

# NEW **Horizons**

*Vol 25 No 3*

*May/June 2021*

*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.**

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## **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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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**

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# new Horizons

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## Why did that happen to me? It's a question we face all too often

That book of wisdom, *Proverbs*, has much practical advice. For example: *'When you see trouble coming, don't be stupid and walk right into it-- be smart and hide'* (Proverbs 22:3 CEV). Take evasive action!

The credit card account is placed in the drawer - and forgotten. *Consequence*: added interest. You lock the keys in the car. *Consequence*: inconvenience and probably expense. Minor consequences these (usually!) - but the principle applies across life: our actions have consequences, good or bad. Not that we can avoid all that life throws at us, for *'...time and chance happens to all of us'*.

More advice from Proverbs, personifying wisdom:

*'Wisdom shouts in the streets wherever crowds gather. She shouts in the marketplaces and near the city gates as she says to the people, "How much longer will you enjoy being stupid fools? Won't you ever stop sneering and laughing at knowledge? Listen as I correct you and tell you what I think. You completely ignored me and refused to listen; you rejected my advice and paid no attention when I warned you. So when you are struck by some terrible disaster, or when trouble and distress surround you like a whirlwind, I will laugh and make fun. You will ask for my help, but I won't listen; you will search, but you won't find me. No, you would not learn, and you refused to respect the LORD. You rejected my advice and paid no attention when I warned you. Now you will eat the fruit of what you have done"'*

So, we have dire Government warnings printed on our cigarette pack, but ignored by many young folk, and

usually with the predicted consequence of a shortened life and a painful death. Or, we ignore warnings that concern covid social distancing, or our unhealthy excess food intake fuelling a coffin-full of ill-health. We accept lending institutions' offers of loans which all too often lead to default - accumulated unpayable interest, home repossession, debtor's prison. Young - and old - blinded by 'love' (or lust) engage in unsuitable relationships and 'repent at leisure' till divorce do them part (Proverbs 5:3-20). An indolent farmer won't reap a crop. Our children (some) join 'gangs' - and acquire a criminal record (Proverbs 1:10-19). Then we wonder, *'why?'*

## Consequences...

All sane parents will do their utmost to *'...train up [their] child in the way he should go'* (Proverbs 22:6). Sadly, given appalling education systems and peer pressures the outcome isn't always what we would hope.

### Life on the edge

On a global scale, too, there are consequences. Man was charged with 'dominion' (bring order) over all the earth - to *'...dress and keep'* it. Applying our common sense and observation and experiment we are to determine how, for our own well-being, to live in harmony with nature - for nature will always win. So we destroy forests, we over-fish the oceans, we pollute our atmosphere and mismanage our water resources, we ignore laws of health, we are profligate with energy. And we wonder why we're in a mess. *Consequences*.

Then there's economics. To maximize profit, lending institutions unwisely invest in loans for 'sub-prime' properties, concealing their stupidity by intricate insurance deals. Result?

The world banking system fails to learn from the 2008 crisis and teeters on the edge of self destruction. Government ignores basic 101 Economics and spend, spend, spend on hare-brained social welfare schemes. Individuals also, consumed by the desire for more, over-extend their resources and face bankruptcy and misery. Nations repeat the mistakes of the past, meddling in the affairs of other nations: *'...ignore the past - and you will re-live it'*. It's a lesson for all of us. *Consequences*.

What about 'nano-technology'? Have we explored the possible consequences? Or GM - genetically modified - plants, or human-animal embryos or human fertilization? And what of the long-term effects of the mass slaughter of infants in the womb? All have consequences for you, for me, for the nations, for mankind globally.

The apostle Paul - in the context of the Lord's Supper - gives advice we can apply generally: *'...if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world'* (I Corinthians 11:). Take the advice how you will - *our actions or inactions have inevitable consequences*.

There's little the average Joe Bloggs can do to affect the crass stupidity of Government. We can, however, take Solomon's advice: when you *'...see trouble coming, don't be stupid and walk right into it-- be smart and hide'*.

Consequences, however, are not confined to our day-to-day life. Our future is at stake.

### The Big Picture

All but a tiny percentage of earth's 8 billion believe in a 'god' of some

kind. They pray, they attend festivals, they worship, they expect their god to be there for them, they contemplate, they believe in some form of after-life, they have their inspired writings. No less so among the two billion Christians. The Christian 'holy book', the Bible, is a *book of consequences*.

