

NEW

Horizons

Vol 9 No 2

March/April 2005

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

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the true meaning of the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

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in the clearest of terms - and
recorded for us in the Scrip-
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dug up, buried again. Our
desire is to restore the sim-
ple apostolic message. We
hope you will be excited
by what the Scriptures re-
veal about life, and the
horizons beyond**

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

It is distributed free on request, being a co-
operative voluntary effort financed by the
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Churches of God Outreach Ministries
P O Box 54621 Tulsa
OK 74155-0621 USA
e-mail: information@cgom.org
1-800-611-8080
Editor: James McBride
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God, UK
PO Box 2525
LINCOLN LN5 7PF United Kingdom
Regd Charity No 283358
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
100 Northcote Street
Aberdare NSW 2325 Australia
e-mail: icg.aust@netcentral.com.au

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
PO Box 476 Don Mills Station
Don Mills Ontario M3C 2T4 Canada
www.canadianchurchofgod.com

or from:

Tulsa, OK 2005

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

new Horizons

Issue No 50

March/April 2005

‘It’s the end of the world’. ‘God is wreaking His punishment on sinning mankind’. ‘Where was God?’ ‘What was He thinking?’ ‘Be warned!’ True?

The awesome catastrophe around the Indian Ocean in December 2004 has given many who profess belief in a deity pause for thought. Would a loving God allow this? Unbelievers scoff at Christian attempts to justify Him.

Some church leaders insist this terrible calamity—perhaps 300,000 deaths—is divine punishment on those nations which are unbelievers. (But what of disasters in ‘Christian’ areas?) Or that it is a warning of worse to come. That we are now in the ‘end-time’ and will soon see the end of civilisation as we know it.

A Great Beginning

We have, of course, throughout the centuries been here before—*many* times. (Though that doesn’t negate the absolute fact that there *will* come an end. And an end that will be even more horrific as human evil soars to a crescendo.)

In recent history the rise in the 30s of the pagan Hitlerian murder squads and their worldwide effect was seen as the beginning of ‘the Great Tribulation’. The 60’s ‘silent spring’ warnings, race riots *etc* stoked the same response, with expectations of mayhem between 1972 and 1975. Past centuries, too, have witnessed dire predictions of the world’s end.

In His understanding of fallen hu-

man nature and the depths to which it can descend, the Creator slapped a time limit on our occupation of His beautiful planet—a nominal ‘six thousand years’. Some historians will say that ‘civilisation’ began around then.

At that beginning the record states: “*God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good*”. Earth was ‘at rest’. Perfect harmony in a gentle atmosphere. No grinding, unstable tectonic plates. All was in balance. Humanity was in harmony with the divine, and could live endlessly in his perfect body. Then—*disaster*.

The Creator has “...*made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host [stars, planets], the earth and*

Natural Consequences

all things that are therein, and you preserve them all” (Nehemiah 9:6). He “...*upholds all things by the word of his power*” (Hebrews 1:3). The material universe, that is, has to be sustained by the active intervention of our Creator. *Our sin interferes with that*.

Consequences

Few understand the shocking effects of our rejection of God’s original guidance—our *sin*, that is. Our sin spills over into the physical realm affecting the very core and depths of the physical Earth and its atmosphere as well as us personally.

Both mankind’s sin and God’s pur-

pose allow into life the intervention of man’s implacable Adversary. Job experienced this. Satan knew that God had, because of Job’s righteousness, ‘*made a hedge [of protection] about him*’ (Job 1:10). To demonstrate to Satan Job’s faithfulness God allowed him to stir up adversity—including ‘a great wind. Isaiah also had this perception, concerning his own nation, Israel, His ‘vineyard’: “*I will take away the hedge thereof and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof and it [the nation] shall be trodden down*” (ch 5:5). Plagues, catastrophic earthquakes, extreme weather and finally invasion followed.

Sin Hurts

The physical effect of sin is very clear in our daily lives, for ‘sin’ expresses all that is contrary to revealed knowledge, and to knowledge acquired through human, if fallible, ingenuity. That knowledge guards us from mental and physical injury.

Every transgression has an effect. Sin has consequences. On the personal level seemingly minor transgression hurts us. *Lie*, for example, and it leaves a physical mark on the neural system and if repeated builds a negative pattern of behaviour. Indulge in *drugs*—eg alcohol, tobacco, heroin—and you can die. Allow *crime* to flourish in an area and it takes root and leads to social decay, to murder and ultimately to national downfall. Disregard *adultery* and *sexual perversion*—explicitly forbidden by the Creator—and we have soaring dysfunctional families, divorce, ravaging sexually transmitted disease including the worldwide scourge of AIDS.

