

**NEW**

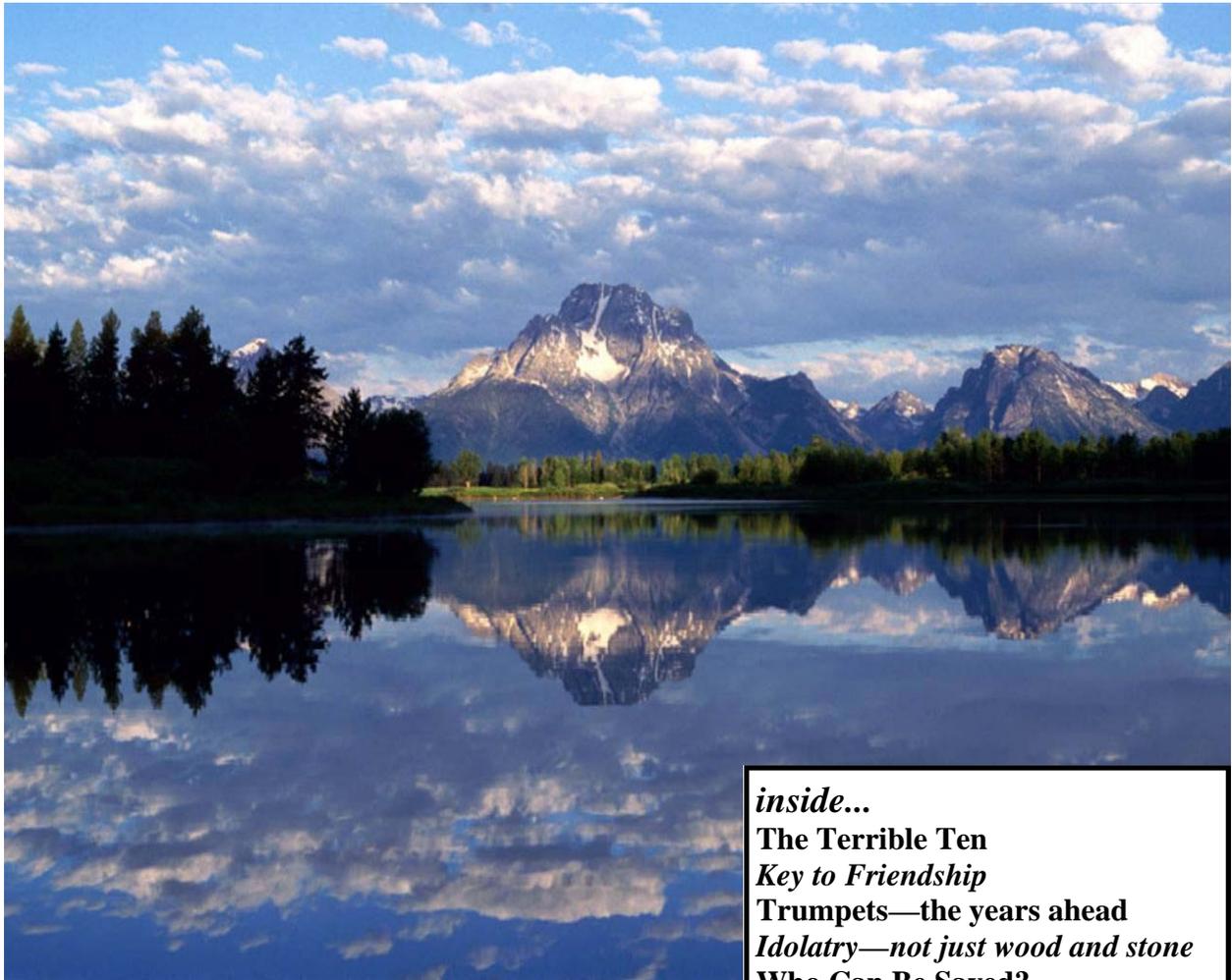
# **Horizons**

*Vol 9 No 5*

*September/October 2005*

*addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow*

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**CGOM**

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

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It's our hope that through  
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will come to understand  
the true meaning of the  
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in the clearest of terms - and  
recorded for us in the Scrip-  
tures. Over the centuries  
that truth has been buried,  
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**

