

new Horizons

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There's a mad scramble to prolong physical life. Is there a way to live forever? And are you ready for it?

It's a natural human instinct to do all we can to extend our life-span. The 'high priests' of this 'religion' are the doctors, the medical researchers, the drug companies. Failing a cure in this life, some even have a hope that their preserved body can be 'resurrected' when a cure is found for their health problem.

But the surety is - *you are destined to die!*

Given that awesome fact of life, is there anything you can do about it? Billions of our fellow humans pin their hope on some form of reincarnation. A return to life, preferably in improved circumstances. The Christian world's hope is that when weighed in the balance they will be judged worthy of 'heaven'. There they will endlessly - do *something* or other. The alternative doesn't bear thought: to exist for ever in a fiery hell.

But even Bible believing Christians are confused. It's clear in Scripture that a key future event is a resurrection. That is, a return from the grave in a new body. Yet that event has a fixed time - at the return of Jesus - and is still future. So, where are all those millions of Christians who have 'passed on' since the first Christian century? How have they coped without their bodies? Some Christians, given this view, have managed nicely for nearly two thousand years with their disembod-

ied 'soul'!

The notion that at our death we pass to heaven or to hell - or purgatory - is, of course, not in the Christian Bible. But for all mankind there is a life beyond the grave. That's a certainty. And that life involves judgment.

Judgment Day

If you are not a Christian and think it is simple twaddle - you still need to be concerned. For, like it or not you are - after you die - guaranteed a 'court-room trial' when your every thought and action in this life will be judged. The Judge is the all-seeing Jesus the Messiah. For most of mankind, that resurrection to judgment the dis- tant future - after the millennial reign of Jesus. For others, that judgment is closer to hand.

It would seem that we are living, right now, in the time just prior to the end of human misrule. Momentous and terrible events loom on the horizon. False religion is about to sweep the world into a cauldron of hate, blood, famine, disease. Billions, literally, will die. But many, Israelite and Gentile, will survive and live on into a new world ruled by Jesus Christ. No - not 'heaven', but a material Kingdom right here on this planet.

The final generation under human rule will live under a despotic and satanically-inspired world ruler. He will seek to obliterate all that is called God, and many Christians especially will be martyred. But

Jesus - no longer living up to his false 'meek and mild' image - will intervene by means of a series of human catastrophes and natural disasters. All the world will understand just who he is! Many - Israelites - will be 'hidden' in concentration camps around the world and some will submit to Jesus. An innumerable host from every nation under heaven will also repent and be 'sealed' by God. They - Israelite and Gentile - are 'the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7).

But the majority of human survivors will refuse to change, will refuse to repent (*ch* 16: 9, 11), and will physically come under the worldwide rule of Messiah. That's when they will face the consequences of rejection.

To back-track a little in time. Prior to that time of judgment, Christ will visibly return accompanied by an angelic host. Christians from all ages will be resurrected and will reign with him. Jesus will then 'form his Government' - much of which is detailed in the Scriptures. He will lead the surviving Israelites - both the House of Israel and the House of Judah (Jeremiah 3:18) - together into 'the Land of Promise', Palestine. They will be placed under the leadership of the resurrected King David, with each of the Twelve Apostles having responsibility for one of the Israelite tribes.

Jesus then turns to the judgment. It is described in Matthew 25. Note that the setting is *after Jesus returns* - that is, after the resurrection of Christians to reign with him, after the marriage supper: "When

How To Live Forever

the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate them [*ie* individuals] one from another" (vv.31, 32). That throne is here on Earth - in Jerusalem: "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it" (Jeremiah 3:17).

Those millions of the final generation - probably *this* generation - who repented are set aside to 'inherit the Kingdom'. Jesus describes them as 'sheep', whom he will 'shepherd and lead to fountains of living water' (Revelation 7:17). 'Sheep' in Bible parlance refer to God's own people - largely Israel. The prophet Ezekiel amplifies the message of Jesus: " Indeed I myself will search for my sheep [the context is Israel] I will bring them out from the peoples [*ie* nations] and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land.... I will feed my flock" (*ch* 34:11ff). And significantly, again echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: "Behold I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats" (v.17).

