

NEW *Horizons*

Vol 24 No 4

July/August 2020

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



inside...

*Listen, you nations!
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Unclean!*

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

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Untimely deaths, disrupted lives and economic disaster have marked 2020. Is there an underlying cause? And will we address it?

It has been heart-warming to witness the response of ‘ordinary’ people to the present crisis. Despite possible contact with the virus, thousands have given their time to support those in isolation, while our key workers selflessly care and support the vital services and without prejudice. It is humanity in action.

Even in good times, charitable giving is generous, contributing billions of pounds and millions of volunteer hours for the nation’s good. It is an expression of what is summed up as

‘...love your neighbour as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18). The patriarch Job muses on the thought, ‘...Did not he that made me in the womb make him [his employees]? and did not one fashion us in the womb?’ (ch 31: 15). In other words, ‘No man is an island’. The rest of the chapter is a check-list for true humanitarian aid—an example for us.

The theme is picked up in the New Testament. It’s recorded that Jesus ‘...went about doing good’ to those in need that he daily encountered (Acts 10:38). And the apostle Paul urges Christians not to neglect this service ‘...let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto

all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith’ (Galatians 6:9-10).

Rice Christians

But let’s be clear—such ‘good works’ are *not* proclaiming the Gospel. It produces what has been called ‘rice Christians’. ‘Works’ used as such produce a superficial pseudo-conversion, to the faith of Jesus. The church is assigned two purposes: to proclaim the same message that Jesus proclaimed (the good news of man’s transformation into a ‘*new creature in Christ*’), and, then, to nourish believers towards ‘perfection’.

It is perhaps remarkable that nowhere in Scripture do we find a

Listen, you nations!

record of church involvement in any form of corporate humanitarian projects. What we find is an intensive outreach programme—a programme that entailed great hardship and even persecution and martyrdom. So great was this that the apostle Paul—who suffered intensely in this enterprise—exhorted Timothy to pray fervently for those in authority ‘... that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth’ (I Timothy 2:1-4).

That’s the purpose of our prayers for the world. The only way for mankind—which is largely in

thrall to Satan (Revelation 12:9)—to have access to the grace of God, have a filial relationship with Him—*ie*, be ‘saved’—and fully enjoy His care is that they *hear and respond to the Gospel*. Those who hear and who respond positively the Father will draw to Jesus—the *only* doorway to salvation (Acts 4:12).

In tune with King David, as Christians we abhor the deeds of those who oppose God, who are not in a relationship with Him. We ‘hate’ what’s going on with rebellious mankind: ‘...*Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate you? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies’* (Psalm 139:21-22). The prophet Ezekiel echoes this, noting that God appointed a messenger to ‘...*Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*’ (ch 9:4).

Along with the Father, along with Jesus, we *love* mankind and our deepest desire should be that they *repent* and come to fill their destiny as sons of God, for He is ‘...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’* (II Peter 3:9).

Not the Economy

Millions jobless. Foodbanks overwhelmed. Long-established businesses gone. Whole industries decimated. The desperate measures to curb the covid plague have had the unintended consequence

of a world economy in tatters.

Leadership Failure

World leaders and powerful influencers desperately seek a way out of our varied crises—crises that result largely from their ignoring the laws of life. For them, nothing short of global solutions will save mankind, and they are working strenuously to formulate ways and means—to achieve this. Desperate for a solution they have turned to the Papacy for guidance, exalting the Pope as the moral guardian of mankind.

The Papacy is an amalgam of church and state—the Pope being ‘king’ of a political state, the Vatican, as well as head of the Roman Catholic Church—a dual role. Pope Francis has welcomed the leadership of most nations within its walls. He has even addressed both Houses of Congress, having been accorded supra-Presidential ceremonial.

High on the world’s agenda is agitation to establish a global government, a ‘new world order’, to control world trade, currencies, culture and even religious observance—a movement strongly promoted by the Vatican and high in its agenda.

Clearly, some of our challenges do require a global solution—pollution, transport, security for example. But a solution firmly rooted in *co-operation* between nations and not *coercion*, whatever the source.

The God Factor

Ignored—even despised—by most of the world is the intimate correlation between human activity and spiritual principles. If we forget God—then don’t expect a positive outcome! Ignore His ‘law of life’ and expect crop failures, disease epidemics, famine, conflict, infertility, physical and mental health issues. And economic mayhem.