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# new **Horizons**

Issue No 53

September/October 2005

**Activists in the United States continue to lobby for an end to the public display of the Ten Commandments. They offended the civil rights of atheists! But why so much opposition to this body of law? Is it indeed 'religious'?**

The Ten Commandments, of course, are in the Bible, considered to be a religious 'holy book' (though in reality a practical manual for living) - listed, for example, in Exodus chapter twenty. Most in our western society have heard of them. And perhaps because they are termed "commandments" few obey them!

But just because they are in a so-called religious book, are they merely 'religious'? Can even secular society at large just ignore them? If we are of a faith that doesn't use the Bible should we be any less governed by "the terrible ten"?

## Lawless Consequences

Even a superficial look at this concise body of law must stir some measure of agreement - whatever your religious faith or lack of it.

Would you, for example, quarrel with *You shall not steal*? All of us do our best to protect our personal property; we all like 'stuff'. We spend multiple billions on security! If this law were removed from the nation's statute book there would be massive insurrection. And if it were not human nature to *covet* another's possessions or to indulge in 'conspicuous spending', look at the

cost savings! So - is this a "religious law"?

Then there's the instruction *Do no murder*. What would your reaction be to the abolition of this law? Is it 'religious'? And what about the commandment that forbids perjury (*false witness*)? How much more smoothly would our justice system run if nobody lied in court - or received the just Biblical punishment if they did so! Again - is it "religious"?

How many husbands and wives have longed for a strengthening of another of those "obsolete Bible laws": *You shall not commit adultery*? Vast heartache would be saved if wife-swapping, secret trysts, open adultery and all forms of sexual aberration were outlawed - and dealt with. Imagine the huge benefits to society: divorce would plummet, one-parent children would be rare, lawyers would diminish, billions of

pounds be redirected to productive use.

## The 'Terrible Ten'...

*are the Ten Commandments 'religious'?*

Then there's that law the breaking of which has caused endless heartache: *Honour your father and your mother* with its direct promise that if this instruction were honoured the nation would thrive. Today? The elderly are despised and often abused, plundered, abandoned, murdered - even by their own children!

But what of the *first four* com-

mandments? How do they relate to a secular society?

## The Sovereign Creator

These four say: *No gods before the Lord. No images or worship of other gods. No distortion of the divinely-revealed religious practices and form of worship. No violation of the seventh day Sabbath*. Surely this is religion? Only if you don't believe there's a Creator God!

With Him, religion and life - the nitty-gritty of day-to-day affairs - are intertwined. A whole, seamless.

Failing to recognize His sole authority, His sovereignty - as outlined in the first four commands - over every aspect of our being destroys the individual, the family, the nation - and ultimately the world.

Indeed, apart from the Sabbath command all religions in their own way would agree even to these. Each faith is, of course, distinguished by its own day for corporate worship— Islam has Friday, Christianity has Sunday, Judaism and Biblical Christianity worship on the seventh day, Saturday.

## Operating Manual

All ten of the Commandments originated when man was first created. They are the basis of the Manufacturer's *Operating Manual*. We were created by God with a specific physical, mental and psychological profile. His Law (Heb *torah* = instruction) was the optimum way for us to live.

Look at the destructive effects of the clash between diverse religions within a nation. India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria - and *cont'd p.8*

# A Key to Friendship

**Have you ever felt angry or disappointed when you were trying to explain something to someone or you expressed an opinion, and he or she just never seemed to understand? Are you listening?**

**Kathleen McCann**

The ability to listen actively to someone is a beneficial skill in friendship. Listening requires a reciprocal relationship. “Just as anger is normally met with anger, so listening encourages others to listen.” (*Learning to Counsel*, by Jan Sutton & William Stewart)

Friends listen to each other, meaning that they hear what the other is saying. It is actually surprisingly hard to listen to what another person says, because we naturally hear our own thoughts first. How we view life obviously takes priority in our own mind.