Those who knowingly and willingly fought against him, or who mistreated the people of God in those dark days, will face personal destruction. Jesus says: "In as much as you have done it [*ie* failed to care for] these my brethren [*ie* Christians], you have done it to me". They are self-willed 'goats' and have had opportunity to repent in the awesome days just past.

This righteous judgment is further detailed by the apostle John (Revelation 19:11-21). An example is the Assyrian nation, which the Lord (that is, Jesus) will use to chasten Israel in the days ahead. They will arrogantly set out to destroy Israel and will suffer the consequences (Isaiah 10:12ff). God says: "For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will my anger *in their destruc-*

tion" (v.25).

Ezekiel furnishes another example, foretelling the judgment of 'Seir', a nation that in the last days oppresses - because of 'an ancient hatred' - God's sheep, Israel (*ch* 35).

Notice Jesus' teaching to the disciples - that same warning that he amplified in Matthew 25: "...whoever gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:41-42).

Not so 'gentle Jesus'!

All, then, in the close of man's day, who deal roughly with the people of God - whether Christians of all nations or Israelites - will face the wrath and judgment of Jesus the Messiah.

A Way To Live Forever

Given that this generation is almost certainly the last to live under the rule of men, it's not unlikely *you* will experience the coming time of trouble. Prophecy describes it as the worst in human experience.

Yet the 'everlasting gospel' will be

so powerfully - and supernaturally - proclaimed that no human of that generation, of whatever faith or none, will be able to hide. Not from God. Not from Jesus Christ. Not from the claims of the Gospel. You - and all living - will have (and now have) opportunity to positively respond to the Gospel and to embark on the path that leads to living forever. Or, you may choose to resist Jesus and the Gospel - and for ever be wiped out of existence in the ensuing judgment.

Not that your repentance will necessarily bring physical protection from the horrors ahead. But you will at their end pass over into - inherit - the Kingdom ruled over by Jesus and the saints.

The world today scoffs at the predictions of the Scriptures. Yet who can deny we live in perilous times - times that match the Biblical prophecies.

It's time to wake up!

God's Remedy

It's not true that 'there is only the here and now'. For all of us '*it is appointed to mankind once to die, and after that the judgment*' (Hebrews 9:27). None of us can escape it. But there's a way to ensure the judgment goes in our favour!

God's remedy - God's *only* remedy - is through Jesus Christ, by his death on the stake [the 'cross'] and by his resurrection. Only through his sacrificial death can our past be wiped clean and the sentence of death be removed. Only by his resurrection to eternal life can we, too, live forever.

Most of us suspect that death isn't the end. The Bible extends the sure hope that we can indeed live forever. But only as we submit to Jesus Christ and him crucified. □

What will you be like in the resurrection? Is Jesus Christ a pattern for the Christian's resurrection body?

***What the Bible teaches is breath-taking!
Request, from any of our addresses, a copy of the article***

After The Resurrection

Here's the first step to living forever. You are invited to request the free articles:

***What Do You mean - 'Repent'?
Coming to Baptism***

Christians are often concerned about 'stewardship' The question may be along the lines of *Must a Christian give one-tenth (ie a tithe) of income to the church? Should you?*

The concept of the tithe derives from the Old Testament practice of the obligation to "tithe increase" for God's service - for example, Deuteronomy 14:23. The concept predates Moses, and a form of it was practiced by Abraham (some three hundred years earlier) and Jacob. In the new nation of Israel the tithe was paid to the authorised Levitical priesthood for their own material needs and for their work in the Tabernacle and the Temple (Numbers 18:20-24). The notion of a tithe was also known to nations other than Israel.

With the passage of three and a half thousand years the details of the tithe have become somewhat obscure. However, the principles remain clear - certainly in "old covenant" terms.

Although disputed, many Bible students consider that there were, in Israel, three separate tithes. The *first tithe* was that mentioned above - for the priesthood. A *second tithe* was for the individual to support attendance at the great festivals held in Jerusalem. And every third year and sixth year in seven there was a *third tithe* - given to alleviate poverty in the land. Given human nature it's unlikely they were strictly adhered to!

The obscurity arises from the detail: who tithed? what was tithed? how was it distributed? was everything tithed? For example we're told that every tenth animal was for God. So, what if you had only nine? Was the upkeep and cost of their home excluded? And food? What is increase? We can but guess!