Instruction Manual

Sometimes there's a small consequence, sometimes it is personally catastrophic. We all have to go. There's no way out but by death—for everyone. And that, too, results from sin. Because all of us have *'fallen short of the glory of God'*. All of us. In the beginning God said in effect: *'If you go your own way you and all your progeny will no longer live for ever'*. We have gone our own way, and as a consequence we die—all of us. But when national sin, world sin, escalates a point is reached at which there is a violent random physical response in the material world around us.

We are built to flourish when we follow the instruction manual—God's guidance in His revelation, His Word. Is it a surprise, then, that 'the machinery' breaks down when we don't 'follow the manual'?

Divine Wrath?

These consequences, however, are not inflicted on us by a vindictive and angry deity but are allowed by a God who loves His creation and whose purpose is to restore to humanity his original glory. That purpose is to shape us—as many as so desire—into His image. It's the work of a lifetime.

God is protective of His world—the *kosmos*. He loves and cherishes it. But He does *not* love 'the wicked' or the evil in His *kosmos*. When the latter seriously interfere with the divine purpose the sovereign God is not averse to removing them! And sometimes a localized (eg Sodom), national (the Amorites) or world-embracing disaster strikes. We need to get real in the image we hold of the Creator!

The Flood of some five thousand years ago is an example. Civilisation had, for over sixteen centuries, slowly disintegrated: Then *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*

continually" (Genesis 6:5). The result? The very crust of Earth was ripped apart (did the 'plates' move?), the atmosphere disturbed. The direct consequence of—*sin*.

The effects, the 'violence of nature', are with us to this day in the present configuration of Earth's physical geography. The inspired historian writes: *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence"* (v.11).

And yes—the innocent and the ignorant suffer. Wrote that ancient sage, Solomon: *"All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked"* (Ecclesiastes 9:2). Jesus had the same message: *"...those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, do you think they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you No, but except you repent you will suffer likewise"* (Luke 13:4-5).

For we are all of one. We who survive weep with them and for them. God is there, here, in the storm, the earthquake, the floods, the cancer—for those who desire Him. In Christ He comes alongside to comfort and support, even till death. But we *all* still experience the terrible effect of universal human sin.

All of us eventually die—from disease, accident, old age, or by a natural disaster. And no *Christian* has immunity.

Sooner or later all of us experience some degree of tragedy. It may be from the death of a family member or of a friend. What happens when they die?

Sadly, much distress can result from a distorted understanding of 'life after death'. For a Bible view request the title:

When Someone Dies

Time to Change

It doesn't always have to be like this. Personally, nationally, worldwide we can *turn from* our sin. God doesn't want anyone to perish. As computer geeks will say when advice is sought for another PC crash: *'RTM—read the manual!'* Read, and *follow*, the 'Scriptures of truth'. The door is still open.

Those terrible destructive waves back in December may indeed be a warning to everyone. But the world's overwhelming generous charitable response says there is still hope, still a glimmer of compassion.

It Won't Last

Sadly, the sure prophetic voice of Scripture has foreseen that mankind in general will, by the 'time of the end', have *'hardened his heart'*. The world has set its course to destruction. For six thousand uncivilized years we have experienced the groping in darkness of politicians and religious misleadership. And have yet to learn the lesson that 'God's way is the only way'.

The world at large may be 'going to hell in a hand-cart'. But individuals—*you*—have still time to change. When you do, whether you live or suffer or die, you will be on course to enter a civilisation at peace with itself. And a physical globe that is stable and at rest.

Alongside other churches of God the *Outreach Ministries* wants to reach out to as many as possible, within the limits of our resources, to encourage individuals to grasp the opportunity to trust Jesus Christ to see them through whatever personal challenges may lie ahead.

You are invited to add your efforts to ours. Ω

What will our world be like in the coming 'millennium'?

Universal peace, at last. No disease. No famine. No poverty. No crime. That's what Christians expect under the sovereign reign on Earth of Jesus Christ. It is the kind of world every sane person desires

But how will that happy state come about? Will Jesus simply 'wave a magic wand'? Will, suddenly, beautiful glistening cities materialize, earth produce in super abundance, all military academies and all hospitals instantly slam shut their doors, all mankind be 'converted'? Many Christians hold this picture as their vision of the future. Reality may be different.

