

NEW *Horizons*

Vol 24 No 3

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addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

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

The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by his apostles in terms clear to those who have 'ears to hear' - 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 Newsletter **OUTREACH, NEW HORIZONS** magazine, the **BIBLE BASICS** on-line home study course, and a 32-lesson **STUDY COURSE**.

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

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

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new Horizons

Issue No 141

May/June 2020

We live in uncertain times. How can we be secure?

How are you coping with the ongoing global crises? The Eurozone on the brink of collapse. Islamic State causing mayhem around the globe. Anti-Semitism again on the rise. 'Rich' countries buried in unimaginable debt. And now another worldwide viral plague.

Our financial system has all but broken down, with fortunes—and indeed meagre nest-eggs—lost. The global economy, too, is creaking. Perhaps the West may now get a taste of what most of our world has been experiencing.

Solutions are daily marketed for individuals (governments don't have a clue); the newspapers are full of them, from financial advice to money-saving tips, for fuel, for fun and for food. And, of course, we should pay attention to those ideas that are appropriate to our own circumstances.

The Neglected Dimension

Governments think *'it's the economy'* that accounts for national prosperity. Rather, national success results from the *spiritual* dimension.

There is a sad lack of advice on this major aspect of life—our *spiritual* resources. For if you profess true faith then you have a secret weapon!

The Creator gives a cast-iron promise that He cares for those who are committed to Him. That commitment, however, is two-way: *our* part is to follow the life guidance He has revealed to us in His Word, the Scriptures.

The divine 'laws for living' are not restrictive but liberating. Act contra-

ry to them, break our covenant, and there are inevitable built-in negative consequences.

The laws of *physics* are a 'concrete' example. Fall from a height and injury is the natural consequence. Imbibe poison and you may die. Eat the wrong foods and illness results. The corona virus, for example, is believed to have mutated from bats and snakes in 'live animal' markets.

So, too, with God's *spiritual* laws. Human well-being is predicated on our compliance with these laws—transgress them and there are unpleasant but just consequences. But follow them and there is liberty. By so doing we reap the benefits of divine protection, we tap into His endless beneficence.

Trust Me—I'm God

God Cares

Nature cries out that the Creator of all abundantly supplies our needs (Psalm 50:9-15). The Creator has provided for the needs of all mankind. He has ordered the seasons to supply the fruits of the earth, and stocked the planet with needed resources, including coal and minerals! (Matthew 5:45).

But for the children of God, Jesus makes it clear that our heavenly Father is concerned for our welfare. In response to faith He will supply our needs. Hear him:

I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven feeds them. Aren't you worth more than birds? Can worry make you live longer?

Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith? Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. Matthew 6:25-32

Trust Me

Our heavenly Father is totally aware of the needs of all those who have placed their trust in Him. Wrote wise King Solomon: *'...Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths'* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Uncertain Times

In uncertain times when war threatens, when economies verge on collapse or family finances are strained, when disease strikes—at such times those who are spiritual children of our heavenly Father can rest assured of His constant presence.

The patriarch Job lost everything—yet clung to his God through it all: *'...though he slay me',* he says, *'yet will I trust in him'* (Job 13:15). And having endured such a painful test of character he triumphed.

For the people of God, not everything goes smoothly! We often face testing times from within and with

A History Lesson

The lives of multiple thousands around the world have this year been swept away by a viral plague.

There is a sound reason

As we note, this isn't a new phenomenon. Rampant disease has time and again swept through civilized life—more devastating than *coronavirus*. But in our high-tech world of advanced medical care—*why?*

Cause

We have always sought 'a reason'. Anciently it was poor hygiene. In the middle ages it was rats (the 'black death'). Then it was dirty water (cholera)—an on-going problem even today. The finger of blame has this time been pointed at filthy live animal markets. All valid. But are these the true underlying cause?

There is here a pattern. When, for example, the economy totters we blame the banks or avarice. When personal tragedy strikes God is in our sights rather than our own choices or time and chance. But we wear blinkers as to the true cause.

Lesson from the Past

When we are not 'blaming God' for our calamities we simply view them as random events. Not so the Scriptures, which present a clear perspective of *cause and effect*. It is prudent that we learn from history, and the Bible presents us with the record of Israel around 1500BC—a lesson, indeed, for all nations, all centuries.