New Testament

In the time of Jesus the tithe was a

legal requirement for all Jews. For example, he told the Pharisees that they should even indeed tithe "mint and anise and cummin" (Matthew 23:23) - simple herbs.

So how does the Old Testament tithing law apply to Christians?

There is no separate 'doctrinal statement' on tithing in the New Testament. There are, however, certain principles deriving from the Old Covenant regulations which, coupled with the "new wine" of faith in Christ, allow us to develop a "doctrine of Christian giving", or Christian stewardship.

The tithes were for the purposes of: support for divine service, support for personal festival attendance, support for the needy. The same principles are applicable today. There is a work for God to be done, Christians need to attend the Festivals, and we still have the needy among us - single parents, destitute, disabled *etc.* All need to be cared for. Good stewardship shows how.

A Key Principle

An important principle is derived from the "Sermon on the Mount". In dealing with other aspects of the Law, Jesus explained that the Christian life is not confined by the Law, but goes beyond it. With *adultery*, for example, he shows us that Christian behaviour cuts more deeply than just the sexual act - it is in the heart. The same with violence - even *anger* transgresses the law of "You shall do no murder".

So, too, with our *resources*: all - whether material or spiritual talents, or our property, or our money, or our time - all belong to God, and we are but stewards. All is to be used to God's glory. We serve *wholeheartedly and joyously* as we are able! Giving is a "heart thing". We give in

response to, and to acknowledge, God's bounty liberally poured out upon us, and in thankfulness for His overflowing mercies. Our giving is not confined by any concept of a strict legal tithe.

Sharing our substance, for the Christian, is a delight. It's an expression of our inner state of thankfulness. Jesus also addresses this in the "Sermon on the Mount". As we "*lay up treasures in heaven*" (Matthew 6:20) we display our commitment to serving God rather than mammon, and to shutting our eyes to covetousness (vv.21-24; Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:3). Again, sacrificial giving expresses our readiness to trust our loving Father for every material need (vv.25-34, Proverbs 10:3).

A Royal Priesthood

Another fundamental principle - often overlooked - is that *the priesthood has now changed*. No longer (since the Temple service ended in 70AD) is it Levitical, nor is it any form of institution. But *it is us*, as partners of Christ (Hebrews 3:14, Revelation 5:10) - whose ministry replaces the Levitical priesthood!

Every Christian is a member of a "royal priesthood" (I Peter 2:9). As such it is our personal responsibility, on the basis of the above principles, to use all our natural talents and our spiritual gifts and all our resources in the service of God. It's not a responsibility we can pass on to others. Each of us is commissioned to total commitment to the service of our Saviour. *Christianity is no soft option!*

Joint Effort

Of course, if you personally are clearly not in a position to do a personal work (age, illness, family *etc*) then you must decide who you consider is to be trusted to wisely use your resources. Though all of us are

obligated to diligently *pray* for the advance of the work of God!

You may decide that your financial gifts are more effectively used in co-operation with others of like mind. This could be to support a joint project - eg a magazine or an 'evangelist' or other form of outreach that you deem to be personally helpful, or someone or some organization you consider to be doing an effective work for God.

A contemporary example is that local assemblies and individuals around the world contribute to the publishing costs of **we are each responsible to** this our outreach **exercise our freedom in giving** magazine *New Horizons*, to the distribution of thousands of pieces of literature and to finance our various support programmes. Pooled resources properly used are usually more effective than individual effort.

Also, our giving certainly - and perhaps primarily - includes donations toward the legitimate expenses (including appropriate remuneration for those who serve the assembly) and outreach projects of the local assembly that we attend.

Buying Salvation

Another key is that we are free individuals not under the thumb of any other human being or organization. As such we are each personally responsible to exercise our freedom in giving - how much, to whom, for what purpose *etc.* It is each Christian's personal responsibility to ensure that what we give is used faithfully and carefully by the recipient.

We are responsible before God who knows our hearts - and both our needs and the depth of our wallet!

What pleases God is a heart dedicated to Him and indwelt and guided by His Spirit. Mere external behaviour isn't necessarily evidence of a converted heart.

Nor is the amount we set aside for the work of God a factor in whether or not we will be saved (though some would have you believe it is!). Our salvation is a free gift extended through God's love and our Saviour's willingness to die for us. *We can not buy salvation!*

On the other hand a stingy and mournful approach to God and to giving can distort our life, inhibit our zeal and cause us to dry up spiritually (Proverbs 11:24, 26) Wrote Paul: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (II Corinthians 9:6). It *could* conceivably lead to our spiritual demise.