The Bible is clear that man, far from evolving, is on a downward spiral. Of course, knowledge has increased, earth's products have been exploited to our advantage. But six thousand years of civilization have utterly failed to make us better people. Four and a half millennia ago man self-destructed. Only one family of eight survived. Noah, a '*...preacher of righteousness*' (II Peter 2:5), alone retained a pure relationship with the Creator, passing on that spiritual knowledge - the true faith - to his progeny. Succeeding generations learned from him the revealed path to success. Half a millennium later that knowledge - though diluted (Joshua 24:2) - still guided mankind.

In Abraham's time, for example, the Amorite people - though on a downward slide - would not merit God's judgment for another four centuries (Genesis 15:16). Canaanite tribes at the time had the righteous example and witness of Melchizedek, Priest-King of Salem, one of their city states (*ch* 14). They had, too, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. But they didn't change their ways and experienced God's judgment when Israel drove them out of the Land.

Consequences for our actions are certain - even though God is '*...merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*' (Psalm 103:8).

### Divine Intervention

Abraham's descendants through Isaac - the people of Israel - inherited the material and spiritual promises unconditionally given by the LORD to the patriarch. They had a Constitution and a legal system that was a model for all mankind (Deuteronomy 4:8). They chose, however, the path of oppression and idolatry. The re-

sult? Eviction from their inheritance - the *House of Judah* for seventy years. The *House of Israel* - a separate entity - in the eighth century BC was exiled and has yet to return. Again - *consequences*.

Empires rise and fall - Greece, Rome, the mediaeval European Holy Roman Empire, the Islamic empire. Add to that the globe-girdling British Empire and Commonwealth - now reduced to a rump. Not random events or bad luck but the consequence of moral and spiritual decline.

For God - the God of the Christian Scriptures - is not 'hands off' but is involved in His creation, for '*...the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will*' (Daniel 4:25). No less so today than in Nebuchadnezzar's era. In part, the Creator's intervention in human affairs reflects human behaviour - consequences.

As with any complex instrument - your computer, for example - you function optimally when you conform to the Maker's *Instruction Manual*. Load a rogue programme or a 'virus' on your computer and the system crashes or won't function properly. That 'rogue programme', for us, is our rejection of divine revelation, the Maker's *Operating System*.

### Prophetic Future

As with the Ninevites' response to Jonah's warning, you, me, our nation - and our world—face the challenge of change.

Mankind vainly struggles to 'get it right', with gains and losses. We fail to recognize that while we may pay lip service to 'God' yet we can't ignore His guidance. The designer of a successful product knows how it works. But if we don't follow his instructions - breakdown.

That's what has happened to us. We are 'broken'. Jesus the Messiah has made full restoration available for all mankind through his sacrifice and the gift of the holy Spirit.

God, through His prophets, has made

known the painful consequence of ignoring His guidance. As a species - and individually - if we *change* ('repent') we can have the 'Nineveh outcome': '*...God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And God was compassionate over the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it*' (Jonah 3:10). Ω

### Basic Principles

*Ignore the following foundation Biblical principles for life - and negative consequences are inevitable*

- There is one God: JHVH
- He created everything
- He is imminent in creation
- There is but one faith
- Man is unique: don't cross species boundaries
- Care for the environment: '*dress and keep it*'
- There is but one race: mankind
- Discrimination: no respect of persons
- Treat others as you would be treated
- Marriage is a life-long commitment between one man and woman
- Promiscuity bears bad fruit
- Children have to be taught to behave
- Properly enforced Law is essential to our well-being

- take stock of your life-style. If you have habits harmful to your health (drugs, tobacco, alcohol etc) - quit them
- *put your financial house in order; there's always a rainy day - live within your means*
- make connections: '*...some friends don't help, but a true friend is closer than your own family*' (Proverbs 18:24)
- *nourish your spiritual side: '...man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word of God'* (Luke 4:4)

## ‘...with what body?’

It’s a question posed to the apostle Paul—and still puzzles many: ‘... How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?’ (I Corinthians 15:35)

Jesus tells us that ‘...all in their graves will come forth’ (John 5). So how could that be? Can’t even bones decay with age, become scattered? What’s left to resurrect? Of course, it’s not an issue with most in Christendom, for isn’t it expected that the ‘soul’ wafts to heaven immediately on death—the substance of most funeral orations? But if that is true then surely there is no need for a resurrection. And if no resurrection then Christianity is a sham—our faith is useless (I Corinthians 15:14-17).