Israel had entered into a covenant with the Creator, the almighty God, an agreement by which they had His protection. For their part of the covenant, Israel agreed to accept God's terms: '*... I am the LORD your God! So don't make or worship any sort of idols or images. Respect the Sabbath and honor the place where I am worshiped, because I am the LORD.*

Faithfully obey my laws' (Leviticus 26:3). This they had wholeheartedly agreed to at Sinai (Exodus 19:8).

A World Exposed

In the hands of mankind's great enemy, the Adversary—the '*god of this world*'—the nations are exposed to his virulent wrath. Look at the chaos of today's world! What nation wouldn't sacrifice all for a guarantee from the Creator of all, to be 'hedged in' from all malign influences!

God's Part

'...I will send rain to make your crops grow and your trees produce fruit. Your harvest of grain and grapes will be so abundant, that you won't know what to do with it all. You will eat and be satisfied, and you will live in safety. I will bless your country with peace, and you will rest without fear. I will wipe out the dangerous animals and protect you from enemy attacks. You will chase and destroy your enemies.... I will treat you with such kindness that your nation will grow strong, and I will also keep my promises to you. Your barns will overflow with grain each year. I will live among you and never again look on you with disgust. I will walk with you-- I will be your God, and you will be my people' (CEV Leviticus 26)

And if Israel neglected their part of the covenant:

Israel's Part

'...If you will not obey my commands, you will be punished. If you refuse to obey my laws and commands and break the covenant I have made with you, I will punish you. I will bring disaster on you--- incurable diseases, and fevers that will make you blind and cause your life to waste away. You will plant your crops, but it will do you no good, because your enemies will conquer you and eat what you have grown. I will turn against you' (GNB vv.14f)

The Inevitable Outcome

But Israel failed in observance of their part of the Covenant, and succumbed to destructive idolatrous behaviour. In one instance it resulted in twenty-three thousand dying from a plague in just one day (Numbers *ch* 25, I Corinthians 10:8). Indeed, because of non-compliance with the Covenant an entire generation didn't survive the forty years in the wilderness.

They also experienced foreign invasions and failed crops, becoming refugees in foreign lands, even having their national identity obscured to this day.

With the 'hedge' of the divine law removed Israel and indeed all mankind is exposed to the tender

Trust Me...cont'd

out—as did those faithful listed in Hebrews 11: '*...These all died by way of faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. And they were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*' (v.13).

They remained, through thick and thin, faithful to the one true God. **Ω**

mercies of the Devil who has always plotted to overthrow the divine plan for mankind through Jesus Christ.

The 'woman' who rides the 'beast'—the predicted end-time religion-dominated civil government that is the conduit for Satan's plans (Revelation 13)—is already in the ascendancy and gaining global authority and political influence. **Ω**

PERSPECTIVE

We may have now moved on, but as I write this there is widespread panic over the new coronavirus. There are dire predictions in regard to the possible death toll. The number who contract the disease is unknown, as for most it is relatively minor and unreported.

As a matter of perspective, *flu* deaths fluctuate from year to year, averaging (UK) 17,000 annually (0.1%). The 'bird flu' epidemic had a mortality of 60% (WHO). In contrast Covid-19 so far has a mortality of around 2%.

It is important that we keep a cool head, while heeding Government advice (Romans 13:1-2), and we should take suitable precautions.

Prophecy

Christians will want to explore whether the Bible has anything to say, and there are indeed predictions that as our age draws to a close there will occur devastating plagues along with wars, famines, etc. (Revelation *ch* 6)...

As it is, worldwide millions die annually have died from a wide range of other infectious diseases. Coronavirus certainly adds to the total, but we will likely see far worse—and not just plagues.

Trust Me

Bible believers will, of course, understand the guidance it gives for health including the guidance on quarantine, hygiene and edible foods. (This virus has been traced to 'live animal' markets.)

But underpinning these practical measures is our abiding trust in our heavenly Father. We have the confidence that He cares for us and will provide for our daily needs. The coming years are uncertain but we place our trust in our Rock. **Ω**

The Everlasting Father

Jeffrey Caldwell

Some months ago my pastor wondered about one of the titles of King Jesus: "Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6), and asked me to look into its meaning and significance, which I found an edifying and interesting study.