Importantly, the discipline of consistent Bible-based giving and sharing of our resources is a key to a growing trust in God to supply very material need according to His sure promises.

The spiritual principles underlying all our giving are those of joy and thankfulness and sacrifice. *Joy* that we are privileged **we are expected to adequately take care of our daily needs** to be called by God - with a stake in eternity.

Thankfulness that we know Him and are known to Him and grateful for the abundance of His overflowing mercies and daily provision for our material and spiritual needs. And a readiness to *sacrifice* for the Saviour who sacrificed all for us.

Daily Needs

Out of this thankfulness, then, all God's people delight to return to God His bounty to use to His glory.

Some brethren, however, need to be restrained from giving! For it is a further principle that we are expected to adequately care for, among others, our own daily needs and those of our family (I Timothy 5:15, II Corinthians 12:14, Ephesians 6:2, Mark 7:11). Likely,

that's why it was the *tenth* animal that was tithed - if you didn't have as many as ten animals a tithe wasn't expected! Though, of course, this did not deny the opportunity to give voluntarily of their substance.

Even our carnal human governments recognize the need we have for some non-taxable income! So even for those who believe in a strict legal tithe the implication of this is that if you are not obliged to pay tax you may, of course, donate - but need not feel obliged to "tithe" your small - perhaps fixed - income. What we give, then, is a matter of individual judgment, taking note of our personal responsibilities.

Other Giving

Another Christian obligation is the necessity of funding our ability to worship (Hebrews 10:24-26). It is important to our spiritual growth, and a Biblical instruction, that we fellowship, worship, and be instructed from God's Word by attending the annual Festivals and Sabbath meetings when at all possible. The *second tithe* principle is to finance this and to help us to afford it - for ourselves, and where possible to help other brethren. This implies that we carefully manage our income, budgeting for this purpose.

Care for the Needy

A further constraint on our giving is that there will always be those among us who for some reason are restricted in their finances, even destitute. The principle of the *third tithe* is that we care for such - in a special way for those who are of the Body of Christ (Galatians 6:6-10).

Those of us who are in employment will already be contributing for this purpose through their social security payments - currently, in Britain, a whopping 12% of gross salary year in, year out! For us, the giving of a *third tithe* is in a sense obsolete, replaced by a generous willingness to share our resources with those in

need - over and beyond obligations imposed by a profligate government! Each local assembly, indeed, should have a fund dedicated to this end.

Heart Religion

Christian giving, then, is a personal matter between each of us and God. It is a matter of the heart, flowing from the working in us of the Spirit of God who is the source of every material and spiritual blessing.

There is no external coercion, there can be no legitimate demands from men - and no privileges granted for being 'a good donor'! All our resources flow from our loving, caring Father in heaven. He delights to see His children sharing this same attitude (II Corinthians 9:7).

In the intent of the hymn *I surrender all* - our giving is not driven by a legal formula but by our willing and joyful and total dedication of our entire being and resources to our Creator, our Saviour, our Provider.

In sum, our commitment to Jesus Christ should energize us to dedicate all our resources in a balanced way to his service.

Let's joyfully honour God and our Saviour with the firstfruits of our substance and of our increase (Proverbs 3:9)!

Bible Basics

The Churches of God publish a home study course

If you would like to study with us please request **Lesson 1** from any of our addresses. This introductory lesson gives some hints about how to study your Bible.

We are pleased to reply to any questions you may have arising from any of our publications. However at this time we are not in a position to 'grade' your studies in Bible Basics

news extra...

WAR CRIMES?

The nations of the world cluster vulture-like over the very much alive body of one of the world's smaller nations - Israel. There are just over five million Jews in the land and a million Israeli-Arabs - the latter with full rights of citizenship, and economically dependent on Israel's economic success.

Israel's 'sin', apparently, has been to defend itself from the vile aggression of the Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank, led by the Egyptian Yasser Arafat. The Israel Defence Force (IDF) is accused of war crimes including the needless deaths of civilians.

War Crimes?