When we listen actively to another person, we acknowledge the importance of the speaker, and we offer respect though not necessarily agreement.

However, the other person—he or she—cannot really know that is being heard and understood unless we can reflect back not only the facts of what was said, but also the feelings behind what was said. We need to respond empathically.

When we reflect back to the other what we have heard, the benefit to the other person is that he hears his own thoughts, his feelings and his own position as if shown to him in a mirror, so that he can see what they look like from outside himself. This enables him to know and understand himself and his viewpoint better. From that position of self-

knowledge, the other is more willing and able to change positively, if that is appropriate, or to accept a different perspective.

What we are doing is picking up the main issue on the person’s mind, not contradicting him, but acknowledging the point and trying to move forward along the path with him.

It is well-recognised that people who actively listen produce a more mature response. The other tends to become

Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion and the beginning of morality  
*The Observer*

*Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

- *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*
- *Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?*
- *Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?*
- *Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no trap is laid for him?*
- *Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?*
- *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?*
- *shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*

*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets*

Amos 3:1-7

more open to what we are saying and to be less defensive.

Empathy is “...the ability to step into the inner world of another person and step out of it again, without identifying too closely (becoming) that person. Trying to understand the thoughts, feelings, behaviours and meanings from the other person’s frame of reference (to feel *with*, to be *alongside*.)” (*Learning to Counsel*)

We should not confuse *empathy* (walking alongside) with *sympathy* (feeling *like*), or *pity* (feeling *for*).

Empathy is like taking a journey alongside another person. Life is a journey and a husband and wife will walk together as companions, not always agreeing, but (hopefully!) aware of where the other is in his own mind.

The Bible has a lot to say about walking together. Amos 3:3 is the most famous: “*Do two walk together, if they have not met?*” (Young’s Literal Translation)

Amos 3:1-7 is primarily about the Lord’s relationship with His people, Israel. First the Lord says, “*Hear*”, meaning, “Listen to what I say.” Then He declares His love for Israel: “*You only have I known...*” The word “known” reveals a special relationship involving concern and care.

The rhetorical questions in Amos 3:4-6 have to do with being warned of danger and escaping because the danger is revealed. The people are in great danger of incurring the Lord’s punishment. He starts and finishes the questions in verses 3 and 6 by referring to Himself. Hence, paraphrasing, “*If you would walk beside me ... we could avoid all of this calamity!*”

I like to think of Amos 3:3 in terms of empathy. Although it is common sense that two people who wish to walk together must agree to meet in

the first place, in this passage the Lord is expressing His great desire to walk alongside His people in an empathic relationship.

Unlike the lion or the snare, the Lord is open and honest with His people. He does not lie in wait to pounce or trap people. He is open about His motivation and His plans so that people don't inadvertently walk contrary to Him. Note John 15:14-15, "*You are my friends if you do whatever I command you ...I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*"

Then Amos 3:7, "*Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*"

Let me finish by quoting again from the book, *Learning to Counsel*: "We can only take people along the road of self-discovery who are willing to travel with us. We can only travel at their pace. Unless two (or a group) are in agreement, the journey toward self-discovery will be fraught with impossibilities.

"This is often coupled with the humbling acceptance that perhaps not all that was hoped for has been achieved. Added to this is the knowledge that in the helping, one has been helped; that in sharing the pain of another's wounds, one's own wounds have been touched and transformed. Above all, there is a sense of gratitude that whatever was changed was made possible by both people."