As I looked into it I thought that He is *'the Everlasting Father of the Kingdom of God'*, looking especially to the context of the *'...government being on His shoulder'*, seems sound.

I see some commentary that says a literal translation of the Hebrew could be "Father of Eternity" (some say "Eternal Father"). However, it is usually thought that the Hebrew is rather well translated "Everlasting Father" with emphasis indicating a "father" who is "everlasting" in the forward sense rather than "eternal" which would be with no beginning. Some thought-for-thought translations say "Father of the Age to Come". "Father of the world to come", several "Father Who Lives Forever".

Far more than anyone else, our Master is the founder, the beginner, the protector and provider for the everlasting Kingdom of God, the founder and pioneer of the new Holy Nation that He, the Holy One, is, as it were, *"the father of..."* - His rather distinctive stamp "all over it like hair on a gorilla" one might say. He not only originated it, even creating from nothing the territory (the universe) but, unlike other rulers has always and will always be there for it to a matchless degree.

Significantly, also, He is the "father of our salvation" -- the

One who in every way makes it possible for us to live forever with Him in His Kingdom.

One blogger, admitting he finds this title most difficult to understand, says : "Under his care, his protection, and his provision, we are safe and will be satisfied for all eternity." Care, protection, provision -- these are functions of an ideal father.

Another commentator says: "With Abraham, the father of many nations, including Israel, and as a model, the father of all the faithful, they were entitled to an earthly inheritance, but through their Everlasting Father, they had an eternal one to aspire to (Hebrews 9:15, Romans 8:16-17). Through Him, His sacrifice and grace, we inherit the everlasting Kingdom of God.

"the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6)

The Berean points to: Deuteronomy 32:6: *"...Do you thus deal with the LORD, O foolish and unwise people [the Israelites]? Is He not your Father who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?"* The God of the Old Testament fulfilled many roles toward Israel, and one of them is as their Father.

He claims fatherhood under three bases: 1) He *redeemed* them ,bought them, from slav-

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

ery in Egypt. 2) He *created* them. 3) He *founded* them as a nation. He has every right to the title!

"Finally, notice His own words in Jeremiah 31:9, speaking of the still-future time when Israel will repent: *"...They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn."* This shows that He will be their Father when He returns to this earth to set up His world-ruling government.

This special relationship to Israel will last throughout all eternity. He is indeed "the Everlasting Father"! Not only of Israel, but all nations; as His genealogy shows, since it traces back to *"...Adam, son of God"* (Luke 4:38). Adam is the father of all mankind.

Christ is *the* "founding father" of the Kingdom of God. The pioneer of eternal salvation for all, forever "there" in a fatherly role for the Kingdom.

Note well the concept of fatherhood (used for the originator of something new) as presented in Genesis 4:20-21 (for the first nomadic herder and first to play music) or Isaiah 22:21—a good government leader as a father), or 'father' as a founder as Joab in 1 Chronicles 4:14, 'father of the Valley of Craftsmen'.

Thus it seems our Lord fits the title *Everlasting Father* as the Originator, Founder, Pioneer, Protector and Provider—forever—of all that pertains to the Kingdom of God.

He is indeed "the Everlasting Father"! Ω

The Devil and his Angels

A powerful spirit has been mankind's adversary since earliest times, first appearing on the scene not long after our first parents were created. He is known in the Christian Scriptures by several titles—the Adversary, the Devil, the Dragon, the Serpent, Deceiver, Father of Lies. And, of course, Satan. His powerful influence has enticed the human race to rebel against our Creator.

The popular image of Satan as a horned devil in a red body suit with a pitchfork is, of course, totally fictional. In fact, no human has ever seen this being, for he is a disembodied spirit. When he first confronted Eve in Eden he had taken possession of the vocal organs of a *nachash*, translated as a serpent. [The Hebrew term *nachash* describes creatures other than serpents (snakes)—as in Isaiah 27:1, possibly a crocodile-like creature.] The one Eve encountered clearly walked upright and had organs of speech.