But, continues Paul, ‘...now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept [ie, have died in Christ]’ (v.20). A crowd of over five hundred had met with him (v.6), as had the Twelve on numerous occasions during six weeks of teaching (Acts 1:3). Jesus is the first to transform from a physical to a spirit body. He is the firstborn of many.

### In the Grave

What’s going on, then, between when we die and when we are raised from the grave? The Scriptures are clear that even the most righteous don’t, when they die, have any interaction with God: ‘...in death there is no remembrance of you: in the grave who shall give you thanks?’ (Psalm 6:5). Nor can you praise Him: ‘...The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence’ (Psalm 115:17). As King Solomon sums it up: ‘...the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing’ (Ecclesiastes 9:5). So—what is going on?

### In God’s Image

Mankind was created by divine fiat from the soil under our feet, from the elements found in it. As such he differs little from the lower creation. Indeed humans and animals and sea-creatures are all (Hebrew) *nephesh*,

that is, ‘creatures’.

Mankind—male and female—alone in creation is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). But common to all species is *ruach*, spirit, even in the tiniest insect. It’s the ‘operating instructions’, the programme for every activity, and imprinted in its unique DNA.

The patriarch Job calls this added element the ‘spirit in man’ (ch 32:8). It is inspired by God, is subject to destruction (for God alone is immortal) and is separate from the body, as is clear from the restoration to life of Jairus’s daughter: ‘...her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her food’ (Luke 8:55).

We don’t know if the human spirit passes passively into God’s presence, but we know it is in His care, in a state called *sheol*, until it is resurrected—and united with a body (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

### With What Body?

We are assured that ‘...it doesn’t yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him’ (I John 3:2). As wrote the apostle Paul: ‘...[Christ] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself’ (Philippians 3:21).

That’s awesome—to return from the grave in a new body; not our old corruptible one but a body that is no longer subject to pain, nor subject to decay and death, and, when appropriate, shining like the resurrected Jesus. A body that is powerful, that exercises the full range of spiritual gifts, that is not constrained by physical objects.

It’s a body that has *substance*—as witnessed by Jesus’s post-resurrection appearance to the disciples. He suddenly appeared before them in a locked room, and not as a disembodied spirit. As he tells them:

‘...a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have’ and he then invited them to touch him (Luke 24: 36-43). Paul notes: ‘...as we bore the image of the earthy man [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Christ]’ (I Corinthians 15:49).

The apostle adds ‘...It is sown a natural [Gk.*pseuchikos*] body, it is raised a spiritual [Gk.*pneumatikos*] body; there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body’ (v.44). Not some kind of wraith, *not* a disembodied spirit, *not* a ghost! They will be visible but intrinsically shining as does Christ.

The Scriptures, by analogy, portray angels both in a glorious form inspiring awe (Revelation 22:8), and as a stranger in a visible body you might entertain in your home (Hebrews 13: 2). Recall that Abraham provided hospitality (unleavened bread, steaks, water) to ‘three men’—in fact to the LORD and two accompanying angels’ (Genesis 18:8).

The Creator placed Earth and all on it under the dominion of the newly-created and perfect mankind (ch 2:8), but through our sin we lost that authority, yielding it to a fallen angel. Our destiny is to regain that authority, with angels assisting us.

The return of Jesus will be to an earth decimated by man’s destructive activity and by the judgments of the LORD. A remnant of Israel will return to the land of promise in shock but in repentance. The resurrected saints will be assigned to supervise the refurbishing of our planet, to rebuilding the waste places, to implementing the divine legal, administrative and economic systems, to preventative health and environmental care. All under the guidance of him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The saints, clothed in their spirit body, will be visible to this remnant, tangible: ‘...yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see your teachers’ (Isaiah 30:20). Ω

## The Fellowship of His Suffering

**Matt Steel**

We are all familiar with the encouraging words found in Hebrews 10:25 which admonish us in “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

There are two significant parts here. The primary directive to this warning is that we should not forsake, reject or abandon gathering together as the saints, as the children of God. But why is that? Why did the writer tell us to not give up on this assembling together.

Was it so we could pass the plate and collect tithes? *No!*

Was it so we could have more and larger church events? *Not really.*

Was it so we could have safety in numbers? *Perhaps.*

Was it so we could encourage and support one another in a world that is dangerous and deadly to the new creature in Christ inside each and every one of us? *Absolutely!*

To truly understand what we are being told here we must ask a broader question: Why do people gather together at all?