I continually hear Amos 3:3 when I read these words, and think of the Lord's great desire to walk alongside His people on life's journey! **Ω**

[This essay is an edited version of one that recently appeared in *The Journal, News of the Churches of God.*]

### **WHY...? cont'd from p.6**

They failed. Responsibility to forward the divine plan passed to those who submit—'are obedient'—to the divine will, expressed solely through faith in God's Son, Jesus the Messiah. He is committed to support them, they are his church, and he oversees its activities—despite appearances!

#### **Our Choice**

Since mankind's beginnings the fulfillment of God's plan for us has been a combination of His invitation and our human choice.

The invitation is there wherever the Word of God effectively reaches. As recorded by Isaiah: "*So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, except it accomplish that which I please, and make the thing whereto I sent it prosper*" (Isaiah 55:11).

That Word has been published almost worldwide through a billion Bibles and Bible portions and in at least half the world's languages, and through innumerable media and missionary activities. But throughout history, only a few fully respond.

God the Father ('*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*: John 6:44) chooses and calls those who are likely to be prepared through personal circumstance—not those satiated by personal prestige, the wealthy, the worldly wise, the powerful etc. Wrote the apostle Paul:

*For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Corinthians 1:26-29)*

Those who hear and respond to the divine call are led to full acceptance of the divine message as personified in Jesus. He said: "*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me*" (John 6:45).

The ultimate purpose of the human race is to finally be reconciled to the Father, to become a part of His divine Family. And, as Jesus said: '*No-one comes to the Father except through me*'. Nothing but the word of truth revealed in the Christian Bible can substitute—no other faith, and no deviant interpretation of the basics of the faith.

#### **Be Baptized**

Many, perhaps millions, encounter Jesus. They learn of his life, his achievements, the way of life he taught and exemplified. They adopt much of what he taught. Their behaviour may well be transformed by the experience. Until, that is, his 'hard sayings' are encountered.

That's when many turn aside, while retaining the externals. Perhaps through their childhood instruction. Perhaps through the traditions with which they grew up. Perhaps through persuasive teaching from the pulpit—'*broken cisterns that can hold no water*'. For whatever reason they may turn aside, a 'blindness', a veil, falls over their spiritual eyes.

However, those convicted of their sin, their alienation from the Father, who pass through 'the door' (who come to Jesus) become his disciples. They embark on a journey of spiritual discovery.

As part of the 'package' Jesus presents to us, those who respond will be immersed in water—symbolic of the death of our 'old man', our human nature—and have hands laid upon them to be given the indwelling Spirit of the Father. Thus is eternity implanted in the human heart. They become brothers and sisters in the ever-living Family of God. **Ω**

Are you willing to commit fully to this Way? Ready to '*follow the Lamb wherever he goes*'? Then, request the free article:

***Should you Be Baptized?***

# Trumpets...the years ahead

Bill Faith

**The Biblical holy days depict the divine plan. The Day of Trumpets, in the autumn, is a pen-portrait of the end-time**

After spending forty days with Jesus following his resurrection from the dead, and while they were standing upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples witnessed the resurrected Jesus Christ rising from the earth and ascending to heaven. As He disappeared behind a cloud two men in white apparel stood by them and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

From that day forward, the disciples expected Christ to return at any time. Only after several years did they finally understand that He would not return in their lifetime.

## Predictions

Many prophecies in both Old and New Testaments tell of His return, when God's government will be established on this earth. Daniel, explaining Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning future world governments, said that finally, "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [all previous kingdoms] and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of this Kingdom wrote, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain [government] of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [over all governments], and shall be exalted above

the hills; and all nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah. 2:2).

Just before Jesus' ascension into heaven the disciples thought that He would fulfill that prophecy then. "They asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'" Jesus replied to them saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus replied to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:6-7). This prophecy was not to be fulfilled at that time, but for a time yet future.

Jesus himself previously had given them insight regarding that time in the future when He would return. He told them.