Outside the pale of His perfect law of life the forces of evil have free course. God’s laws are a hedge against the mayhem spread by mankind’s adversary, the devil. Ancient Israel entered an agreement with the

Creator that if they embraced this way of life—the ‘ten commandments’ with its ramifications—they would have His protection. The agreement summarized the eternal spiritual law of ‘love God’ and ‘love your neighbor’. It is our practical application as a sinning physical nation of the guidance inherent in our first parents in their original sinless state.

Template for Governance

God set out the terms of Israel’s constitution: ‘...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’ (Exodus 19:5-6).

Israel’s response was fulsome: ‘... All that the LORD has spoken we will do’ (v.8). As long as they adhered to the covenant they experienced God’s direct intervention, His providence, His support in battle. But their commitment was fragile, and they soon turned to their own resources—to idolatry, to abandoning the very seal of the covenant, God’s seventh-day Sabbath.

Any nation that harnesses itself to the divine covenant with Israel can experience this same relationship with the Creator. Indeed the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords—heralds that very scenario. The surviving remnant of all nations will co-operate under the terms of this same covenant.

Pray for the World

In face of man’s self-destruction what is the role of the church of God? In our hands we hold the solution—the Word of God—and in God’s time we will, under Christ, implement its divine principles (Revelation 5:10. But not now. The current not unprecedented crisis will pass leaving behind the detritus of human incompetence. And we won’t have learned the lesson that the cause—and the solution—is *spiritual*.

The prophet Daniel addresses the

plight of his nation of Judah, at that time experiencing in exile their rejection of the Covenant. He sets the example *for us*:

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed the sins of my people. I said, " You are faithful to your covenant and show constant love to those who love you and do what you command. We have sinned, we have been evil, we have done wrong. We have rejected what you commanded us to do and have turned away from what you showed us was right. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our rulers, our ancestors, and our whole nation. You, Lord, always do what is right, but we have always brought disgrace on ourselves. This is true... of all the Israelites whom you scattered in countries near and far because they were unfaithful to you. Our kings, our rulers, and our ancestors have acted shamefully and sinned against you, Lord. You are merciful and forgiving, although we have rebelled against you. We did not listen to you, O LORD our God, when you told us to live according to the laws which you gave us through your servants the prophets.. We sinned against you, and so you brought on us the curses that are written in the Law of Moses, your servant. (Daniel ch 9)

Painful days are on the horizon as dark forces seek worldwide domination. The day of God’s reckoning is near (Revelation 6:17). Through His church He has been issuing a warning to *all* nations—largely unheeded. It is a battle of the spirit as Satan, knowing his time is short, works to oppose the godly and to take back control—and the open allegiance—of mankind (Revelation 12:12).

Increasingly, opposition from friends, family and secular authorities, and even persecution and death will be the lot of those who remain faithful to the Word of God and who resist the attempts to be coerced into idolatrous worship—embracing human traditions of deceptive religious practices. We must pray fervently for those in authority ‘...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness. Ω

A Chance to Live Again

Mankind is concerned about 'the other side'. Is there life after death? If God doesn't 'call' me am I eternally lost?

It's a much-asked question: *What happens to those who die 'unsaved'—and to those who have never heard Christ's message?* That would include many billions down the millennia since the beginning of civilisation. Are they 'lost'? And it would paint a picture of God as unfair, uncaring—and certainly not the one who *'...so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten son'* for us.

Divine Plan

It's easy to assume, looking at our chaotic world, that all is random, just time and chance. Some take refuge in 'conspiracy theories' (someone out there 'pulling the strings'), but most of mankind is simply confused! The *truth?* There is indeed a power in control of events.

That power is the Creator—the one who *'...left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness'* (Acts 14:17). He lives eternally, this is His world—and He turns human actions to fulfill His ultimate purpose.

That purpose is to share with mankind the entirety of His creation: *'...The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ'* (Romans 8:16-17). Given man's hostility to the way of life He revealed for us, God had designed a selection process to be worked out over a seven thousand year plan.

The Invitation

Given human resistance to the Creator's plan, since we first walked the earth, He has sought out those who express willingness to carry out His will. From the beginning God's grand design has been passed on—by those who were given the promise of a Deliverer. There have always been those few who remained faithful and were motivated by God's Spirit: *'...prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 2:21).*

[Adam lived to relay his first-hand experience to Lamech—his ninth generation descendant.]