Well, in simple terms it's for the purpose of mutual support. For example, companies were formed so workers could collectively do things that no single individual could accomplish. Another example might be from the days of the Old West when a posse was formed for the purpose of bringing fugitives to justice. Another example is seen in support groups such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* which was formed so that the encouragement and support of the whole group as a could help the suffering individual stay sober and healthy and live life in a more positive way.

People need support. Even the most introverted of us benefits from per-

sonal interaction and from participating in the collective congregation. In fact, I have often thought of the church as a support group of sorts for recovering sin addicts.

Each one of us has been, and to a certain extent still is, an addict of sin.

Just two chapters past that first admonition, the writer of Hebrews in 12:1 tells us to “... *lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*” Almost before we are aware of it, sin can wrap its destructive tendrils around us and bring us down and away from the healthy life we so very much want to live. Life is hard and we need to come together in what Paul calls “... *the fellowship of His sufferings*” (Philippians 3:10).

This fellowship is not just with Christ Jesus but is also with one another. Now some might say, “I don’t think I would be missed; I don’t have responsibility; I don’t do anything in church.” Yet that assessment misses completely the purpose of fellowship and the mysterious power of encouragement that your brothers and sisters in Christ feel when they just see that you have joined them in the fellowship of His suffering.

This reminds me of the *Fellowship of the Ring* from Tolkien’s famed novels. We are a fellowship, not of a ring but of the Lamb, of the Lion and the suffering of the Son of God. We are on a journey in an unholy land, there is darkness and danger all around us. But if we stick together, we can fight for one another. We can stop one another from falling off a frozen windswept ledge. We can fend off the fiery darts of the enemy and perhaps stop that dragon taking his toll on our fellowship.

The second significant part to the warning in Hebrews 10:25 is tied to the first. He says “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

What do you think the “Day” is that the writer is referring to? Well, it makes me think of the Day of the Lord, the day when all our suffering, all our efforts, all our struggle, will finally end and we will be changed. We will be changed completely and thoroughly into a being of righteousness, goodness, power and eternal life in Christ Jesus. The day that we long for, and so very much want to arrive at, ready and prepared for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

But what if we are all coming to a different Day before we come to the Day of the Lord? What if the Day that we are all hurtling towards is in fact a Day of darkness and struggle? What if the Day is out there when we will no longer be able to gather in freedom? A Day when we will no longer be able to peaceably assemble in our fellowship of suffering? In fact, we have already seen this situation over these last year, haven’t we? We have seen churches around the country prevented by local and state governments from fellowshiping. Believers prevented from coming together to worship, to encourage one another and support one another. These measures have even affected our small congregation. Think about it. Last year we were not able to gather for our most solemn annual observance.

We could not take the Passover together as the larger Body of Christ. We had, in a sense, come to a Day that our fellowship was outlawed. Now some might say this was for the health of the community and we were doing our part to help and perhaps this was true. But it shows very clearly how tenuous our freedom to peacefully assemble really is.

There is a Day coming, a Day that precedes that Day of the Lord when our fellowship will be outlawed, not as an unintended consequence of measures taken to combat a disease, but rather because what we know and what we believe will be considered by others to be a disease. A dangerous pathogen to the power and control of our old enemy. We know this is true because it **cont’d p.5**

## THE HIDDEN RULER

**One ‘coincidence’ too many and we’re tempted to think ‘who’s pulling the strings?’. The reality is—*someone is!***

Here’s what US president Woodrow Wilson wrote (1913):

"Since I entered politics, I have chiefly had men's views confided to me privately. Some of the biggest men in the United States, in the field of commerce and manufacture, are afraid of something. They know that there is a power somewhere so organized, so subtle, so watchful, so interlocked, so complete, so pervasive, that they had better not speak above their breath when they speak in condemnation of it."

What the President wrote (and whoever he refers to) is a clear reflection of the Christian Scriptures, for there is indeed an unseen force that controls and manipulates all of human activity—its commerce, its education, its culture, its religion.

It does, of course, have a human face—the countless thousands through time who listen to his whispers and implement his destructive and deceptive policies.