God's revelation, the Bible, gives us some clues. We can tease out some foundation principles:

- God's end purpose will remain unchanged: He will continue to prepare Family members for His Kingdom
- His calling will at that time be open to everyone
- access to God's Family will be on the same terms as now
- basic human nature will be the same as today
- the option to 'choose life' remains
- the present malign influence of the Adversary, Satan, will be restrained
- untamed human nature will be controlled *via* the legal process

World in Chaos

Human activity will in the last days all but destroy the planet—through war, disease, pollution and even religious persecution—and kill literally billions. Powerful natural seismic disasters will occur. The horrific events of that time will derange multitudes, leave many more unable to cope with non-existent infrastructure, unavailable power, scattered family and with other support systems non-existent. An anguished and

dispirited remnant of mankind will creep from their 'holes in the rock' to face the terrible sight of an upside-down world.

Into this chaos will step Jesus Christ.

Jesus, however, will not return as the meek and mild Saviour. At 'the last trumpet blast' (I Corinthians 15:52) he will enter our world accompanied by powerful spirit beings and equipped with awesome spiritual authority and strength. The world's united nations will, from their military base in northern Israel and directed from the political power-base in Jerusalem, oppose Jesus with all their deadly weaponry.

To no avail. In that time '*...his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives*' and he will begin to reign as King over all existing earthly authority. Ahead is the awesome task of restoring Earth to its pristine best.

Time to Reconstruct

Into such a world, then, will Jesus arrive to begin Earth's reconstruction. He will establish his power-base in Jerusalem having overthrown the 'king of the North'. Bearing in mind the above principles, the following will require time to achieve or overcome. There will be no 'magic wand'.

- rotting corpses of animals and men will have to be buried to prevent disease
- cities destroyed by war and natural disaster will be painstakingly cleared and re-built to divine specifications
- there will be conflict during the early part of the millennium, and after the end
- hostile armies will for a time be maintained

The Millennium...

fact and fiction

- lost soil fertility needs time and hard work, with careful husbandry, to be restored
- water sources will become purified and safe, with proper sewerage
- there will, to eliminate disease, be a universal education programme on the laws of health and hygiene
- many nations will resist the authority of Jesus to scrap their ancient belief systems; they will be replaced by the one true faith
- nations beyond the boundaries of the restored Israel will be evangelized by the risen 'saints'
- an inspired justice system, based on divine Law, will be universally introduced for all nations

Unchanging Purpose

Near the end of his life Jesus, in Matthew 25, explained an important principle of his coming millennial rule. First, some background.

For the past six thousand years or so God has been preparing a people fit to live eternally in His company as part of the divine Family, and to ultimately colonize and inhabit the far reaches of the Universe. Until the return of Jesus they have lived as physical human beings but with the added 'ingredient' of the influence of the Spirit of God. At his return, all those with the Spirit—alive and dead—will join him as spirit members of that Family, no longer flesh and blood but resurrected to unending spirit life. Together with the angelic hosts they will join with Jesus in Earth's reconstruction.

Further, during the terrible times prior to his return many thousands from the nations of Israel will accept Jesus as the Messiah, together with

request the free booklet
Keys to the Book of Revelation

'an innumerable multitude' from every other nation. These will enter the new Earth as physical human beings, but begotten by the divine Spirit, to live out a life of testing—just like Christians in this age.

Jesus Enthroned

Notice that the time setting of Matthew 25:31-46 is :'*when the Son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he shall be seated on his throne of glory*'. Elsewhere we are informed that he will be accompanied by the previously resurrected Christians from down the ages. The time, clearly, refers to the beginning of 'the millennium'. In this passage Jesus is setting out his plan for the ensuing thousand years—how everyone will be judged.

He describes *three* classes of people: the 'sheep', the 'goats' - and 'my brothers'. How everyone (the 'nations') treats those men and women converted during the thousand years is the standard of judgment. Elsewhere (eg ch 12:48) Jesus defines his 'brothers' as '*whosoever shall do the will of my Father*'.

