established institutions seeps into general society—petty vandalism, litter, discourtesy, manners, and escalating to violence against the person. Not least affected is that foundation of civil society, the heterosexual family with its current lack of discipline and instability.

Underpinning our (previously) stable society has been widespread acceptance of Christian values and respect for all life—long abandoned by increasing numbers, and actively promoted by the ruling ‘elite’ in government and our national institutions. They have undermined the foundations—the family and Christianity. The main purpose for abortion is *contraception*—almost entirely due to the widespread—and widely accepted—gross violation of God's family law and fundamental to Christianity.

As these pillars continue to crumble the death knell tolls for our society and the collapse of our once working society becomes inevitable. Governments must carefully consider our laws in the light of these age-old principles of respect. **Ω**

*Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in more modern language*

## Cradle to Grave—and Beyond

### Children—*blessing or curse?* What does the Bible have to say?

We have all been there, have all experienced it—*childhood!* Sometimes joyful and exciting, sometimes traumatic and perhaps increasingly so. But from cradle, indeed from conception if not before, to beyond the grave we are part of a grand design—and are being prepared for it.

Children are the future, and from the moment a precious vulnerable new life is conceived the parental generation is responsible for the child's welfare—not just physical and material but for the nourishment of the spirit.

#### Purpose

Man is not some random divine afterthought, flotsam afloat in a material universe. Nor is he a base creature created to live and then return to the earth. We are uniquely created: *'...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'* (Genesis 1:27).

Hear what God inspired the fifth century BC prophet Malachi to tell his hearers (and us): *'...It is because he knows you have broken your promise to the wife you married when you were young. And why did he do this? It was so you would have children, and then lead them to become God's people [KJV: That he might seek a godly seed]. Don't ever be unfaithful to your wife' "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel. "I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to his wife. Make sure that you do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife."* (Malachi 2:15–16).

It's in the family environment that the foundations for a child's future are laid. For God, the default position is—a godly family, children who would upon maturity become part of His Family. *'...Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth',* God

instructed our first parents (Genesis 1:28).

*Important*, then! Yet our Western world in general neglects this fundamental responsibility. Sex gangs infest many cities, largely unchecked. Young teens are snared into drug peddling, unchecked. Child care homes are too often unsupervised, their charges lured into prostitution, drugs and criminal activity, while knife crime and drug use pervade major cities.

#### The Way Forward

A key to a resolution is in our title—*'...from the cradle...'*—parental responsibility. As wrote Malachi it begins with a sound and lasting relationship between a man and a woman, dedicated to the nurturing of the next generation: *'...fathers, do not provoke your children, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord'* (Ephesians 6:4).

Since the role of 'Sunday Schools' and *Christian* religious instruction in the home, in schools and in churches has declined this vital knowledge has become sparse. The Scriptures contain a comprehensive curriculum on godly living. *And instruction begins from birth.*

From the moment a babe's eyes first open it should 'swim' in a loving disciplined and godly environment, nourished by the application of those same Scripture texts and by godly example.

Our nations have all but abolished the Bible, smothered Christian education in schools and universities, allowed the influx of foreign philosophies and forged an alliance with atheists and humanists—to the near-exclusion of Jesus Christ on whom our civilization is founded. **Ω**

*If the foundations are destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?*  
(Psalm 11:3)

## The Way

*The Christian life is described as 'the way of the Lord'. This series highlights some aspects of the journey*

At the heart of the Christian's life lies a key element—growth in the knowledge of Christ. Having committed to him and acknowledged his authority through our repentance and baptism, we embark on a lifetime of having our entire being shaped to his image. We are no longer our own but 'bought with a price: *'...you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's'* (I Corinthians 6:20).

Jesus put in place a system to promote this growth—the local church assembly. To the Hebrew Christians, accustomed to assembling in the synagogues, the apostle wrote: *'...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching'* (Hebrews 10:25).. As said Jesus: *'...where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them'* (Matthew 18:20). He personally oversees and where necessary corrects his church.