The Adversary’s greatest weapon, however, is *scepticism*, for he has persuaded mankind that he is a myth, a figment of wild religious imagination. The Bible, however, unveils his true identity. It is man’s adversary, the Devil, who has deceived all mankind. Warns the apostle Paul: ‘... *the god of this age [who] 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). John, in reference to the Adversary, adds: ‘...*that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world*’

That ‘brightness’, the good news of deliverance, sheds light on the way of life for which man was designed and created (by Christ), with the ultimate goal of our transformation from

flesh to eternal spirit as members of the divine Family.

It is a whole new way to live, totally opposed to the designs of this evil being. The depths of his intelligence, born out of unknown ages in God’s service and six millennia to learn every human foible, mustn’t be downgraded.

Having coveted godhood and been cast out of God’s presence and seeing the new creation, mankind—destined to be God’s sons—he then plots to usurp man’s God-given (Genesis 1:26-28) sovereignty over the planet. He seduces our first parents to accept his leadership and—at least initially—to reject divine guidance, and claims mankind is under his jurisdiction: ‘...*I will give all these things [all human kingdoms] to you [Jesus] if falling down, you will worship me*’ (Matthew 4:8-9) - a claim Jesus didn’t dispute.

The Adversary still stalks the earth. Peter warns his hearers: ‘...*the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking . whom he may devour.*

***whom resist steadfast in the faith*’ (I Peter 5:8-9).**

### **Fellowship...from p.4**

has happened many times before. Talking about men and woman just like us it says in Hebrews 11:35-38 (NKJV).

“...*Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*”

There is a Day when we will no longer be able to gather, to fellowship. When we will not be able to encour-

age each other. When we will not be able to fight for each other. In that Day we will of course have the Spirit of Christ Jesus in us and on us, strengthening us and supporting us. But we also need something else. We need the ability to remember, to play over in our minds the friendships, the smiles, the kind words of encouragement, the loving embraces. We need to bring to our remembrance the tears of joy and of suffering, of sharing one another’s burdens, of praising God, singing of His love, the quiet prayers and the spoken Word of God washing over us. We need to remember the fellowship.

All these things are only made possible by gathering together. We gather together so that we may store up these moments for help and comfort in the day of darkness to come.

There are always sicknesses that keep us away from community. Certainly, people are doing their part to not spread Covid-19. There are family events and hopefully some fun weekend trips. Sometimes a private time for Sabbath rest, prayer and meditation is needed. There are many reasons that we can be kept away from our church fellowship. But I encourage all of us to examine ourselves and make sure that we are not creating a new tradition, a tradition of abandoning the gathering of ourselves together. For most certainly each of us benefits from the love, support, encouragement, and strength we both give and receive from one another. And all the more as we see the day approaching

Above all, dear brothers and sisters, make no mistake. You are needed. You are loved. You are precious and beautifully unique. You are irreplaceable. Your presence does indeed lift the hearts and minds of your brothers and sisters in Christ, with whom you are joined through the Spirit in the Fellowship of His suffering.  
*God bless, be safe—and see you on Sabbath!* Ω

## THE DAYS OF NOAH

**Court Greenfield**  
**In his Word, Christ gives warnings and predictions of the coming end of days and His imminent return to rule on this earth.**

*‘...But concerning that day, and the hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. Now as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man. For as in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark; And they were not aware until the Flood came and took them all away; so shall it also be at the coming of the Son of man. (Matthew 24:36-39)*

When the Bible says that the end times will be like in the days of Noah, it is not only speaking about technology, but about the attitudes and sins of our world. So, how bad was it during Noah’s day?

We can read in Genesis to get an even better picture of what it was like during this time. *And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord repented that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the crawling thing, and the fowl of the air; for I repent that I have made them.” (Genesis 6:5-7)*

To get an even better picture of how bad things had become during Noah’s day, let’s drop down to verses 11-13: *Now the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt – for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said*

*to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold I will destroy them with the earth. (Genesis 6:11-13)*

Now, doesn’t that sound just like our world today - even in our own country? During the terrible hurricanes recently, looters were shooting at the people who were trying to help those who were in trouble. Violence is everywhere. There are many examples of how violent people are becoming and it is only getting worse. You can see why God said that He would have to step in and punish this world – its people and even the animals that are also becoming violent.

### Origin of Civilization

While each man back in Noah’s day had around nine hundred years to perfect various crafts, he also had the same amount of time to develop wrong attitudes and habits. Those alive at the time knew how to work with metals – for both good and bad purposes. This included the development of weapons such as swords and spears.