Down the centuries individual believers have been selected by God to share this inheritance. In due time the Deliverer (Jesus, God become human flesh) and the church became the matrix in which increasing numbers committed as His offspring through the indwelling of His Spirit.

At the Deliverer's return (John 14:3) this advance party will serve with Jesus in the restoration of an Earth devastated by human mismanagement. The fearful who survive the coming chaos will experience the benign effects of divine government (eg Isaiah ch 2). They too, then freed from Satanic influence, will be invited to become *'my sons and daughters'*, spoke God (II Corinthians 6:18).

But the rest, the vast bulk of

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

mankind? They are a key element of the next stage of the divine plan.

Renewed Life

In a discussion with opposing Jewish leaders Jesus had this to say: *'...the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation'* (John 5:28-29). Two categories of people—and two resurrections.

The apostle Paul confirms that *'...as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming'* (I Corinthians 15:22-23). A series of resurrections. These will *'...live and reign with Christ a thousand years'* (Revelation 20:4). Jesus was raised from the dead three days after his death on the cross: *'...now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept [ie, died]'*.

John conveys a message to us from the Father to Jesus (Revelation 1:1). In it He makes clear that there is a further resurrection: *'...the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished'* (ch 20:5). Two resurrections of humanity, then—but a millennium apart.

The Human Spirit

To echo Paul's query in another context: *How are the dead raised up, and with what body will they come?'* The dead are, of course, dead. Just dust (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21). They don't know anything

and all activities have ceased: '... *the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward*' (ch 9:5).

But there is in us a 'spirit', the '*spirit [Heb ruach] in man*' (Job 32:8). It is not immortal as is God's Spirit, but it 'returns to God' upon our death—described as being in '*hell* (Heb *sheol*—the grave, *not* a furnace!'. It retains all our characteristics and will imprint the body when restored to life—at either the first or the second resurrection.

A God gives His Spirit only to those who are living in submission to His will

Second Resurrection

When Jesus returns the righteous dead will be raised in a spirit body (I Corinthians 15:44), while 'the rest of the dead' remain in their final resting place. This would include the vast majority of the estimated 108 billion born on earth since man first walked the planet. It includes the multiple millions (5.4 million last year) of under-fives who die annually worldwide. Without the indwelling Spirit of God (a personal choice) they are all 'lost'.

God in His loving plan for us has addressed the future of these 'lost'. As we have seen, He tells John: '*...the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished*' (Revelation 20:5).

A Physical resurrection

The people of Israel (the descendants of Jacob) are described as '*...as the sand of the sea*' in numbers. They were selected to be the torch-bearer of a right relationship with the one true God, but let the flame almost extinguish. Only a remnant remained faithful and the ten tribes were scattered. (James 1:1). However, the divine

promises remain true, and the Scriptures predict that with a 'new heart' (conversion, the implant of God's Spirit) they will return to the Land of Promise (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

This remnant—which will survive the devastation and chaos of the end-time—is but a miniscule fraction of that vast multitude of Jacob's descendants through the ages to this day. Ezekiel then describes what will happen to the rest of Israel under the analogy of a resurrection out of their graves: '*...Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people [Israel] I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel*' (ch 37:11-12).

The prophet then describes how this will happen: '*...I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live*' (vv.5-6). Clearly a restoration to physical life!

Universal Restoration

The apostle John in vision saw beyond the millennial reign of Christ to a time when '*...the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished*' (Revelation 20:5). He then recounts what follows:

'...I [John] saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (vv.12-13)

They were raised from their graves for judgment (v.4)—not simply a passing of a sentence but a span of time when they would be confronted with the claims of the Messiah and given the opportunity to enter a relationship with the Father: '*...whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*' (v.15). Some *were* written into that Book—*ie*, they *were* enrolled as '*sons and daughters of the Almighty*'.

Judgment Day

All of mankind—every man, woman and child—will thus face our Creator. Those in this life who follow Christ are judged day by day—now, in this life (I Peter 4:17). Those who survive into the millennial Kingdom will, with Satan suppressed, be judged by their works (Matthew 25:31ff).

During the millennial reign of Messiah all of mankind will follow one faith, be subject to the divine Law, motivated by the divine Spirit (Isaiah ch 2)

But those—from the beginning of time who are not in this life reconciled with the Father will be raised in their physical body—as exemplified by the fate of earlier civilisations. Jesus addressed this.