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory* (Matthew 24:29-30)

## A Troubled Future

The Bible teaches us that just before

The Day of Trumpets in 2005 falls on **Tuesday October 4th**, beginning the previous evening at sundown

the return of Christ to this earth, "...there will be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1). Jesus speaking of this same time told His disciples, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until

this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

It is at this same time when Jesus returns that He will also gather His people. Those who are still alive will be instantly transformed while those who are dead will be resurrected to eternal life. "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. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..." (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Jesus told us that the exact time this will happen is only known by God the Father. (Acts 1:7) The Apostles Peter and Paul both make reference to this time when Christ will return.

Peter warned,

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless*

(II Peter 3:10-11,14).

Paul, however, added that that day should not take Christians by surprise. "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so come as a thief in the night.... But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:2, 4-6).

## Divine Plan

The return of Christ and the resurrection of the saints are important events yet to be fulfilled. To help remind us of such events concerning salvation, God has instituted holy days that are to be shadows of things to come (*refer to Colossians 2:16-17*).

In fact, the Feast of Trumpets is the holy day that foreshadows the return of Christ and the resurrection of His people. The Bible states that there will be *seven trumpets* which will signal calamities that will happen upon the earth in the latter days.

The seventh and last trumpet will signal

the return of Christ and the resurrection of the elect. For we are told in I Corinthians 15:51-52, "*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.*"

In conclusion, there is a time yet future when our Lord Jesus will return to this earth and establish Himself as King of kings and Lord of lords (*see Revelation 19:16*). This will usher in a time of great peace, often called the millennium. "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*" (Isaiah 11:9).

It will be a time when, "*...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore*" (ch. 2:4). It will come at a time that will surprise the world, yet will not surprise those who know God's plan for salvation. That plan is revealed by the holy days that God gave man to observe.

The *Feast of Trumpets* is the day that foreshadows the return of Christ to this earth and the resurrection to eternal life of the saints. Ω

Request the booklets (no charge):  
**God's Holy Days**  
**Tabernacles— mankind in the flesh**

## Idolatry...not just wood and stone

The gold standard for true worship, surely, must be God's own definition as revealed through His Word. Whatever your religion you aspire to worship the Deity in truth - however much you may personally fall short. Yet the average Christian - and, surprisingly, even religious leaders - assume they can form their own definition.

Apart from a few deranged folk who daily hear directly from God, religious folk look to their Scriptures for guidance - the Bible, the Koran *etc.* That's where the divine will is canonized. The Christian Scriptures, for example, tell us: "*All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine...*" (II Timothy 3:16). But do we believe it? Can we live by God's own standards?

### Unchanging God

We can with total assurance rely on God. He is consistent. His character is the same yesterday, today and will be the same tomorrow, for the next millennium, for ever. What was sin yesterday is still sin. So - how for example did He deal with *idolatry*, which is, clearly, sinful?

Let's first define *idolatry*. An idol is a representation of the god in material form, and the spirit of the god was deemed to inhabit it. Using such images, then - however ignorantly - was not merely bowing before wood or stone but was worship of its indwelling god or

spirit. Yet the apostle Paul wrote: "*What they sacrifice [to idols] they are offering to demons and not to God*" (I Corinthians 10:20). Idolatry was contrary to the Creator's instruction: "*You shall have no other gods before me*", and "*You shall not make for yourself an engraved image*" (Exodus 20:4-5).

The Creator is revealed through but one form of religion. All others are humanly devised. His attitude to all these usurpers is clear: nothing, no-one, can substitute for His way. He has revealed how man is to worship Him and has laid down strict guidelines - emphasised in His model nation Israel by serious attached penalties.

Yet here's something curious. Islam, for example, claims that through Abraham it worships the same God as Jews and Christians. Indeed it's a generally accepted position. So how come such divergence in belief and practice, from both Judaism and Christianity?