Where did these evil attitudes and habits come from? It all goes back to the Garden of Eden and freewill, doesn’t it? The first man and woman were presented with a choice between two very different life paths. God created to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food – the *Tree of Life* and also the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. God instructed them to eat freely from any tree in the garden but not to touch or eat of the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* or they would surely die.

Eating the fruit of the *Tree of Life* symbolized choosing to follow God’s will and obey Him, allowing Him to determine how they should live. By eating of the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, they chose to make their own decisions and disobey God. As a result, sin

entered into the world.

### Choice

Adam and Eve’s first two children, Cain and Abel were perfect examples of choosing to live in the way of sin or in obedience to God. *Abel* was righteous and obeyed God. *Cain* was rebellious and intent on getting his own way. He refused to offer the proper sacrifice that God required and when rebuked he killed his own brother out of envy.

The Jewish historian Josephus states that Cain refused to learn from the punishment God placed upon him and instead determined to increase in his wickedness. His only aim was to procure everything that was for his own bodily pleasure, even to the harm to his neighbors. He augmented his household substance through robbery and violence. He was the author of measures and weights, cheating all he dealt with and changed the world through his cunning craftiness. He built a city and constructed walls. His children, especially Tubal-Cain, became experts in martial arts and invented the art of making brass.

### Advanced Knowledge

Most of the time when we think of what it must have been like during the days of Noah, we tend to reason that because it was so long ago that these people back then must not have had anywhere near the knowledge or technology that we have today. We assume we are more advanced or maybe even smarter than they were, but archeologists have proven from finds in the ruins of ancient cities that they did have much more knowledge and technology than we ever thought they had. In fact, we are just now approaching the level of technology that the people living before the Flood enjoyed.

There have been many artifacts discovered from ancient digs proving that there was indeed advanced technology before and after the flood. These are some of the proofs that the ancients were far more advanced than we give them credit.

As we read in Genesis 6:1, men be-

gan to multiply on the earth. According to Strong's Concordance, the original Hebrew word translated "to multiply" means "increase" and "to multiply immeasurably". In other words, the earth experienced a massive population explosion. Due to their extended lifespans, the number of people could have grown to well in excess of five billion by Noah's time.

Knowledge and technology also rapidly increased. According to Genesis 4:17-22 mankind built cities, had cattle ranches, composed and played music, and discovered metallurgy, including how to make alloys such as brass. Think what a person could accomplish with such a long lifespan. Machines and other devices would rapidly become extremely sophisticated. All fields of science would progress with astonishing speed. Because mankind had been created perfect, he would have been much more intelligent than we are today.

Take the example of the ark. Building the ark to provide shelter for all of the animals was a really big job. In fact, it took Noah and his three sons years to build it. It required advanced wood working and ship building knowledge and techniques as well as the use of different tools such as T-squares, reading blueprints, using levels, pulleys, *etc.*

No other ships the size of the ark were built until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. God could have just provided an escape vessel, but He wanted to see if Noah would obey and to give the people a chance to hear Noah's warnings and to repent. Noah was a preacher of righteousness who warned the people of the coming calamity due to their sins.

Have you ever wondered why God had to choose the animals that went into the ark? Why didn't He have Noah pick them? All Noah had to do was choose seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean. He could have done this

easily, so why did God have to do it? The reason Noah couldn't do it was because many of the animals back in Noah's day had already been genetically engineered. Yes, they were genetically modifying plants and animals.

#### **Divine Warning**

Famines and disease were commonplace throughout the land. There are mentions in the Bible of animal attacks from lions and wolves. All of this should have warned the people of the results of their sins and violence. Are we heeding these same warnings today? God made sure that all mankind was told of the coming punishment and offered anyone who changed their ways a place on the ark. However, all rejected God's warning and only eight people survived.

Just as men are doing today, before the flood they were experimenting with DNA, genes and genomes. They were trying to create life, to create clones, just like today. They were cloning and biologically engineering many of the life forms that God created, and they were very successful at it.

You may have heard about researchers cloning, or identifying, genes that are responsible for various medical conditions or traits. What's the difference? When scientists clone an organism, they are making an exact

genetic copy of the whole organism. Perhaps some of this cloning and genetic engineering back then got a little out of hand, and creatures were produced that raised havoc with other life forms. That's why only God knew which animals were genetically pure in each of their kinds and why only God could choose them – cows, deer, dogs, cats, elephants *etc.* Perhaps this would also explain why animals such as dinosaurs, saber toothed tigers *etc.* were not on the ark and became extinct.