Yet a ten-year old Arab lad is sent to 'greet' an IDF patrol - killing six with the explosives they had strapped to his body. What civilised people use their children - boys and girls - as weapons? Or use them as shields behind which snipers hide? Or booby-trap waste receptacles, or forbid civilians to leave their booby-trapped homes? What civilised people teach their children from birth to hate, to see murder as a religious duty? Yet that is what Israel faces.

The allegations against Israel turned out to be false, though forcefully expressed both by the heavily biased United Nations and by Amnesty. About fifty bodies were found in Jenin - almost all in military uniform. Put this, however, in the context of a *war for survival*. The aim of Arafat, backed by other murderous surrounding regimes, is to *exterminate* Israel - 'to drive her into the Sea'. Accommodation is not on the agenda! For Israel it is fight - or disappear from history!

Lesson of History

In a previous war for survival (Britain in 1939-1945) Allied bombers *specifically* targeted

civilian populations in Germany. Death toll: 600,000 men women and children - *civilians all*. The IDF sought to avoid civilian deaths by refraining from aerial attack with deadly F-16s.

Another example... Over forty three thousand German civilians died and over nine hundred thousand civilians were made homeless in four nights of *Allied* - *ie* the British and American Air Forces - air raids, code named "Operation Gomorrah" against Hamburg in July, 1943. And German air-raids killed 40,000 British civilians including 5,000 children. What, too, of Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

A whiff of hypocrisy permeates the air in 2002!

Truth v. Propaganda

'The first casualty of war is truth' is an old dictum. In war, misinformation (*ie* propaganda) rules. Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, for example, has been accused of crimes in south Lebanon 20 years ago, supposedly having encouraged the Lebanese Christian militia to massacre the inmates of two refugee camps, known to be sheltering Arab terrorists. The 'camps' were in fact virtual towns, with a combined population of 50,000. There were under 500 killed - with fewer than fifty civilians!

For some reason the world's politicians and media are intent on pillorying Israel. Forget the 'War on Terrorism' - this is different! It's OK, it seems, for the West to exterminate al'Qaeda or Taliban (from two miles up with mega-bombs).

A Heavy Stone

'Jerusalem' - in prophetic terms standing for the entire nation - is in the Bible foretold to be at the centre of the world stage in the 'time of the end'. [cont'd p. 7]

COVETOUSNESS

...a modern idolatry

**What does it mean 'to covet'?
Why, in the Bible, is it called
'idolatry'?**

Nine of the Ten Commandments are quite practical. Worship the sovereign God as He commands. Respect previous generations. Don't kill. Don't steal. *Etc.* All good practical stuff. The last Commandment, however, is often viewed as introducing a 'spiritual' element - in the mind rather than behavioural. Yet it is one of the most widely flouted - even by Christians.

The apostle Paul brands covetousness as 'idolatry' - perhaps the most heinous sin. 'You shall not covet...' God says, listing examples in the Tenth Commandment.

Sexual Gratification

Take one item: 'You shall not covet your neighbour's wife'. Is that not covered by the *seventh* commandment: 'You shall not commit *adultery*'? Adultery includes at least an illegal desire for someone else's husband or wife. It is a foul practice that tears at the very fabric of society. The more widespread, the more tolerated, it becomes - the closer a nation edges to the brink of destruction. So, how do these two commands differ?

The command also includes coveting you neighbour's livestock and his property - 'anything that is your neighbour's'. Clearly we are seeing the focus of our covetousness as mere things, as objects of self-gratification. We want them because we don't have them. Life has dealt a poor hand, we may rationalize. And the simple desire to have them can lead to our taking them! It does not stay long 'just in the mind'.

Back to 'your neighbour's wife'. 'Love' is not involved here, as with

many who convince themselves it may be in an adulterous liaison. The woman (or indeed the man) is seen as a mere object, a fulfilment of 'my' need.

By extension it applies to a visit to the 'red light' district. It applies to those pathetic inadequates who will rape or dally with pornography whether on the 'top shelf' or in the tabloids or on the internet - or TV. It is an indictment of those who abduct and molest children or who lust, contrary to nature, after a person of the same sex. It includes all who seek a sexual experience outside marriage. Any society which tolerates such sexual covetousness and self-gratification is being gnawed away internally and faces collapse.

Who Are We?

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is an international association of independent local assemblies—separate groups of Christians who meet together for worship, instruction in the faith and fellowship. Each assembly is self-governing according to Biblical principles, but co-operates with other like-minded assemblies to work towards agreed goals.