We are *all* advised to avidly study God's Word—but it is in the local assembly that we fellowship, where *'...iron sharpens iron'*, where we can encourage and support one another and where we receive instruction in the Christian way.

Under the guidance of mature Christian leadership, it is in the assembly that we are nourished spiritually and where our 'gifts of the Spirit' are honed to further the work of his church. Where possible let us not neglect it else we may wither on the vine. **Ω**

#### Festivals 2019

Lord's Supper	April 18 Thurs evg
Unleavened Bread	April 20-26
Pentecost	June 9
Trumpets	Septemb 30
Atonement	October 9
Tabernacles	Octob 14-26
Eighth Day	October 21

## Are You 'Born Again?'

**With over six billion homo sapiens populating our planet, the death—or life—of one individual doesn't seem of great significance. Millions die, millions are born, daily. So it's easy to think there's not much point to our existence.**

If, as is widely believed, we are simply the end-product of a chance and random concoction of DNA—then we are born, we live, we die. No hope. End of all. Too often a miserable story.

So, given this scenario, it's okay to indiscriminately wipe out multiple millions before they see the light of day. [In the *USA* there have been an estimated 30 million abortions since the 60's. In the *UK* there are around 180,000 each year.] It's then okay to commit, as did Hitler, genocide, wipe out the disabled. Or the multi-millions more worked to death by Stalin. Your moral views are your own responsibility, tempered only by the law of the land. And there's *no eternity*. No purgatory, no hell—and *no heaven*. Mere extinction. That's evolution for you.

But consider—that DNA didn't materialize from thin air, and certainly not from nothing. But because of the onslaught of godless pseudo-science most 'westerners' are sold on the comic-cut notion that organic forms developed suddenly from nothing, and through a billion years of 'evolution' arrived at what is considered the pinnacle of nature. *homo sapiens*, mankind.

### Human Potential

No—a Supreme Intelligence created man, and in His own image. We have, in embryo form, His characteristics—we think, we plan, we accomplish, we imagine a future, we have emotions, admire beauty, we love, we experience joy. And for what reason?

The divine purpose is that each one of us can become like Him—not only in our character but also

formed from the same substance. That is, *Spirit*. Equipped to live eternally and free from the restraints of the flesh.

To this end God told our first parents: "...*be fruitful and multiply*". Our all-pervasive obsession with 'sex' is rooted in God's instruction to "...*be fruitful and multiply*" (Genesis: 1:28). His purpose and desire is to "...*bring many sons to glory*". From the moment of conception that is our potential. God's appointment is that we procreate, and that what is conceived grows in the womb to maturity, develops to godly adulthood, commits to a life-long fruitful marriage. Only *sin* mars that awesome purpose.

This sinful nature of ours, shared by all mankind, delights in all that's perverse. It sees no wrong in practices that frustrate that divine plan: war, murder, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, pornography, transgenerism.

### New Birth

Created from the elements of the soil under our feet, man is but a 'clay model' of what God has in mind for us! Our lifespan is but a vapour, a wisp of wind that makes a greater or lesser mark - and then is gone. But not in the mind of our Creator, for He has plans for each of us.

Born as flesh and blood we are invited to become spirit, to become an integral part of the Family of God by means of a 'new birth'. The Jewish compatriot of Jesus, Nicodemus, had a midnight encounter with him and was told "...*you must be born again*" (John 3:3).—this time as a *spirit* being, no longer limited by our human frailties but able to activate all the powers of our 'divine nature' (II Peter 1:4).

The apostle Paul puts it like this: "...*It [our present existence] is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body*" (I Corinthians 15:44). We are now, he says "...*of the earth, earthy*" (v.47), but for those in whom dwells God's Spirit we will at the return of

Christ by means of a resurrection from the dead be transformed to immortal spirit. *This* is the 'new birth', what it means to be 'born again'.

### A Process

But that doesn't 'just happen', for there may be a long and hard road ahead before the goal of salvation is attained—a road we must follow to its glorious end.