Bible Types

Mystery surrounds this being. He appears suddenly in the record Adam passed down (Genesis 3:1). Prior to this appearance where was he? What was he doing? How long since he 'fell'? (God didn't create him worthy of the titles noted above: Adversary *etc.*)

The Bible prophets view the aspirations of earthly potentates as a type for Satan, and so we are given insight into Satan's background by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. We learn that he was originally an 'anointed cherub', a created spirit: '*...You were the anointed cherub that covers, and I had put you in the holy heights of God, where you were. You walked up and down in the midst of*

the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you' (Ezekiel 28: 14-15)

He was, then, a created spirit being, and in his beginning perfect. But he sinned. Then having gained the allegiance of a third (Revelation 12:9) of the heavenly host (angels) he rebelled against the authority of God, aspiring to be His equal: '*...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High* (Isaiah 14:13-14)

The apostle Paul reflects on this arrogant pride, warning Timothy to be wary in appointing church leaders: '*...Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*' (I Timothy 3:6).

The 'Morning Star'

Isaiah calls him '*Lucifer, son of the morning*' (Heb, *leylel*). In the LXX it is 'Light bearer' and refers to the 'morning star', the earth-like but now desolate planet Venus. It is noteworthy that he wants to ascend to the throne of God, to be 'above the stars'. (Could this perhaps have been his original domain—not God's heaven [for 'heaven' may refer to the stars]—over which with a quota of angels he had been given jurisdiction?)

Jesus tells his apostles: '*...I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven*' (Luke 10:18). In vision John sees that '*...there was war in heaven [space]: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven*' - Revelation 12:7-8). Jude adds: '*...the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*' (Jude 6).

God's Angels

It is of note that every time an angelic being—specifically referencing the '*angels of God*'—appears he has bodily substance and behaving as would a human but with added supernatural characteristics as exemplified in Genesis 19:11: '*...they [angelic beings] smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great*'. These same angels washed their feet and enjoyed meals with both Abraham and Lot (eg Genesis 18:4, 8, 19:3).

There's no reason to assume that this is not their normal state—even when in heaven. They are real, palpable—not a deception. The created angelic body was spirit ((Job 38:7, Hebrews 1:14), but had human form. They had substance. Wrote Paul: '*...there are heavenly bodies* (Gk. *soma*)'.

'spirit' (Gk *pneuma*) It exists in several dimensions derived from elemental particles (photons, *etc.*: Heb 11:3), each having specific qualities:
inanimate (eg wind, breath)
animal
angelic
human
holy (alone immortal)

Fallen Angels

Those angels that sinned (II Peter 2:4), however, have become disembodied spirits without '*flesh and bones*' (cf Luke 24:39), roaming the earth (Matthew 12:43) and mischief-making at the behest of the 'prince of the devils', Satan, our Adversary.

Angered by the sight of God's successful new creation, Adam, as having been assigned dominion of Earth, Satan determined to oust him—a plan he realized through his subtle deception of Eve (Genesis 3).

Satan's angels ('*angels of the devil*') are, in contrast to God's angels, invisible disembodied spirits. But here's a question: *how did they become so?* A universal law may apply here: '*...the wages of sin is death*' - (Romans 6:23). The angelic tangible (spirit) body decays when, having sinned, it dies.

But God has restrained these spirits, chained them to Earth and its atmosphere: '*...God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them* **cont'd p.6**

On Whose Side Are You? father you

It's a human trait for each of us to align ourselves with a particular position, whether philosophical or moral or faith-based—or even a cherished sports team. There is, however, one choice we all face—whose side are we on?

The choice—for all of mankind—is limited to *two options*. For one it is a deliberate thought-through decision followed by a life-time commitment. For the other—well, it's a state into which we were all born and, likely, have never given it much thought. Well, perhaps we have. For the end result is ultimately death—*oblivion*. I'm sure that many have crossed your mind.

Two Ways

The manner by which Jesus and his apostles labelled our choice can sound harsh to the modern ear. The apostle John touches on the subject by detailing the two ways as 'children of God' and 'children of the world' (*Williams* I John 4:4,5).

The godly, the 'children of God', are those who are 'born of God' and (the analogy is with human life) his 'seed' remains in him, maturing into God-like character. As such they do not habitually sin but are striving towards becoming perfect, to reflect the character of Jesus and the Father.

Jesus, however, was more blunt. In one of his encounters with the religious leaders of the time he describes the real 'father' of the worldly thus: '*...You are of your father the devil;* (John 8:44).