Treat well those who will follow Christ and '*you are not far from the Kingdom of heaven*' and on the path to salvation. Treat them badly, showing a disdain for the things of God, and you will—unless repentant—be adversely judged accordingly. That's because Jesus Christ through his Spirit will dwell in each of his 'brethren. As now, how you will treat them is a sign of how you will treat the Saviour—and your Creator—himself.

the risen saints accompany Jesus as he begins to establish his rule

To follow Jesus Christ and his principles of living—the Law of God—brings untold material and spiritual benefit, especially at that time when the world's culture is weighted in his direction, as in the coming millennium. The 'sheep' will voluntarily turn to Christ and have the divine Law '*written in their hearts*' through the indwelling holy Spirit. (There will be no coercion, but all will have freedom to choose.)

Those, however, labelled as 'goats' will continue to reject his teachings and will experience the dire consequences. As the prophet Isaiah points out, during that time '*...the sinner will be struck by the curse at a hundred [years old]*' (Isaiah 65:20). Even under the benign and perfect government of Jesus Christ there will still be those, though surely a minority, who reject God's invitation and give in to human nature.

Perfect Justice

Note that under the millennial reign of King Jesus '*...from Zion the Law [Torah, instruction] of the Lord shall go forth and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall arbitrate between the nations and decide disputes for many peoples*' (Isaiah 2:3). Human nature will continue to be active! There will, for all successive generations, be a perfect universal legal system based on the divine principles. The judicial authority of Jesus will, from Jerusalem, embrace the entire world. Clearly there will be

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a powerful need for it!

From the Matthew 25 passage we can see that some (even among God's people) will, at least through part of the thousand years, experience hunger, illness, imprisonment, poverty. How they are treated is a factor that will determine the fate of all Earth's inhabitants.

The Future is Bright

The Millennium is a time when the nations and most individuals will come to lay down their arms and begin to learn God's ways—in personal and international relationships, in agricultural practice, in healthy eating, in hygiene, in their families. The divine Law will be fairly and consistently implemented, and with due mercy.

The world will become super-productive in every sphere of human existence. Sound education will universally flourish. In every corner of the globe destructive religious practices will wither. Economically, 'boom and bust' will cease and there will be equal opportunity for all according to their natural abilities. The world will be healed and at rest.

Above all, the vast majority from every nation, and from every faith, will turn to Jesus Christ and become part of the divine Family. His 'church' will fill the Earth and very fraudulent faith will fade.

All that will take time. Just as the incoming tide covers the sands God's way will come to cover the entire Earth—every culture, every nation, every individual. Man's universal dream of health, peace and prosperity will become reality **Ω**

If you would like to talk about any matter related to your Bible studies or to your personal life challenges our elders are eager to be of service. They may be contacted through any of our offices

Enquire, too, about places to fellowship in strict confidence

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The greatest hoax ever? Or, the certain evidence of a Creator God?

The resurrection of Jesus is perhaps the most attested fact of history. It has significance for all mankind—for *you*, whether Christian or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist or even in Judaism. *All* mankind.

Since man was created and ‘fell’ the knowledge of a coming Deliverer—the ‘*Desire of all nations*’—was common knowledge. That knowledge—however distorted—passed down the generations, into all nations, all religions. Inevitably false teachers hi-jacked God’s plan introducing many of its elements into sometimes successful humanly-devised religions. Since creation there have been numerous such deceptions—in Babylon, in Egypt, in ancient Iran, for example.

In Mithraism, ‘born’ in ancient Persia, the ‘god’ supposedly died and was resurrected. The hand of the great Deceiver, however, is seen in other aspects of that false faith. In stark contrast to the true church being built (to this day) by Jesus Christ, adherents of Mithraism observed his birth—on December 25. They worshipped on Sunday, believed in an ‘immortal soul’, believed in false ideas of heaven and hell and eternal torment for the wicked. Just like the modern face of ‘Christianity’.

But no-one, ever, has returned from death in the same manner as did Jesus the Messiah. Certainly no founder of any other faith has done so. Not in all human history. Devotees visit the tombs of Abraham and Mohammed. Buddha disappeared into nirvana. Yet Jesus predicted, in detail, his death. He predicted his resurrection and the precise timing of it. He carefully laid the plans for his future activities. He burst the chains of death and came among his contemporaries in a tangible body that defies explanation, able—and visibly to witnesses—to pass through solid matter. He was transported instantly from place to place. He passed through locked doors. This was no myth. Many contemporary witnesses bore testimony to this unparalleled event. And it’s not over, *for he still lives*. The fact of his resurrection was well-known throughout the then known world.