These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus Christ: "...go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded his church to 'feed my sheep'.

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature and tapes which are mailed to some seventy countries around the world. New Horizons is just one of these publications, and other titles are listed in its pages.

Individuals and groups are invited to join with us in our efforts. Simply

Rampant Consumerism

But this instruction from the Creator about covetous behaviour is inclusive of much more than sexual gratification. 'Who is my neighbour?' Jesus was asked. It isn't just 'the man next door' whose property we desire. My neighbour is, in a sense, my community, my nation, our world with its display of conspicuous wealth.

This is the principle of 'keeping up with the Joneses'. It's shop till you drop. It's the grasping after the glittering shop window displays. It's the competition to acquire the latest toy or play-station or software. It's the new furnishings, the latest fashion, a newer car. We stoke inflation through grasping after ever higher wages to pay for the latest gismo, a larger home, the more exotic holiday. We pile into the latest share fad or get-rich quick scheme.

And to fuel it is *credit* - cheap plastic to 'take the wait out of wanting'. *Buy now-pay later* is the watchword.

Credit card debt is at an all-time high in Western society. The average Briton, for example, is in debt to the tune of £7,000 plus - and that is apart from his home mortgage (now worth a total of £388 billion). We are in hock to the tune of a cumulative £42 billion or so credit card debt alone. Thousands suffer heart-break and despair of clearing their debt, becoming prey to the predatory loan shark and/or the loss of their home.

How much simpler: '*Do not covet!*' Or, as the New Testament has it, "Be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5).

Get Rich Quick

Covetousness stretches its deadly tentacles into other aspects of society. Grossly overpaid 'stars' of the world of sport and entertainment with their lavish lifestyle - flaunted in the media - stimulate the avarice of the man-in-the-street. Adults,

teenagers - and increasingly, pre-teens - lust after unattainable wealth. Burning desire for mere material goods consumes the individual to the point of idolatry. Many turn to criminal activity or to unsustainable borrowing - and to get-rich-quick schemes.

Part of the 'bread and circuses' mentality of modern government is to give free rein to such schemes. To the outrage of self-help groups, proposed legislation in the United Kingdom, for example, threatens to unleash a gambling frenzy through relaxation of laws previously and sensibly introduced to curb the horrors of gambling - on the race-track, in casinos, in town hall bingo sessions.

Also in the UK every week, lulled by the distant dream of unearned and untold wealth, of becoming filthy rich, sixty percent of the UK populace take part in the National Lottery (recently dumbed down to the 'Lotto'). The lottery is the only Government-permitted advertising on the BBC and is widely promoted in shops, bill-boards, through instant scratch-cards *etc.* Inevitably, of course, multiple millions are disappointed. It's a lottery, after all!

Savvy organizations see the Lottery for what it is - a tax on the poor, who spend the largest proportion of their wealth on it. It's a discouragement from saving, an encouragement to instant gratification.

Sadly, substantial lottery winnings all too often leave individuals and families in ruin. And post-draw despondency sets in after yet another failed bid: "Hope drawn out makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). The wise King Solomon also said (v.11): "Wealth acquired rashly [or hastily] dwindles away, but he who gathers by labour increases".

A Christian Response

The apostle Paul urges Christians to 'flee idolatry'. He also perceived that an element of idolatry is *covetousness* - 'the desire to have more',

greed (Colossians 3:5).

Now, it is not wrong for a follower of Jesus to better him or herself, even to be wealthy. Through the development of our inborn talents we are to 'pursue legal occupations'. However, part of the fallen human nature is this tendency to covet. Said Jesus: "What comes out of a man defiles him; for from within, out of a man's heart, wicked reasonings proceed.... covetousness..." (Mark 7:21).

Nor, for the Christian, may covetousness be considered as a 'lesser sin'. Paul again, instructing the brethren: " For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person *nor covetous* man - who is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5). Those same Tenth Commandment elements again! That's strong stuff!

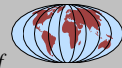
The reason? An unrestrained desire to accumulate possessions runs contrary to the heart of the Christian ethic: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", the second of the two great foundation principles of the faith. [Request the article ***The Neglected Commandment*** for the other one!]