And he describes the character of the Devil: '*...the lusts of your*

will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it'.

The Worldly

The apostle John addresses the worldly: '*... Here is the clear difference between God's children and the Devil's children: those who do not do what is right or do not love others are not God's children*' (GNB I John 3:10). 'What is right' he earlier defines as the divine Law: '*...Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law*' (v.4).

He elsewhere analyses 'worldliness': '*...Everything that belongs to the world---what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of---none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world (ch 2:16)*. It's a temporary world, for: '*...The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever*'.

None of us can claim to have lived the perfect life! For '*...all have sinned*'. And as such we are - when separated from Jesus Christ—doomed to perish' (John

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3:16) and as such are 'children of the devil'.

All of us are born into a world that's dominated by '*...the god of this world*' (II Corinthians 4:4). John describes him as '*...the great dragon [that] was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world*' (Revelation 12:9).

As long as we remain under his dominance, and conduct our lives in accord with his norms we qualify, in Bible terms, for that title, '*child of the devil*'. As wrote Paul '*...his servant you are whom you obey*' (Romans 6:16).

Children of God

We humans are a key element in a grand plan designed by our Creator, a plan phased over millennia, right from our creation. God's purpose is to share His nature, and to covenant us as joint-heirs of the universe together with His Son (Romans 8:17).

That, in return, requires us to commit to a filial relationship with Him through Jesus, having abandoned our present way of life as '*a child of the Devil*'—one who has not embraced a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ.

When an individual in whom is God's 'seed' (that is, His 'child', His offspring) sins they turn to the source of forgiveness, to their 'Father' and through their acceptance of Jesus Christ and his covenant they are instantly forgiven: '*... As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear him*' (Psalm 103:12).

God's plan of salvation is open to all who hear—and respond. **Ω**

Defeating Plagues

The life of multiple thousands around the world have this year been swept away by a viral plague. Vastly more have experienced a disrupted life and may take years to fully recover

As we noted, this isn't a new phenomenon. Rampant disease has time and again swept through civilized life—more devastating than *coronavirus*. But in our high-tech world of advanced medical care—*why?*

Cause

We have always sought 'a reason'. Anciently it was ignorance. In the middle ages it was rats (the 'black death'). Then it was dirty water (cholera). The finger of blame has this time been pointed at filthy live animal markets. All valid. But are these the true underlying cause?

There is here a pattern. When, for example, the economy totters we blame the banks or our avarice. When personal tragedy strikes God is in our sights rather than our personal choices or time and chance. But we wear blinkers as to the true cause.

Lesson from the Past

When we are not 'blaming God' for our calamities we simply view them as random events. Not so the Scriptures, which present a clear perspective of *cause and effect*. It is prudent that we learn from history, and the Bible presents us with the record of ancient Israel around 1500BC—a lesson, indeed, for all nations, all centuries.

Israel had entered into a covenant with the Creator, the almighty God, an agreement by

which they were assured of His protection. For their part of the covenant, Israel agreed to accept God's terms: '*... I am the LORD your God! So don't make or worship any sort of idols or images. Respect the Sabbath and honor the place where I am worshiped, because I am the LORD. Faithfully obey my laws*' (Leviticus 26:3). For His part God promised peace, abundant crops, clement weather, freedom from plagues and disease, fertility.

This covenant they had wholeheartedly agreed to at Sinai: '*... all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do*' (Exodus 19:8).

A World Exposed

That was the new nation of Israel—established by God to be a beacon of light to the world, a template for good government. But in the hands of mankind's great enemy, the Adversary—the '*god of this world*'—all nations ('Gentiles') are exposed naked to his virulent wrath.

For the outcome, just look at the chaos of today's world! Economy, education, religion, health and hygiene, climate—all are adversely influenced by this enemy of mankind to our detriment.

So what nation wouldn't sacrifice all for that guarantee from the Creator of all, to be 'hedged in' from all malign influences! And if Israel neglected their part of the covenant?: '*...If you will not obey my commands, you will be punished. If you refuse to obey my laws and commands and break the covenant I have made with you, I will punish you. I will bring disaster on you ---incurable diseases and fevers*

Angels...cont'd from p.4
down to hell, [Gk, tartaroo] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment' (II Peter 2:4). Satan is, says the apostle Paul, '*...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience*' (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan (as do his fallen angels) has the ability to possess a suitable willing recipient, including humans—as, for example, Judas Iscariot: '*...when [Jesus] had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him*' (John 13:26-27).