If you so desire, the Creator has a plan of life tailored personally for you, perhaps beginning with a growing awareness of a missing dimension in your life. Respond to God's 'tap on the shoulder' and by whatever means the Father will draw you to Jesus Christ, mankind's one and only channel to 'salvation'—defined as entrance to the immortal spirit Family of God.

Jesus, having warned his hearers of the challenge of discipleship, urged them: "...*which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him*" (Luke 14:28-29). So (v.33) be prepared to stake everything on his service, for there will be many obstacles to distract us—antagonistic family, finances, negligence, business, entertainment.

Jesus used that imagery of birth to illustrate (John 3). The ultimate goal is our 'birth' as a spirit member of His Family—joint-heirs with Jesus Christ as a son of God. Dedicate our life to His service through a changed heart and baptism (and stay faithful) and we are—just as a babe in the womb—conceived, begotten by the Spirit of God, a 'new creature'. Paul, again: "...*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" [*ktisis*] (II Corinthians 5:17).

As does the babe in the womb, we must grow to full-term—to the moment of death, or until Christ returns and we are gathered to meet him in the air. Ω



**Life, for everyone (Gk. *laos*) who has walked this planet, is a gift of the Creator. Some, however, are special—the ‘people of God’,**

True believers are set apart by the Father as a unique and special part of creation. The apostle Peter in reference to the church at large states: ‘...*you are God’s chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation*’ (I Peter 2:9).

As witnessed by the historical record, that would exclude most of mankind, for ‘the people’ [of God] at times has comprised but a handful of the faithful. Peter also notes, for example: ‘...*the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water*’ (I Peter 3:20).

But around 1500BC a people emerged who entered into covenant with God to do just that.: ‘...*all the people answered together and said, all that the LORD has spoken we will do*’ (Exodus 19:8). It was their unanimous response to God’s offer: ‘...*if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*’ (vv.5-6). They were ‘...*the apple of his eye*’ (Deuteronomy 32:10).

A previous lone voice had voiced the same determination to follow Him: ‘...*[Abraham] obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*’ (Genesis 26:5).

Sadly, the covenant was soon widely breached and over the ensuing centuries Israel embraced

idolatry, to the point were God said: ‘...*you are not my people, and I will not be your God*’ (Hosea 1:9), and ‘...*I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away*’ (v.6).

### **The ‘People’ Renewed**

With the ministry of Jesus Christ a new ‘people of God’ is born, a people in whom dwells the divine Spirit. They are the new priesthood who have themselves entered into that same Covenant. They—the church of God—are ‘...*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should shew forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*’ (I Peter 2:9-10).

They are God’s precious ‘flock’ (v.2), and are being tutored through the experiences of life to reign as ‘kings and priests’ when God’s kingdom comes to reign over mankind: ‘...*[you] have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*’ (Revelation 5:10). They are ‘*God’s heritage*’ (Gk *kleros*—a term later corrupted and applied solely to the ‘clergy’, the church leadership).

Each member of this ‘royal priesthood’ is individually select-

## **The People of God**

ed by God (John 6:44) and endowed with spiritual gifts with which to serve their congregation. Within their local assembly the new Christian is nourished by spiritually mature brethren, and overseen by chosen leaders (selected in accordance with strict guidelines—eg I Timothy 3 and publicly appointed).

These ‘elders’ (or ‘bishops’ Gk *episkopos, overseer*) and deacons are tasked to serve the brethren. They are held responsible (by Christ) to ‘...*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage (Gk *kleros*), but being ensamples to the flock*’ (I Peter 5:2-3).

This implies that ‘the people’ will gather in assemblies to experience this face-to-face guidance, for fellowship and for worship, and we are urged to ‘...*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching*’ (Hebrews 10:24-25).