What It Means

The death and resurrection of Jesus sets

divine approval on the faith he promoted. In face of philosophers, sceptics, even bishops, unless Jesus of Nazareth arose from the grave Christianity is a fraud. Unless he arose from the grave every professing Christian is still unforgiven, still in their sins, still without salvation. Unless he arose you may as well go away and devise your own rules for behaviour, follow any faith..

If Jesus conquered death it undeniably proves the existence of an Almighty God. It means that every other faith system is, however successful, fraudulent. It puts every individual who commits to Christianity under awesome obligation. It answers the ultimate question—*is there life beyond the grave?* If the Gospel reports of his resurrection are true can we then question the substance of the rest of the Bible? Or the existence of God?

Jesus time and again predicted his own death. But always he made clear that in a specified time he would rise from the dead. Talk about going out on a limb. It happened—precisely as he predicted. Since he was right you can be sure his other predictions are certain. Like, ‘*I will come again*’. Like, ‘*when the Son of man returns in all his glory he will gather the nations before him*’ for judgment. And believe him, he will not return as the ‘meek and mild’ Jesus of popular imagination but as the all-conquering King of kings set on exposing and destroying ‘*those who destroy the earth*’.

Irrefutable Evidence

Consider the following, each of which can be supported by much evidence:

- Jesus predicted his own death—‘*killed*’—many times
- He time and again predicted his resurrection
- He fulfilled a precise timetable, resurrected as the ‘*first of the firstfruits*’
- He predicted when he would rise again from the dead: in ‘*three days and three nights*’. This, he said, was the only sign he would give the unbelieving Jewish authorities
- He fulfilled all the many prophecies concerning his death
- He was seen on numerous occasions, after he rose, by numerous contemporaries—on one occasion by around five hundred

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS...*just a sham?*

- The Jewish authorities couldn’t produce his body and resorted to bribery and influence
- The empty tomb on the outskirts of Jerusalem, easily accessible to all comers, bore witness to his resurrection. No evidence was produced showing it fake or fantasy. No-one made the tomb a shrine. It was empty. [request the article *The Empty Tomb*]
- Following his crucifixion the disciples were unbelieving, fearful and timid. They were transformed following the resurrection appearances of Jesus
- The teachings of the apostles following the first Christian Pentecost centred on the undisputed fact of the resurrection of Jesus. No-one in Jerusalem contradicted them.
- Only in the fantasy realm of fiction did Jesus Christ recover, live for a time in the flesh and then die like everyone else

Act Now

The passing of centuries has blurred the impact of the resurrection of Jesus. The undeniable fact is that he died, horribly mutilated, and then three days and three nights later passed through the undisturbed grave-clothes and a sealed and solid rock ‘door’. He walked and talked with his disciples. And then, before many witnesses, ascended to the right hand of God. Historically, some have been restored to life. But all of us, like them, die sooner or later.

Believe he was resurrected and your life has to change. It is evidence that death isn’t the end, that there is life beyond the grave. That God exists. And, as Jesus said and as confirmed by his apostles [see **Apostles**, p.8], that a time of judgment is coming.

Jesus was the first to be resurrected—‘*the first of the firstfruits*’ - in a spirit-body. At his coming again all those who truly believe and are baptized will join him, in the same form, to reign with him for a thousand years in a renewed world. Wrote James: ‘*We are a kind of firstfruits*’. There is, now, time for you to commit to him and to have stake in his Kingdom, to reign with him. **Ω**

[Be sure to read the related articles in this issue of *New Horizons*]

TABERNACLES

...humanity in the flesh

The Festival of Tabernacles is an age-old divinely inspired festival that has relevance to all mankind throughout history

Many Christians share the understanding that the Biblical *Festival of Tabernacles* is a 'type' of the millennial reign on Earth of Jesus Christ. The festival has, however, layers of meaning that shed light on the entire history, past, present and future, of mankind.

The Festival was outlined by the LORD to ancient Israel as they departed Egypt, but existed long before. The 'ten tribes' lived in tents for their forty years spent in the wilderness, and the Festival, in one of its aspects, commemorates this. But it does have wider relevance for all of mankind.

To state the obvious, we humans are totally dependent for our life on the nourishment derived from our food. We are physical beings. It's not surprising, then, that mankind celebrates this. It's in the religious calendar of ancient faiths—and in the form of our autumnal 'harvest festivals' is firmly planted to this day in Christianity.