We can convince ourselves that we can handle riches successfully. But Jesus warned us of '*...the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things entering in choke the word [of God in us] and it becomes unfruitful*' (Mark 4:19).

The apostle Paul, in similar vein, says to us: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.... But you O man of God flee these things and pursue righteousness...*" (I Timothy 6:6-11). □

World Watch

world news in the light of Scripture



Mad Spree

A charity invites donations of up to £500 (\$750) to install clean water for a Third World village. *Yet*

Last year the United States and the European Union together spent £550,000,000,000 [over \$800 billion] on 'defence' procurements. [*"...neither shall they learn war any more" Isaiah 2:4. "Your Kingdom come" Matthew 6:10*]

Royal Triumph

Millions turned out, June 2-4th, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne of the United Kingdom. The strength of public support for the Queen confounded the nest of republican Government ministers and Members of Parliament. The Queen has been an island of stability in a sea of national disruption, as the nation's leadership hands over national sovereignty to the European Union.

War Crimes ...cont'd

And that's after some nineteen centuries of relative obscurity.

Wrote Zechariah: "*...in that day I [ie the LORD] will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all peoples. All who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations [the UN] be gathered against it (ch 12:3).*

For short-term gain the West accommodates oil-rich nations like totalitarian Saudi Arabia despite its acknowledged active financial support for worldwide terrorism - *eg* in the form of the Islamic al'Qaeda - and its open support for Palestinian suicide bombers.

The day is coming, however, when all nations will be weighed in the balance of God's Scales of Justice. How they dealt with Israel will be one of the key pieces of evidence! □

Will the grave give up its dead? Will those who died thousands of years ago live again? How will they be raised - as flesh and bone, or in some spirit form? And when?

John Morton

Resurrection is no mystery for those who are prepared to search the Bible for answers. Jesus Christ himself said, "Do not marvel at this: for the hour is coming in which all who are in the grave will hear his voice and come forth" and "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised" (John 5:28, I Corinthians 15:52).

In the Beginning

When God formed man of the dust of the ground He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. The word breath, translated from the Hebrew word *shamah*, simply means spirit. When God created mankind from the physical matter it was the spirit that impart life to the body He created (Genesis 2:7, *see also* Zechariah 12:1).

In a prophetic vision about the resurrection of the nation of Israel, Ezekiel saw physical bodies being formed that were lifeless until the spirit was added (Ezekiel 37:5 and 10). The Hebrew word *ruwach* used in this instance also means spirit.

The spirit of man is *not* an 'immortal soul' as some believe. According to the Bible there is no conscious awareness after death (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Psalm 6:5, 115:17, 146:4). When we die the spirit returns to God in an inert form, as if asleep, where it awaits the resurrection (Ecclesiastes 12:7, I Thessalonians 4:13-14).

Two Spirits

What Ezekiel saw being added to the newly formed physical bodies where the spirits of Israelites who

had previously died. They were being brought back to life again. It is interesting to note that in chapter 36, verses 24-27, Ezekiel mentions what God called "my Spirit" is to be given to them so that they will obey God's laws.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul confirmed the existence of two different spirits, the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, when he said: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (I Corinthians 2:11-12).

Spirit of Man

Not only does the spirit of man impart life, as we read earlier, according to Paul it also imparts the intellect that enables man to understand the things of this world. It enables man to process and store knowledge, to reason and make choices, form opinions, attitudes and to experience emotion. The spirit of man is our conscious awareness, our individual persona - the very life and essence of who we are!

Spirit of God

The second spirit that both Paul and Ezekiel mentioned has a different purpose - "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11). Clearly mankind does not have the capacity to understand the things that God must reveal through His Spirit, things that the "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9). Things that otherwise seem foolish (v.14, *see also* chapter 1:18, 21 and 25). This second spirit is given by

God to those whom He calls: "Repent and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the Holy Spirit" (John 6:44, Acts 2:38, 5:32).

Receiving God's Spirit begins a transformation of the mind (Romans 12:2) by adding a spiritual perspective that gives us the wisdom, understanding and enlightenment that results in a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7, Ephesians 1:17-19). With the help of God's Spirit we make the transition from a carnal, self-centred way of life, to a better way based on spiritual laws and values, which by application, over a period of time, will lead to an eternal life of peace in the Kingdom of God (Romans 8:6, Titus 3:5). (*see also* "God's Kingdom" in the July/August 2001 issue of *New Horizons*).