He is now, however, restrained and disseminates his rebellious philosophy, assisted by other foul spirits of varying wickedness (Matthew 12:45), through capturing the minds of individuals in all walks of life. In so doing '*...the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn on them*' (II Corinthians 4:4).

His destiny is to be destroyed in the great final conflagration of *ge'henna* (Revelation 20:19). **Ω**

that will make you blind and cause your life to waste away. You will plant your crops, but it will do you no good, because your enemies will conquer you and eat what you have grown. I will turn against you' (GNB vv.14-17).

Israel sank into gross idolatry and succumbed to destructive behaviour. In one instance (among many) it resulted in twenty-three thousand dying from a plague *in one day* (Numbers *ch* 25). With the 'hedge' of the divine law removed Israel (and all mankind) is at the tender mercies of the Devil.

Unless the entire world rejects this satanic influence and serves the one and only Creator, inevitably we will experience not just plagues but economic collapse, and near annihilation. **Ω**

Jerusalem Besieged

In an unspecified time span just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem is predicted to be invaded by a union of nations ‘...all nations’. It is described by the prophet Zechariah:

the day of the LORD comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Zechariah 14:1-2

The on-going horrific devastation of cities in Syria and other middle eastern nations is an example, vividly portrayed on our screens, of modern warfare. We can thus imagine the effect of such an invasion on Jerusalem, beset by modern weaponry.

It will herald the time predicted by Jesus, addressed to his disciples living in the area at that time:

‘...when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are

Matthew recalls another aspect, foreseen by Jesus:

‘...When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. (Matthew 24:16-19).

This envisages an invasion of the wider Jewish territory, and a signal for his resident disciples to flee to a safer area.

Physical Destruction

It will be a time like no other. The appalling loss of life and stupendous infrastructure devastation will be unprecedented. As describes the prophet Jeremiah: ‘...Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble’ (ch 30:7). Jesus added detail: ‘...in those days shall be affliction (Gk. *thlipsis*), such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved’ (Mark 13:19-20).

Nor does that complete the destruction, for the Jerusalem area will be afflicted by a landscape – changing earthquake scattering thousands of inhabitants.

Seismic Change

It is the end of our present world system. For these events herald and accompany the return of Jesus Christ with the same majesty and awesome power with which he delivered the Law to Israel fifteen hundred years previously.

Zechariah again:

‘...his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall

reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with you’ (ch 14: 4-5)

The transformation continues (v.8): ‘...When that day comes, fresh water will flow from Jerusalem, half of it to the Dead Sea and the other half to the Mediterranean. It will flow all year long, in the dry season as well as the wet’. The prophet Ezekiel (ch 47) provides further perspective on this river.

And, Zechariah again: ‘...All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place... And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited’ (vv.10-11). It’s an area suitably prepared for the administrative centre of the universal millennial Kingdom of which Jesus is King: ‘...the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one’ (v.9).

Living Waters

Jesus will return not this time as a man but with all the power and majesty and authority of the God-head: ‘...the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, he shall come, says the LORD of hosts’ (Malachi 3:1).

That ‘temple’ is now under construction—and has been since mankind’s beginning! It is his ‘church’ which will be fully built and furnished by the time of Jesus’s triumphal return. From Jerusalem the resurrected saints will disseminate the living waters of the good news, the gospel of

Jesus Christ', to the four corners of the world, beginning in the holy city. The prophet continues with this message from God: '...I, the LORD, will make the descendants of David and the people of Jerusalem feel deep sorrow and pray when they see the one they pierced with a spear. They will mourn and weep for him, as parents weep over the death of their only child or their first-born' (Zechariah 14:10 CEV).

They will turn surviving mankind to the pure way of life summarized by the divine Law—at that time to be written in the heart: '...this shall be the

covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people' (Jeremiah 31:33).

The saints will, too, administer under His guidance the rebuilding of earth's devastated cities and wrecked infrastructure: '...[the 'Israel of God'] shall build the old waste places: you shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in' (Isaiah 58:12).