The ancient Canaanites of Biblical notoriety, for example, observed spring, summer and autumn festivals dedicated to the ingathered harvests. It's a time of thanksgiving to the Deity for earth's bounty. Not surprising, then, that the nation of Israel also observed 'harvest festivals' - *Unleavened Bread, Pentecost* and the *Feast of Tabernacles*.

A Divine Plan

When our first parents rejected God's guidance they lost the right to

live in Paradise—and direct access to their and our Creator. The LORD had literally walked and talked with them in the Garden. Having through their awesome sin rejected the divine way they had to leave 'the Garden'. They still had to till the soil, but there are indications in the record that it was no easy task. All of nature was topsy-turvy. Some commentators have suggested that for some seventeen centuries earth yielded its harvest reluctantly, and there may have been no defined seasons. Only after the terrible world-shaking trauma of the Flood did 'mother nature' settle to the regular seasonal pattern on which we still depend.

The merciful LORD did not abandon mankind but instituted access to Himself through sacrifices. All nations developed a sacrificial system. We have a detailed record of the system inspired by God in the record of the nation of Israel and described in the book of Leviticus. Their significance was for all mankind—Adam's progeny down the centuries and to this day.

Sacrifice was, of course, a mere substitute for reality. They pointed forward to the One through whom sin could be conquered. Each sacrifice appointed by God had significance in the future life, death and work of Jesus. The sacrifices made by other nations obscured their true significance and were often corrupted, as among the Canaanites, to human sacrifice—a practice forbidden by God. Before the time of Moses, Israel had observed both sacrifices (Exodus 5:3) and festivals (v. 1).

Festival Reality

God's annual festivals similarly look forward to Jesus the Messiah and His divine plan for all mankind. They have as much significance in today's world as anciently. Probably more, as

the end of the age approaches when they will have their final fulfilment.

There are hints in the Biblical record that they were observed in some form by the people of God long before Moses. As with sacrifices the nations corrupted the festivals and obscured their significance. This is true with the modern form of Christianity, which ignores the divine festivals and substitutes pre-Christian ones, as Easter, Christmas, All Hallows, the various saints' days.

At 'the Exodus' from Egypt the nation of Israel had the chance to put sacrifice behind them and experience the reality. They agreed to what was a spiritual 'marriage covenant' with the LORD, and to become a 'kingdom of priests' (Exodus 19:6). By this Covenant God did not require sacrifice (Jeremiah 7:22-24). But Israel soon embraced idolatry and, in consequence, were 'divorced'. A sacrificial system, administered by a Priesthood, was re-instated until the birth of Christ made them unnecessary. [*Check out the article **The Law of Life***]

Providence

Within Judaism to this day the Festival of Tabernacles is observed in part as a remembrance of the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. During those years they lived in tents—temporary dwellings, booths or 'tabernacles' - and experienced direct divine provision for every material and spiritual need. The LORD was with them daily, visible in a pillar of smoke by day and of fire by night. Their food and drink was miraculously supplied, and their clothing didn't wear out. To this day within Judaism there is annually an observance representative of their long period of wandering.

The festivals, then, are an expression of thanks for 'harvest home', for divine provision of every need: food, shelter, God's presence. They are no less significant for Christians of

every race, and an appropriate observance amid the secularism of the world today. All outside the Christian faith can experience the same benefits by entering into the same Covenant.

As did the early church of God, it is appropriate to annually observe this 'pilgrimage' festival. It honours the Creator and is a reminder of His great plan.

Humanity in a Nutshell

Death is a guaranteed exit for all of us. Life is brief, temporary, a puff of vapour. The *Festival of Tabernacles* is, for all mankind, a picture of our brief existence. Not only for individuals or for nations but also for mankind in the flesh. A time will come when there will be no more flesh with all its trials and tribulations and when Earth will be peopled by a race of spirit beings. But not yet. That—Eternity—is represented by another festival.

Tabernacles is a snapshot of all of this. It is a *seven-day* festival picturing the whole of our physical existence as the human race—from man's beginnings separated from God till Eternity begins. It encompasses every age of man right through what is known within Christianity as 'the Millennium' - the thousand-year reign on Earth of Jesus Christ as King of all kings, and LORD of all religious 'lords'. During that time the physical survivors of man's destructive activities in these last days, and their off-spring, will re-build a peaceful and prosperous world under the guiding hand of Jesus Christ at the head of a supervisory army of the Spirit-born saints from all ages of man.