Paul said this renewal, or transformation, of the mind produces a new person who can, in time, reach the fullness of understanding and character of Christ (II Corinthians 3:18, 5:17, Ephesians 4:13 and Galatians 4:19). Through His Spirit God shares with us the very essence and power of His very own divine nature. It implants within us the very mind that is in both the Father and Christ. Because we have His divine nature He calls us His sons and daughters (II Corinthians 6:18, Romans 8:11,14-17).

God's Plan

It is God's intention to share His power and glory with His sons and daughters. Having the sort of power with which He created the universe means nothing will be impossible for us (Matthew 17:20), so He must be sure that we will not use it for evil. We are exposed to evil in this life for the purpose of overcoming it. We need to be guided by God's spirit to really recognise evil for what it is and to acknowledge its presence in our lives, so we come to abhor, resist and reject it. This is an

Will the Dead Live again?

essential part of our preparation for what God has in mind for us.

Having progressed sufficiently toward developing a sound mind that is free of evil, God will complete His handiwork when He transforms us from our temporary, physical existence into a permanent, immortal spirit (I Corinthians 15:44, 49).

Two Types of Resurrection

Some will rise when Christ returns: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first", others later: "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (I Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 20:5).

Many of those who have God's Spirit and are alive when Jesus Christ returns will be transformed into spirit beings instantaneously. Those who had God's Spirit and are now dead will also be resurrected as spirit at that time. This is the resurrection Paul spoke about when he said: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51-52).

The majority of people who have lived in this age have not been prepared for eternal life. They have never been given God's Spirit, nor overcome evil – so they must be resurrected back to a physical life for the process to be completed. And this will be done one thousand years after Christ's return. While Ezekiel's vision portrayed this happening to the House of Israel in particular, the Book of Revelation refers in a general sense to all people (Ezekiel 37:10-14, Revelation 20:5, 12-13).

Judgement

John said "the books were opened" meaning those resurrected to physi-

It's a sad day when a loved one dies. Will you meet again? Is there life after life? What really happens when you die?

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When Someone Dies

cal life will receive understanding of God's word through the Holy Spirit and they will be judged according to what they do with that understanding, just as we who are called now are currently being judged by our actions (I Peter 4:17). They will have the opportunity to have their names written in the "book of life" which is for those who attain eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Everyone gets a chance – "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:20-23, Revelation 20:12).

But not everyone will avail themselves of that opportunity for eternal life. Tragically the Bible indicates that there will be those who will be subject to a second death from which there is no resurrection, because they refuse to accept God's way (Revelation 20:14-15). Their very essence and persona, the spirit in man, will be destroyed forever. Hopefully, the majority of mankind will come to see the abhorrent consequences of evil and chose God's way rather than eternal death.

The Dead Will Live Again!

What an incredible time it will be when the grave will give up its dead as the Bible says. When those who died thousands of years ago will live again. Everyone who has ever lived, even those who have never known God, will receive the opportunity to become sons and daughters of God and live forever as spirit beings in God's Kingdom.

There really is no mystery about resurrection if we study what the Bible says. It is an incredible event that will literally transform your life! □

The Festival of Tabernacles

September 21 to 28, 2002

Many Christians are preparing to observe the annual *Festival of Tabernacles*. It is an eight-day observance that has its roots in creation itself, and has been observed by the people of God from time immemorial.

Those associated with the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* will be observing the festival in various resort locations. Our readers are invited to join with us in this time of celebration, worship, fellowship, instruction from the Word of God - and fun!

The dates for the *Festival of Tabernacles* vary from year to year. They are based on the calendar used in Leviticus 23 - where the annual festivals are listed. Tabernacles, for example begins on the *fifteenth day of the seventh month* on that calendar.

The overwhelming majority of observant churches use the calendar maintained by the Jews. This format is disputed by some Christians, and a variety of alternatives have been proposed - each based on a combination of sometimes conflicting factors.

It would appear that the disputes - which can be acrimonious! - are unnecessary. The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* encourage the use of the Jewish calendar, but do not exclude those who use a different form, as long as Christian courtesies are maintained to ensure peaceable assembly.

Our position is outlined in the free article *The Origin of the Calendar*, available from any of our addresses, or by e-mail from information@cgom.org or coguk@aol.com