### **Servant Class**

Jesus addressed the Twelve with this issue of power-seeking (lordship) and inappropriate oversight: ‘... He said to them, ‘...*The kings of the nations lord it over them, and those exercising authority over them are called benefactors. But you be not so, but the greater among you, let him be as the lesser; and the one governing as the one serving. For who is greater, the one reclining, or the one serving?*’ **cont’d p.8**

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

unsigned articles are by the Editor



## God has in the beginning established the foundation principles for a stable society

Few will deny that our world is far from stable, with civil unrest, wars and threats of war, famine, disease and poor health, poverty afflicting many and the great wealth divide. The 'doomsday clock' is set for near midnight and the news media predict catastrophe stemming from multiple roots.

That's the record of human civilisation from earliest times. Whether you believe that the Genesis account of man's origins is *fact* or *allegory* it illuminates what has gone wrong to deliver our present plight.

### Edenic Perfection

Mankind embarked on civilisation equipped with a set of principles guaranteed to build a Utopian dream. Uniquely in creation he was endowed with a spirit (the 'spirit in man') that was a reflection of the divine Spirit, made '*...in the image and likeness of God*' (Genesis 1:26). He was perfectly fitted physically and mentally to his (perfect) environment and equipped with the intellect to properly apply those principles. His entire being was created to function in accord with them.

His role, in tandem with his wife, was to maintain and enjoy his 'garden'—representative of the entire planet—and to harness all of nature to that end: '*...God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*' (Genesis 1:31).

### Wrong Choice

Our first parents were by no means automatons, programmed to always do right—they had the freedom to make choices in accord with an informed (by God) conscience. When confronted with a simple opportunity to exercise that choice—to follow those principles or to follow

their own way, God's or man's—they chose the latter. *Disaster.*

God had given fair warning of the consequences of going their own way: '*...you shall surely die*' (ch 2:17). Expelled from their home they lost face-to-face communication with the Creator, their Mentor, and began to '*...do what was right in their own eyes*'. And we have continued in that mode ever since.

### Faithful Few

God's instructions filtered through the centuries as a handful of the faithful sought to willingly follow His guidance, and reaped its rewards. It is reported of Abraham, for example, that he: '*...obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*' (ch 26:5).

The rest of mankind went each their own way, sometimes right, often wrong. The Palestinians of that time sank into gross idolatry and God expelled them from Canaan and freed Abraham's descendants (the twelve tribes) from Egyptian slavery, installing them in the land promised to Abraham.

### A Model Nation

Abraham was promised that his offspring would become a '*...blessing to all nations*' (v.4), and God set about forging a nation to that end.

Under the leadership of Moses the captives were freed. The people—the 'children of Israel'—were united into one nation whose overall ruler was God. The people pledged '*... all the LORD has spoken we will do*' (Exodus 19:8).

But they needed help. As with any society their life had to be regulated and God set out a legislative system dubbed 'the Law

## From the Beginning...

of Moses', but in reality God's guidance for a successful nation. Their laws were the codification of the guidance the Creator instilled—and built into—Adam and Eve in Eden, and summed up in 'the Ten Commandments'.

As with any people group obedience to the 'Laws of the Land' had to be enforced by penalties and, as an example for all nations, they are recorded for our learning (throughout the *torah*).

### History Transformed

Despite their pledge of obedience, Israel soon lost its way. They, too, sank into idolatry absorbing (as today, throughout the West!) the anti-God culture of the surrounding nations. They kidded themselves that they were being faithful, yet idolatry tainted their religious practice—as today in Christianity.

At the due time and to further His plans, and as human behaviour reached its nadir, God sent Jesus as man's Saviour: '*...when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*' (Romans 5:6).

### Radical Change

For us to be restored the first step is a radical change of our nature - possible only when our sin has been covered (only through the death and resurrection of Jesus).

It is a plan conceived before man's appearance on earth: '*... [God] has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*' (II Timothy 1:9).

### The Law Fulfilled

Jesus steadfastly upheld the teachings of the 'Old' Testament, tell-

ing the disciples: ‘...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me’ (Luke 24:44). He also said: ‘...Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil’ (Matthew 5:17).