The prophet Zechariah was inspired (ch 14) to record that the entirety of mankind, from every nation, every faith, will be required—under duress if necessary—to observe the *Feast of Tabernacles*: 'And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all

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 quarterly *Newsletter*, *Fountain of Life*, a bi-monthly outreach magazine *New Horizons*, the *Bible Basics* home study course). The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren.

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

the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts and to keep the feast of Tabernacles' (ch 14:16).

The Devil Bound

Satan will be 'locked up' during the Millennial period, and released only *after* the thousand years are complete. It will be a test for this evil spirit as to how its long years of confinement will have changed it. John again: 'And he [an angel] laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan and bound him a thousand years...that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled' (Revelation 20:2, 3).

This evil spirit will then seek to once again—as now—deceive mankind. It

will be a 'cut-off point' for the final generation of the thousand year reign of Messiah: *will they worship Jesus—or this evil being?*

Fate of the 'Unsaved'

Many ponder the fate of all those who, down the centuries before and after the lifetime of Jesus, have never 'accepted Christ', or had opportunity to do so. 'Tabernacles' also includes, represented by its last day, the resurrection from their graves to physical life of all those who have died without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In their flesh they will be given opportunity to live a godly life, to be transformed by the divine Spirit, to experience life without the malign influence of Satan. Recorded the apostle John: '*The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished*' (Revelation 20:5).

Prophetic Week

In parallel to the seven annual Bible festivals, there is also a 'prophetic week'. The seven-day week is a strangeling as far as the calendar is concerned. It doesn't accurately tie in with movements of either sun or moon. It was, of course, the time assigned to the material Creation. The LORD 'worked' for six days—and rested on the seventh. The latter He humanely set aside as a day for man to rest from his daily toil and to fellowship with Him, to recharge our physical and spiritual 'batteries'.

To further His plan He chose a godly man, Abraham and his progeny through his son Isaac, to raise up a godly nation, Israel. The sign (like a wedding ring!) of His Covenant with Israel—and it remains to this day for all His people—was the seventh-day *Sabbath*.

The apostle Peter gives an interesting insight. He tells us: '*a day represents a thousand years*' (II Peter 3:8). Each day of the literal week,

that is, has prophetic meaning with each day representing ‘a thousand years’. Man, having rejected divine guidance, has six ‘days’ to work—a notional six thousand years—to do his own thing: form governments, educate, devise religions *etc.* All without reference to his Creator. Then there would be a ‘seventh day’ lasting a thousand years for us to ‘rest’ and to allow Messiah to clear up the mess we have made.

This seventh ‘day’ represents the Millennium. During this time of God’s direct rule the physical layer is mankind ‘at rest’ with Christ as King of kings, while the spiritual layer is the reign of Messiah with the resurrected saints as spirit beings.

Mankind in the Flesh

Tabernacles, in sum, covers the whole time man *in his flesh* has existed and will exist on Planet Earth. It encompasses the ‘six thousand years’ of human civilisation during which we have ruined earth and pillaged its resources, time and again killed our fellow man in needless war.

It includes, too, that ‘thousand years’ of the direct hands-on rule of Jesus Christ as symbolized by the seventh day of the prophetic week, the *Sabbath*. And it embraces the period during which the dead will be resurrected, the veil of deception lifted from their eyes and have opportunity, for the first time, to become part of the divine Family.

There are, then, various layers of significance to this divinely-inspired annual festival that are important for all of mankind through all generations.

Tabernacles...

- is a festival representing the temporary presence on Earth through the centuries of all humanity in the flesh as we are born, live and return to dust
- is a remembrance by Israel’s descendants of the time of their pil-

grimage through the wilderness following their miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt

- reminds them of ‘tabernacling’ - living in temporary dwellings in booths or tents—during that time
- is an annual reminder to Christians that we, too, are ‘*strangers and pilgrims*’ on earth, surrounded by a world that rejects God’s way of life and ‘enslaves’ mankind
- and that Christians, through Jesus, have been freed from bondage to that world system
- is an autumnal ‘harvest festival’ of thanksgiving for God’s bounty and provision of our material needs
- is a time for ‘holy convocations’ - assembling to hear God’s Word proclaimed, and for fellowship with those of like mind
- incorporates the reign of Jesus Christ (represented by the seventh day of the prophetic week) over physical humanity as He restores Earth to its pristine beauty
- and teaches all who survive the coming time of awesome trial on Earth the true way to peace and prosperity
- includes those who experience, after the ‘thousand years’, Satan’s final attempt to deceive and to usurp the authority of Jesus Christ
- encompasses the time of resurrection from death to physical life of all who have never understood the good news of God’s plans for us
- It includes the ‘*second death*’