He toured his nation exercising divine power in restoring the sick to health and raising the dead. This was especially so in Capernaum—a city which turned a blind eye to his 'mighty works': '*..And you, Capernaum, which are exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell [hades, the grave]: for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you*' **cont'd p.5**

Satan's Last Throw

The Devil is largely regarded as a fiction or a music hall joke with his pitchfork, horns and a red body-sock presiding over a fiery 'hell'. But he is real as our world will before long experience.

The work of this Adversary of mankind, Satan, the Devil, is unfinished. Until Jesus Christ returns to take up the reins of government Satan remains 'the god of this world': *'...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). He is *'...the spirit that now works in [Gk presently energizes] the children of disobedience'* Ephesians 2:2.

By influencing the world's philosophy, its educational systems, its economics, its culture—and mainly through its Babylonian religion presently propagated by apostate Christianity—he has sought to undermine the true purpose of God's creation. But all of that will be swept away by the establishing of the benign rule of God when Jesus will be *'...king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one'* (Zechariah 14:9).

Satan Banished

In this age, Satan works his evil worldwide, under restraint from the LORD. He is free to test those called by God, but subject to boundaries (Job 1:12). Frustrated by God's presence on earth through His Spirit in His saints Satan turns his venomous destructive wrath on mankind in general.

When Christ returns at the end of man's botched tenancy of Earth, Satan will be bound—restrained totally as in a prison and with zero influence over mankind or the elements for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

Last Throw

After this millennium of unrivalled peace and prosperity it is time for the great judgment—termed 'a great white throne' (v.11). God will raise up those who have died without Christ—the vast majority of humankind.

Wherever on this round planet they died they will be returned to life—physical life as exemplified by Ezekiel (ch 37): *'...the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Gk.hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works'* Revelation 20:13.

The Devil now seizes his chance to defy the Almighty! He and his

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Live Again? ...from p4 (Matthew 11>23-24). So, too, with other cities (v.21).

Wrote Paul: *'...as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order'* (I Corinthians 15:23-24). It's a fair plan, a perfect plan designed by God before the world began. Ω

demons set out to deceive and then to mobilize those who have been resurrected in a last ditch attempt to overthrow Jesus Christ: *'...Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea'* (vv.7-8).

['Gog and Magog' is a name for anti-god forces]

They attack Jerusalem, the earthly headquarters of the Kingdom, and are inevitably destroyed in a searing conflagration *'from God out of heaven'* (v.9). It is their 'second death' (v.6). It is described by Peter in his second letter: *'...the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word [who sent the Great Flood] are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men'* (ch 3:7).

Satan and his demonic hosts will be judged on their record by the resurrected Christians (I Corinthians 6:3). Their fate is to be destroyed in those same earth-enveloping flames (Revelation 20:10).

All mankind, in the end, will have had ample opportunity to be united with the Father through-out eternity. Ω

Life Renewed

Sarah and I recently ‘attended’ an internet funeral (it was 200 miles from where I watched it!). The death was Sarah’s 99-year old aunt. A moving message from the pastor, and the content was undoubtedly a comfort to the family and those who knew her well. If anyone truly deserved heaven then it was Aunt Molly.

And that was the point of the message—that in her long involved life she was surely worthy of the reward of, immediately upon her death, going to ‘be with Jesus’. Indeed, up to her final year she was still busily helping out the ‘younger ones’ (80s and 90s!) in her care home and involved in various church activities. The thought of heaven was a guiding principle for her.

Curiously, though, the pastor didn’t comment on any Bible texts that referred to heaven. There certainly are many such. Yet none of them, properly understood, provide that promise of immediate transport to heaven when we die. Rather the entire reference is to a future *resurrection*.

Now, ‘resurrection’ implies a prior death. And the Bible has much to say on both these matters. Our Christian faith is firmly rooted in the Scriptures—the Old and the New Testaments, and they present us with a consistent understanding of life after death.

The Human Spirit

Fundamentally, we are created from the elements of earth (‘...*dust you are*’ - Genesis 3:19). But these elements are totally inanimate—there is no inherent life. That life was added in the beginning by the Creator—the life-giving force of ‘...*the spirit in man*’ (Heb *ruach*—Job 32:8), which animates and integrates with the inert physical body. This is commonly known as the ‘soul’, (Heb *nephesh*, Gk. *psuche*). Of itself, the human spirit is mortal—it can be destroyed, for God alone has inherent immortality (I Timothy 6:16).