The so-called ‘Law of Moses’ (in reality Moses was the messenger and enforcer of the Law of the LORD) was described as ‘...what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?’ (Deuteronomy 4:8). The entire Old Testament is there for the education of the Church and the modern secular authorities.

Jesus ‘fulfilled’ this divine Law in many ways. His birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and ongoing life in the Spirit were predicted in the Scriptures and fulfilled in him. The ancient laws of blood sacrifice had their fulfillment in him—they each portrayed some aspect of his character and mission and are no longer incumbent on God’s church nor on mankind generally—Jesus Christ alone is required.

The laws (Exodus 20ff) to regulate a physical nation (Israel etc) along with their prescribed penalties are delegated to the secular authorities, as outlined by the apostle Paul: ‘...the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God’ (Romans 13). So there is no place in Christianity for criminal punishments. (The mediaeval church, perversely, delegated to the State the punishment (torture, burning etc) of those who disagreed with church doctrine!)

### Worship Me

Another tranche of Old Testament laws had reference to divine worship and centred on God’s appointed holy days—the weekly

and annual Sabbaths, and on Temple worship: ‘...These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their seasons (Leviticus 23:4). They were faithfully observed by the early church—both the weekly and annual Sabbaths (eg I Corinthians 5). Paul, of course observed these and the weekly Sabbath throughout his life as both Jew and Christian.

There were, as part of Israel’s learning curve, laws of *uncleanliness*—eg on touching the dead, festering disease, etc, and laws promoting hygiene.

Their exact form cannot, because of changed circumstances, always be replicated but the principles remain sound and are taken on board by modern civilized governments and by Christians where appropriate.

### New Regime

Jesus is sometimes portrayed as having changed the Law of God—and indeed he did change some laws in vogue in the first century. He did not, however, change the *written* Law of God (or ‘Moses’) but corrected the erroneous ‘...tradition of the elders’ (Matthew 5-7). Jesus told them ‘...Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition’ (Mark 7:9).

Rather, Jesus replaced superficial obedience with a piercing insight into the Law’s true significance—submission of both heart and mind. The Pharisees, for example,

Israel worshipped at the Tabernacle. There they brought their sacrificial offerings, peace offerings etc. Those with running sores, menstrual females, new mothers etc were also excluded for a set time. They could enter only when ritually ‘clean’ through prescribed washings (Psalm 24:3-4).

A lesson for Christians is our respect for the local assembly and wise protective quarantine for the vulnerable.

certainly believed the law that said ‘...don’t kill [murder]’ yet they sought to kill Jesus.

### Family Relationships

In responding to a question about divorce Jesus set forth an eternal principle applicable to Christians (who now have the indwelling assistance of the holy Spirit) that we make as our standard his statement, ‘...as it was from the beginning’—as it was in Eden before man chose death rather than life (Matthew 19:4).

It is to this original guidance that Christians must aspire.

### Law of Liberty

Rejected by early mankind, God allowed us to go our chosen way. Nations devised their own ways to govern, their own legal systems, their own idolatrous religions. He ‘...gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts’ (Romans 1:24). Deviation from God’s revealed will incurred an automatic consequence.

As Paul told the Athenian philosophers: ‘...the times of this ignorance God winked at [overlooked]; but now commands all men every where to repent’ (Acts 17:30). **Ω**

### People ...cont’d from p.6

*Is it not the one reclining? But I am in your midst as One serving’ (Luke 22:25-27).*

In the service of Jesus and the church, all brethren are gifted in various ways by the in-dwelling Spirit to edify their local assembly—some to serve as evangelists or pastors or teachers or counsellors etc. (These are roles, functions and not ‘offices’. There are but two offices—*overseers* and *deacons* - Philippians 1:1).

As part of ‘the people of God’ Christians are commissioned to be worthy representatives of Jesus Christ. **Ω**

## BRITAIN ON THE BRINK

**Britain voted to exit the European Union by March 2019, but negotiations have stalled. Will national independence enhance her position in the world?**

It's a momentous step to take after forty-five years tied to the sclerotic Union of European states—dubbed 'the United States of Europe'. Horse-trading has been tortuous and long and the issue remains unresolved.