The future for Jerusalem - and for all Israel—is bright. Ω

Read our article:

The World of Tomorrow

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

Life Well Lived

Jesus promised that at his return he would reward his dedicated followers

He tells his followers of '...the time...that you should give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great' (Revelation 11:18)', adding, '...I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life' (Revelation 22:12-14).

On what basis do we gain that reward? Certainly not salvation itself, for that is in its entirety a gift of God: '...by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast' Ephesians 2:8-9.

As the apostle John points out '...now are we the sons of God' (I

John 3:2). He adds '...He that has the Son has [eternal] life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life' (ch 5:12). It is a present reality for those who have covenanted to serve him—our sin forgiven, our relationship with the Father secured while we remain faithful.

Beware!

The apostle addressed this issue of rewards in the context of false teachers—rife in his day and also subject to a warning by Jesus a half-century previously: '...Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward' (II John 8).

Listen to those who don't teach the 'doctrine of Christ' (what he taught) and we are in danger of not receiving a 'full reward'. Paul puts it like this: '...If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire' (I Corinthians 3:14-15).

How are we contributing to God's 'temple' (v.16)? Are the materials 'gold' or are they just 'stubble'? Are we seeking daily to shape our life increasingly in the image of Jesus? Or are we compromising with the world, simply drifting? Our reward reflects our final image.

Paul adds another image: '...There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead' (ch 15:41-42). When the Christian is transformed by being raised from the dead at Christ's coming he or she is judged by the perfect standards of Jesus. Judged—but in the sense that our personal growth is assessed and the reward that he promises given.

Paul, again: '...Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (I Corinthians 15:58). Ω

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MiniStudyMiniStudy**Sabbath—a day to remember**

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it you shall not do any manner of work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor the stranger that is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11)

Any Bible scholar worth his salt knows that the weekly Sabbath of the Christian Scriptures is not Sunday but Saturday. Even Roman Catholic scholars will agree, while claiming that the Roman Church had (contrary to Scripture) divine authority to change it. So how should we observe this special day?

- The ‘day’ itself is observed from sundown on Friday to sundown Saturday. This is, in Bible terms, the seventh day of the week. It is a day that has remained in unbroken sequence since the beginning of time: ‘...from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath’ (Leviticus 23:32, Genesis 1:5)
- The weekly Sabbath is a time designated by the Creator as ‘holy’. That is, it is a day to be carefully distinguished from the other six days: ‘...God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work’ (Genesis 2:2-3). It is a divine appointment for *all* mankind
- The seventh-day Sabbath is a day for physical joy and refreshment—not a burden!. We ‘rest from our labours’, our regular day-to-day business activity. It is well-known that mankind needs this regular recurring pause in our busy schedule. The Sabbath puts our acquisitive lives in perspective
- But Sabbath is especially a time for refreshment of the human spirit. It is a time to burnish our relationship with our heavenly Father and our Saviour through prayer and meditation on His Word. And a time to cement our relationships with our families and our brethren in Christ. Also a time to assemble for instruction from competent teachers: ‘...let us consider one another to provoke to 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)
- The seventh-day Sabbath is a sign of the covenant we made with our God at our baptism. It is a perpetual sign given by the LORD (JHVH) at creation to identify God and His people, His ‘mark’—a sign that, when embraced, has defined—and on occasion cost the lives of—obedient saints down the ages. It primarily identifies the one and only Creator of all that is material and of the spirit: ‘...in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it’ (Exodus 20:11, 31:13-17)
- No secular work not of a humanitarian nature should be done, and chores minimized. The other holy days (an outline of God’s plan)—there are seven observed annually—are also set apart for worship, fellowship, instruction and physical and spiritual enjoyment—days when we desist from our normal business activities (Leviticus 23:7), and rejoice in feasting (Exodus 12:16, Nehemiah 8:12)
- In sum, the seventh-day Sabbath, for Christians, is not a burdensome chore but a welcome break from the daily grind, a pause in our daily lives that brings rich reward. It is not a complex system of ‘dos and don’ts’ but a willing personal expression of our submission to our Creator God and our Saviour, and of our liberty in Christ. Each of us is free to observe it within the principles laid down in the Scriptures. Its observance is destined, as the end of the age approaches, to become *a life or death personal decision* as the ‘man of sin’ comes to dominate the world of politics and religion Ω

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