Our human spirit retains all there is to know about us, both physically and spiritually. By divine power a new body is given at one of two separate resurrection sequences, moulded from the preserved spirit. When we die, the human spirit has left the body and ‘...*then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*’ (Ecclesiastes 12:7). It passes into His care until restored to life.

Death Means Death

Most of the world, including most of the Christian faith, mistakenly believes that conscious life continues after death by means of an ‘immortal soul’. Yet one prophet notes [*...the soul, the living being—Heb nephesh that sins will die*] (Ezekiel 18:3, cp Matthew 10:28).

This was the understanding of the ancient people of God: ‘...[*Man;s] breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish*’ (Psalm 146:4). Again, ‘...*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence*’ (Psalm 115:17). King Solomon summed it up thus: ‘...*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten*’ (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

Restoration

But, of course, that’s not the end. There’s a divinely-driven fair plan in place whereby *all* mankind will have opportunity to recover from the blight (death) of the sin that infects all of us. Wrote Paul: ‘...*as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order*’ (I Corinthians 15:22-23).

I mentioned *two* resurrections, and they are ‘in order’. The apostle John, in Revelation *ch* 20, introduces them. *First* is the resurrection that accompanies the return of Jesus as King of kings (v.5).

Paul explains: ‘...*the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord’ (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). [The ‘dead in Christ’ are those who in this life live in accord with the indwelling Spirit of God].

It is at *this* time that God unites the dormant human spirit of all His be-gotten children with a new spirit body. Writes Paul: ‘...*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory*’ (Colossians 3:4). To the Corinthian brethren he adds: ‘...*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural [Gk. *pseuchikos*] body, and there is a spiritual [Gk. *pneumatikos*] body*’ (I Corinthians 15:37-44).

The return of Jesus Christ will inaugurate his one-thousand year reign over our physical planet. His saints will, as joint-heirs of creation, reign with him as the primeval true faith, the Gospel, encompasses all mankind, and through the holy Spirit mankind becomes transformed into the image of Christ.

A Second Resurrection

Following this millennial reign is a second period of resurrection: ‘...*the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished*’ (Revelation 20:5). Not everyone will have heard the true message of salvation. Nor has everyone escaped the powerful influence of the Devil who has diverted them from God. Paul tells us: ‘...*if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*’ (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

At this (second) resurrection all will hear and will again choose God’s way—or Satan’s way (Revelation 20:8). People from past generations—from Sodom, from ancient Israel, for example—will rise from the dead to face a period of judgment. God takes the long view. Ω

History is not random but a carefully orchestrated stream designed to fulfil God's unchanging purpose

Leaf through a history book and it may appear that our past is a jumble of unrelated events. In fact, there's a stream of time that links seeming random human activity to a grand plan that will at last set mankind on the path to true peace and prosperity.

This time-line was pre-set before the creation of the world—a world that was designed for this sole purpose. The record of creation defines man's limited conditional tenure of the planet, allotting us a defined time span. Events on a cosmic scale happen '*...in the fulness of time*', when God so decrees.

Purpose

All of creation was placed under mankind's jurisdiction, for our benefit—the animal creation, the soil and its mineral wealth, the heavens with its sun and moon and stars, the spirit world and not least our God-given talents and skills (Hebrews 2:6-8). It was placed at our disposal—but now lies in ruins, all corrupted by our misuse.

But man is the principle point, the acme, of creation, created from earth's elements yet God-like: '*... God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*' (Genesis 1:27). We were appointed to exercise *godly* dominion of earth and its resources—'king of the world'. But through our own choice we abdicated our sovereignty.

We yielded control to a fallen created spirit who is now '*...god of this world*' (II Corinthians 4:4) and has '*...deceived the whole*

THE STREAM OF TIME

world' (Revelation 12:9). He has succeeded in transforming himself into an '*...angel of light [enlightenment]*' (Corinthians 11:14). Six millennia of deception has given us a world at the point of self-destruction. But—his and our rule is ending, for the Devil '*...has but a short time*'—and he is very angry (Revelation 12:12).

A People Prepared

For two thousand five hundred years God sifted mankind as He prepared a people for Himself. Then at a precise moment in time He had ready a nation, a people tested in the fire of exile and slavery' which was designed to be a model of good government and a beacon of light in a dark world (Genesis 15:13-16). The nation of Israel was born.