As to why none of the pre-flood advanced technology survived, consider: if you and your family were the sole survivors of a nuclear holocaust, how much of modern civilization and technology could you reproduce? Could you mine metal, refine it, mold it and build a car from scratch? How about a computer? God wanted to protect the future of mankind from self-extinction. He needed to slow down their progress.

Remember the story of the tower of Babel? They were getting dangerously close to reaching the pre-flood levels. So, God intervened again by confusing their languages and scattering them all over the earth. It has just now taken us back to pre-flood knowledge and technology. Once again, God is going to intervene.

Think about the time we're living in – *as it was in the days of Noah.*   Ω

**...What if a business you are building (or any project) were taken away by circumstances before you had accomplished its purpose? Frustrating. Disappointing. Pointless.**

**...Your life will one day be taken away—will it, too, be pointless?**

***Or, is there more? There is a life beyond the grave, and you will have to give account of your 'project' to your Creator.***

**...That record can be erased—'...as far as the east is from the west'. But there's a price—for you**

**and for your Saviour, the very Son of God, who took on the penalty for your transgression of the laws that govern our life. *Your price? A change of direction.***

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## Love My Commandments

### God's church parallels the commandments by which man should live

As a shining beacon of hope and love and probity the church of God has surely fallen short in its mission. Rent by division, pride, disunity, disharmony—and, sadly, corruption, the flame burns faintly. What are the factors that obscure our witness of the message of Jesus?

#### Love Your Neighbour

*Central to the divine plan is the concept of family. It was enshrined in the guidance the LORD gave to our first parents and is a universal theme throughout the Scriptures, and summed up in the fifth commandment: '...Respect your father and your mother, and you [collectively] will live a long time in the land I am giving you' (Exodus 20:12).*

The nation—and the church—thrives when the family is unified in its diversity, in its purpose, in its relationships. With *'father and mother'* setting the example and guiding the offspring in godliness then there is stability and happiness. So in the church the leadership is the key to inspire devotion and unity and orderliness. Pride at the top—locally or higher—thwarts the brethren's desire for peaceful relationships with all brethren in the church family, universally.

Every society is undermined by violence, and human nature demands that there are laws to curb it. God enshrined such a law in His guidance for human civilisation: *'... do not kill'* (v.12). Jesus modified this: *'...You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment'* Matthew 5:12). The apostle John applies this fundamental principle to all of us in God's church: *'...Whoever hates his brother is a*

*murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him'* (1 John 3:15).

Sadly, some brethren carry this burden with them year after year despite annually focusing on reconciliation on the *Day of Atonement*. It festers and eats up their local congregation, spreading like leaven.

Material adultery is common in Christendom (*cf* James 4:4)—but unthinkable among the 'Israel of God'. The Scriptures, however, speak also of *spiritual* 'adultery'—liaison with 'gods' other than the one true God. He identifies Himself in His Word in those first four elements of His instructions for mankind and all else is idolatry. (*see* I Corinthians 8:5-6).

Christendom at large has adopted so many idolatrous practices (*eg* Christmas, Easter, Sunday) that it can be barely distinguished from the heathen religions.

Another foundation principle is honesty and integrity. We are familiar with the financial and sex scandals rife within Christendom—and not unknown in the church of God. Large denominations 'steal' from the brethren to finance empire-building (or flashy headquarters) and leadership self-aggrandizement, while pas-

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### 2021 Festivals

Pentecost	May 16
Trumpets	September 7
Atonement	September 16
Tabernacles	Sept 21-27
Eighth Day	September 28

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tors 'steal the truth' by—often knowingly—purling false doctrines from the heathen and peddling them to their flock.

The latter practice is also a form of 'false witness'—widespread in the world's courts. But in the end blinds their hearers to the glorious riches of the true Gospel.

#### Love God

The most serious indictment of modern Christendom is the scandalous perversion of the key elements of the true faith—epitomized by the *first four* of the ten commandments.

The gods of pride and worldly prestige replace the humility of the Saviour, while 'other gods' oust the one true Creator of all. Churches are crammed with graven images and the true worship—as prescribed by God—replaced by a confusion of pointless ritual: *'... You shall not bring the holy Name to anything that is vain'* (Exodus 20:7 *Dean Stanley*).