Closing Day

But that’s not all there is to God’s interest in mankind. The seven day *Festival of Tabernacles* is immedi-

RESURRECTION

The death and the resurrection of Jesus are recalled annually in the *Lord’s Supper* and the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. You are invited to request our publications explaining these days

Lord’s Supper...Friday April 22
Unleavened Bread... April 23-30

ately followed by a final ‘closing day’. It is an annual gathering of the people of God. Tabernacles encompasses mankind’s earthly sojourn *in the flesh*. That will end.

The plan of God is for all who will to join him in His spirit-born family, and *this* life is ‘boot camp’. After Tabernacles all that remains will be spirit—each fit to accompany God through the coming aeons.

The *Closing Day*—the eighth day of the festival—represents that time. *Eternity*. **Ω**

Apostles

Anticipating that he needed reliable instruments on earth to be witness to his resurrection, to promote his message and to fulfil his promise to build his church, Jesus trained and inspired twelve men who had ‘*continued with him from the beginning*’. He called them *apostles*—‘sent ones’.

For an intensive three and a half years during his physical life-time and for forty days following his resurrection these men heard Jesus speak of the Kingdom of God. He exposed the wrong notions that had distorted the original revealed teachings through Moses and the Prophets. The twelve apostles, and Paul (‘*born out of time*’) were a unique band, never to be repeated. Just as Jesus was authenticated by his works—healings, raising the dead, casting out demons *etc*—so too were these twelve authenticated by their works.

The apostles were guided by God’s Spirit in all they taught. Their witness of the life of Jesus (the ‘*Gospels*’) and their teachings, recorded for us in the book of *Acts*, in the *Letters* and in the book of *Revelation* are the authentic and infallible teachings of Jesus. (It is, note, an error to assume that all the words of Jesus to the twelve can be universally applied to all Christians.)

To reflect those teachings, all doctrine must conform to their writings. What Jesus and his apostles taught is ‘*the faith once delivered*’. All contrary additions—and there are many right up to the present—are fraudulent and deceptive.

MiniStudy

What Is the ‘Millennium’?

They shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years Revelation 20:5

Since man first set foot on Earth his life has been marked by conflict. Having rejected divine authority uncontrolled human nature paved the way to the present world turmoil, with leaders unable to devise permanent peace—despite the universal human desire to live peaceably. God, however, has a plan to ensure enduring world peace.

We recently entered and celebrated worldwide a ‘new millennium’ of history. But the old challenges remain: wars, poverty, hunger, premature death, disease, crime, massacres. The term ‘millennium’, of course, just means ‘a thousand years’. In religious terms, in Christianity, it has a more specific meaning:

- the *Millennium* is the coming time of the direct 1000-year rule of planet Earth by Jesus Christ, the Messiah
- His return to reign is one of His many specific promises during His earthly ministry
- it was, too, widely prophesied in the writings of the Old Testament
- before this event, mankind will all but destroy the planet and ‘*all flesh*’ with it, with only ‘*a few men left*’
- Jesus will eliminate all the forces that will have combined to bring this about, culminating in a final showdown in northern Israel
- He will depose the ‘*King of the North*’, who will have established his power base in Jerusalem
- once He gains supreme authority He will begin the massive task of restoring Earth to its pristine beauty and productive energy
- in this Jesus will be assisted by an angelic host, by those people from Old Testament times who were motivated by God’s holy Spirit, and by Christians
- from ‘the divine HQ’ in Jerusalem they, under Messiah’s direction, will restore order and sanity to the survivors of man’s inhumanity
- all mankind will come under the benign enforcement of God’s rule, with one universal faith
- the ‘heart’ of man will be transformed by the indwelling of God’s Spirit, to willingly follow God’s way of peace and harmony

See *The Millennium—fact and fiction* (this issue), and request the articles:
God’s Grand Design and *The World Tomorrow*

New Horizons may be viewed
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hints about how to study the
Bible

*We are pleased to reply to any ques-
tions arising from any of our publica-
tions. However, we are not yet in a
position to 'grade' your responses*

all are available from any of the addresses listed inside

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