As a model nation it failed, but it carried forward the divine Law and the divine Name—a witness to mankind to this day. More, Israel harboured '*...the promised seed*', the Deliverer from the malign grip of Satan: '*...when the fulness [completeness] of the time was come, God sent forth [Gk. ex- apostello] his Son, made of a woman, made under the law*' (Galatians 4:4).

The Promised Seed

When our first parents sinned and broke their covenant with our Creator, God promised them he would send a Saviour, a Deliverer: '*...I will put enmity between you [the Devil] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*' (Genesis 3:15). That is, eventual complete defeat of

Satan and the triumph of the 'one seed', Jesus.

The prophet Daniel was accorded an unveiling of when this would happen. He was provided with the key to the time, the 'fulness of time' when the Deliverer would appear (Daniel 9:24-27).

Beginning in 457BC there would be a period of 483 years to the unveiling of the 'seed', the Messiah. The period ended in 27AD

when Jesus began his ministry. It is a prophecy anathema to Jews:

'May the bones of the hands and the bones of the fingers decay and decompose, of him who turns the pages of the book of Daniel, to find out the time of Daniel 9:24-27, and may his memory rot from off the face of the earth forever' (Talmud). The reason, clearly, is that it pinpoints the year when the long-awaited messiah would come—Jesus.

[The 'seventy weeks' comprise a series of 'sevens': 7weeks (7x7)+ 434 (62x7)+1 (7)=490]

Historic Panorama

But this prophet has much more to say. Earlier he received a royal command from King Nebuchadnezzar to interpret a dream (of which he had forgotten the details!). God gave Daniel both the detail and its interpretation, thus cementing his influence in the kingdom. The dream referred to '*...the latter days*' (ch 2:28).

The King's vision was of a huge image made with several metals.

Prophetic Time

Prophecy makes use of symbols. *Ezekiel* notes that a 'day' may be used to represent a year (ch 4:6; see also Numbers 14:34). So 'seventy weeks' is 490 days or, prophetically, 490 years

It was, as we will see, a panorama of history from that time (the early sixth century BC) until the establishment of God's everlasting Kingdom—yet future, but imminent.

The image (of a man) had a *golden* head—interpreted as the King, as the leader of the Babylonian kingdom. It would be replaced by a new dynasty—the Medo-Persian; not so politically strong and prosperous (made of *silver*) and which overthrew Babylon c.426BC.

In 334BC the Persian Empire was overthrown by Alexander (the Great)—as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was inferior to prior kingdoms (bronze) and after his death the kingdom was divided to four generals. It was eventually succeeded by a *fourth* kingdom noted for its strength (iron) - the Roman Empire (*ch* 2:40). This fourth kingdom (Rome) was predicted (v.44, 7:7) to continue until God through Jesus the Messiah sets up His Kingdom.

Lingering Empire

Over the centuries following the resurrection of Jesus the church in Rome gained ascendancy and political influence. In the sixth century the Emperor Justinian molded his legal code on Catholic jurisprudence. The political influence from the East (Byzantium) started to decline and the Papacy assumed the role of moral authority for all mankind, becoming known as the 'Holy Roman Empire'.

By 800AD the Papacy (Leo III) had developed the boldness to crown Charlemagne as Emperor, implying its supremacy in civil affairs. 'Rome' was alive and well under the authority of the universal Roman church.

For over a thousand years the Roman church then dominated the world with an iron fist, donating to the world such abominable institutions as the Inquisition, and using the secular subservient State powers—with death, when necessary—to enforce its beliefs.

The influence of the Reformation and humanism weakened its authority and by the end of the eighteenth century the Roman

Church had lost its controlling status as a civil government. However, in 1929 Italy and the Church signed (by Mussolini and a papal representative) the *Lateran Treaty* whereby the Church recognized the State of Italy—which in turn recognized Vatican City (the 'Holy See') as a sovereign State.

Nearly every nation now has representation to the Vatican with nearly 90 on site in Vatican City, while there are 115 'apostolic nunciatures' abroad. It now wields powerful influence politically and socially worldwide. The 'Roman Empire' has not gone away!

Prophecy

Bible students will recognize the identification of the Catholic Church with 'Babylon', a great world-dominating idolatrous religious system, identified in Scripture as 'antichrist' - and increasingly influencing supine Protestantism.