Every nation sooner or later becomes entangled in conflict—internal or defensive and too often aggressive. Great Britain has had its share, both *defensive* (Romans, Vikings, Normans, Spanish Armada *etc*), the seventeenth century English *civil* war and various continental involvements. Plus, of course, our participation in the destructive two world wars. Millions were lost in conflict.

### Historical Pattern

Our (Anglo-saxon) nations, in accord with Bible prophecies, gained domination of the world stage by 1800AD, by which time our nation-building was complete. We were undeserved heirs to the world's wealth and straddled the planet.

Our position came, however, with responsibilities—with the obligation to use our resources to serve our fellow-man and the God of the Christian Scriptures.

The heavy burden of mediaeval Christianity was cast aside and we could worship God freely. The faith was taken

worldwide, initially from Britain—its positive influence persisting even into our day both abroad and at home.

Most of our citizens were taught the foundation of the teachings of Jesus Christ and society was stable and prospered. Legislation was generally in harmony with that world-view.

In times of conflict our nation was called to prayer, as by King George VI on the eve of D-day, and the nation responded, crowding the churches. And we were delivered. It was a pattern often repeated.

### Lesson from History

Of all the nations we, as once a Bible-believing nation, ought to have learned from history. From the example of ancient Israel it was clear that our prosperity as a nation hung on our moral temperate—align ourselves with divine guidance and we are winners, abandon it and we lose.

To our national disgrace we failed to learn the lesson and calamity struck again and again. And in recent decades our leadership—the 'shepherds of Israel'—have led us down the path of rebellion against that guidance.

Legislation has consistently tilted against the foundation principles for success. Blind leaders can't see that continued economic success *results* only when matters of the spirit are esteemed: when all life from conception to the grave is respected, when all can live peaceably and equitably and harmoniously each; *...under his own fig tree*, when the bed-rock of civilisation, the heterosexual family and marriage, is exalted, when business and industry is dedicated

to the service of the nation. And, above all, when Christian principles are unashamedly and universally taught from earliest years.

### Check-out

Measured against current trends our nations fail on every count. No degree of an economic 'deal' can deliver a permanent and secure future. As Great Britain negotiates its 'Brexit deal', long-term we face a bleak future—no sunlit uplands, no utopia.

But all is not lost. As we check-out of the stranglehold of Rome it's time for our leaders once again to call upon the nation to pray, to plead for God's mercy. The lesson of ancient Nineveh is that when a nation turns to the one true God and seeks forgiveness the 'curse' is removed. **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](http://www.cgom.org)**

*read or download:*

**It's not the economy, stupid**  
**[www.cgom.org](http://www.cgom.org)**

*Are you unable to attend Sabbath services in your area?*

*The following CGOM Associate Churches offer live streaming of their regular Sabbath services!*

*Tulsa Church of God, Tulsa, OK — 1:00 p.m. CST  
www.tulsachurchofgod.net — www.tulsachurchofgod.org*

*Church of God, New Mexico, — 1:30 p.m. MST  
www.cognm.org*

*The above also offer online access to past sermon presentations.*

*request—no charge*

**The Feast of the Nativity**

**The Easter Story**

**Tabernacles...*humanity in the flesh***

***Bible Basics***

*The Churches of God Outreach Ministries publish an internet Bible home study course*

*If you would like to study with us check it out at  
**www.cgom.org***

*The introductory lesson gives some hints about how to study the Bible*

*We are pleased to reply to any questions arising from any of our publications.*

Don't miss out on a single issue of the *New Horizons* magazine!  
When you move don't forget to send us your new mailing address.

*Please send your change of address to:*

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

*or e-mail your change to:*

**subscriptions@cgom.org  
in Europe:  
coguk@aol.com**

*you are invited to look at our website for numerous articles free to read or download*

**www.cgom.org**

*all are also available from any of the addresses listed inside*