Most culpable is the neglect of the day that is God's mark, His 'identity card', the sign that He is the Creator of the vastness of the universe and of all that flourishes on Earth—His *seventh-day Sabbath*, a day given to all mankind to celebrate (Genesis 2:2-3). It is a memorial (*'...remember'*) of His almighty power in creation (Exodus 20:8,11).

As man's day draws toward dusk and before darkness falls, this is the time for all the churches and all believers to assess their relationship with the one true God and His law of life. **Ω**

MiniStudy**Remember Me**

*‘...taking a loaf, giving thanks, He broke, and gave to them, saying, This is My body being given for you. This do to My remembrance.’ (Luke 22:19-20)*

*‘...as often as you may eat this bread, and drink this cup, you solemnly proclaim the death of the Lord, until He shall come’ (I Corinthians 11:26)*

Christians, largely, will hold a mental picture of the last hours of our Saviour. We have our personal reflections. We have images imposed by the media, art and the speculation of theologians, professional and amateur. And then there’s our imagination. We picture the Twelve gathered in the upper room sharing the supper. We see Jesus pass the ‘sop’ to Judas and watch him scurry off to the religious authorities to confirm details of his betrayal. As dusk falls we watch the twelve as they descend into the valley and in our mind’s eye we follow them over the Kidron into the quiet garden on the side of the Mount of Olives. We observe the visible agony of Jesus in prayer and the sleeping disciples—and see the approaching flickering lanterns of the religious cohorts.

- The facts are laid before us in the New Testament, largely in the Gospels and Paul, but we can distort the image by imposing on it our twenty-first century concepts. That picture becomes less obscure when we project ourselves into the norms and culture of their era
- The Scriptures provide us with *time markers* for this world-pivotal occasion. The events surrounding the death of Jesus occur at Israel’s *Passover*—the Passover lamb was slain on the 14th day of the Hebrew first month of Abib (our March/April) [that year it was Wednesday afternoon], prepared, and then eaten when the 15th day began. It was to be eaten ‘...before midnight’ on the 15th. Jesus, we are told, died—was sacrificed (I Corinthians 5:7)—that day at ‘...the ninth hour’ (3pm-4pm)—the time the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the Temple—Jesus thus fulfilling his destiny as the Lamb of God ‘...slain from the foundation of the world’. Laid in the tomb it is the first of his three nights and three days in the grave (Matthew 12:40)
- We follow the Twelve as, on the Tuesday afternoon, they come together to the venue Jesus had chosen for his final meal with them. They dine, and as the meal ends Jesus surprises everyone by starting to wash everyone’s feet, the work of a servant. He then takes a loaf and breaks and distributes it among them. This he says, is my body—not the body of the lamb, he says. It will be broken for you as I take on your griefs and infirmities (Isaiah 53). He then takes the cup they had been drinking saying it is *his* blood—not the blood of the lamb, but blood soon to be cruelly shed once and for all for our redemption from the bondage of our sin
- [Scholars are divided as to whether or not this meal was a Passover. The evidence is inconclusive. Israel kept that first Passover on the 14th Nisan: ‘...Israel shall kill it between the evenings [ie, of 14th and 15th Abib on the afternoon part of the 14th]’ and it was eaten, with unleavened bread, on the 15th before midnight (Exodus 13:6-8). Jesus was sacrificed at the time of the Temple sacrifice indicating the fulfilment of the typology. Israel’s annual Passover was a celebration of deliverance from their bondage in Egypt—it was not representative of forgiveness. The symbolism of the bread and the wine in this last supper references the expulsion from the Garden in Eden when Abel sacrificed the lamb (Genesis 4:4)]
- This, Jesus explains to them, is a *new covenant*. The former, the Law I gave through Moses, was a teacher to prepare you for this new regime. The sacrifice of the lamb, and indeed all the sacrificial system, points to me. All that Temple ritual is redundant (*cf* Matthew 24:2), for *I* am your Passover lamb—and only through me are you redeemed from the sin that separates you from the Father. As said John the Baptist ;...*I bear away the sins of the world*’. To keep me in remembrance, he says, I want you to annually observe a simple ceremony by doing as I have just done to you. Come together—not for a love-feast but for what you might call my supper. By symbolically washing one another’s feet you keep in mind that you are servants and not tyrants like the Scribes and Pharisees. By the bread and the wine you remember me as your Saviour Ω

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