Having throughout the Christian

centuries claimed equality with God, changed God's festivals (imposed Christmas, Easter *etc*), altered His laws (*eg* substituted Sunday for Sabbath), persecuted and murdered those who would not submit, and harboured every foul practice, the Papacy is now—undercover of its current 'cosy' pope—preparing to unleash its final attempt at world domination. It will with faux miracles mesmerize the entirety of mankind.

'...Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God [ie the church], shewing himself that he is God'

Draconian powers will force mankind into a universal, humanist or atheist worship of Satan—on penalty of economic sanctions—already in place in many nations—which will be enforced for non-compliance by State authority (And, ultimately, by torture and death.)

It will, however, incur the divine wrath. Jesus, the Messiah, by his life, death and resurrection has de-throned the 'god of this world' and is about to assume his rightful role as global King of kings and Lord of lords. Satan's destructive 'new world order' will be replaced by the divine New World Order that will restore Godly righteous living to those who survive into his Kingdom.

So ends man's six thousand year incompetent rule, increasingly under the control of the Adversary. Throughout this stream of time God has been in control channeling our will to His perfect will—and always on time. **Ω**

unsigned articles are by the Editor

MiniStudy**UNCLEAN!**

And that you may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean (Leviticus 10:10)

The LORD, in His guidance to Israel, required rules—often derided by present-day commentators—that regulated day-to-day life. They are portrayed as a burden, ‘too heavy to carry’. Yet the principles that drive these regulations are of no less value in the modern world.

- Our world is sick. Five million under-fives die annually from a range of infections and other health issues. Epidemics rage across nations often merging into pandemics that take the lives of millions (eg one third the world population from the black death, fifty million from the 1918 flu). Water-borne diseases kill over two million every year, and even in s-called advanced nations disease prematurely ends productive lives of millions
- Our attempts to eradicate such diseases have limited effect, whether massive programmes of vaccination (eg Bill Gates) or water purification projects or mass screening. Yet malaria, tuberculosis , cholera, measles *etc* remain a challenge and virulent epidemics recur. In ‘advanced’ nations billions are expended on a vast array of drugs, on surgical intervention, on alternative treatments in a vain attempt to defeat ill-health. And world population nevertheless explodes. Like the ‘poor’, ill health is always with us!
- At its birth as a nation (c.1500BC), Israel was mentored by the Creator. He rehearsed with them the ancient foundation principles for a successful life in all its aspects, not least for health. God’s ‘health service’ could be summed up as ‘holiness’—separation, cleanliness with all its ramifications
- Provision was made, for example, for the safe disposal of human waste products: ‘...*make sure that you have a small shovel in your equipment. When you go out to the toilet area, use the shovel to dig a hole. Then, after you relieve yourself, bury the waste in the hole*’ (Deuteronomy 23:13). Advice ignored in later times when excrement was tipped into open sewers with terrible disease consequences. Legislation, in Israel, was enacted for those who contracted contagious diseases like leprosy. At first signs of infection they were required to report to the health authorities (the priests) and were isolated—quarantined—and reported back in seven days. When the diagnosis was confirmed they were required to leave for a secure dwelling ‘outside the camp’: ‘...*As long as you have the disease, you are unclean [Heb. Tame] and must live alone outside the camp [in a ‘dwelling-place’]*’ (Leviticus 13:46)
- Strict adherence to hygiene was mandatory, and washing in clean running water required following contact with dead bodies or with animals: ‘...*You are my chosen people, so don't eat the meat of any of your livestock that was killed by a wild animal. Instead, feed the meat to dogs*’ (Exodus 22:31). Should a rodent or other small fall into a cooking utensil it had to be cleansed or destroyed. As a result of Israel’s submission to His guidance the LORD promises ‘... *I will take sickness away from the midst of you*’ (23:25)
- Modern Israel’s homelands are fast becoming like that inherited by their forefathers: ‘...*The land, unto which you go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness*’ (Ezra 9:11). With our lust for ‘more’ we have polluted our food supplies, ignored health warnings, permitted the consumption of food not ‘...*sanctified [set apart] by the word of God*’ (I Timothy 4:3, Leviticus 11). We pay the price
- Above all, we have broken the strong link between national peace, economic prosperity, abundant mental and physical health—and our willing submission to our Creator’s guidance through His Word. The consequence is national decay and destructive disease Ω

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