### Day to Remember

Take the weekly day for worship. Divine revelation says *the seventh day* of the week. Deliberate departure from this under Israel's divinely-appointed *Constitution* (*'the ministration of death'*) incurred *death* for an individual. And when, later, the Sabbath came to be despised and disregarded by the nation in general - just like today - God 'arranged' for its invasion and deportation to foreign countries.

The day for His formal worship was clearly important to Him. Serious stuff.

Let's ask the question again - *does God change?* Why, for thousands of years ever since creation, would He insist on the *seventh-day Sabbath* and not the Islamic Friday? Or, indeed, the Christian *Sunday*? The seventh-day Sabbath is one of the signs - the major sign - that identify God. Any other observance no matter how hearty or sincere identifies some other god.

Protests, here, from Christians! For most it's okay for God to change His worship day, despite the evidence. The Sunday tradition - for tradition it is - goes back a long way. But you will not find Biblical support for it. It simply isn't in the Christian Bible. Yet the last Pope is reported as desirous that Sunday be written into any European Union *Constitution*. And he did have some influence worldwide!

Jesus had some disturbing words. In the 'sermon on the mount' he warned against false teachers (Matthew 7:15). Then he adds: "*Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven*" (v.21).

Could you, unknowingly, be an idolater? What is God's will? You will read about that in the Scriptures - notably, as Timothy points out, in the words from the Old Testament (II Timothy 3:16).

*Study the Scriptures - carefully.* Ω

## “Who, then, can be saved?”

**Relatively few in our world are willing to give their all to the way pioneered by Jesus Christ. Why?**

The Gospel message has been proclaimed, in one form or another, since the time of Jesus Christ—nearly two thousand years. Since then, generations have come and gone. Yet few in any one generation have embraced its precepts. Even the apostolic evangelism, preached with power and with accompanying miracles and signs, while reaching multitudes, yet failed to convert but relatively few of their own generation.

Today, those professing to be Christian are still a minority—at best one in three of mankind. These two billion subscribe to a wide range of often quite bizarre beliefs. Take the name ‘Jesus’ and, it seems, you can add on any weird and crackpot notion the mind can envisage—and call it ‘Christian’. The result—‘Christianism’ rather than the message brought by Jesus, true Christianity.

### The Business of Faith

Jesus tells us he came to reveal the Father. Since the Father is the Supreme Creator and prime mover of the Universe and all it contains He can be considered as the ‘Founder-Chairman’ of His enterprise, with Jesus as the CEO, the ‘Chief Executive Officer’. As such it can safely be assumed that the ‘Company’ was formed with a specific purpose.

To continue the analogy—such a vast project demands a careful choice of personnel. A recent TV series, *The Apprentice*, highlighted the careful selection needed for even a limited human business. In the series Sir Alan Sugar of Amstrad personally and carefully selected his key personnel.

### Grand Design

Can we expect anything less from the Father, the prime mover of all that is?

God’s grand design is no short-term, slapdash project but one that embraces millennia. It is no money-grabbing exploitation of its ‘workers’ but motivated by their present and future welfare.

The divine plan has been consistent in purpose from its inception. It is endlessly expanding by the day, and the current personnel are delegated the responsibility of recruiting others with the same stringent selection procedure. Indeed that recruitment is a major plank in God’s business—a people business.

### Lost Cause

In general, Christians assume that God’s purpose is to ‘save the world’. He is engaged in a desperate struggle to keep His human creation out of the hands of Satan, and saved into Heaven. The hope is that by means of our evangelistic effort God will ‘win’.

Sadly, according to this scenario billions have, down the millennia, already been ‘lost’. Though not the religiously correct thing in modern Christianity, these ‘lost’ languish in eternal fire, endlessly burning but not burning up.

Given such failure, in human business terms God (the Chairman) and His CEO should be sacked by the shareholders! And, of course, many have indeed shunted Him into limbo.

God, however, is not doddery, not a failure. He is the all-powerful Creator and Ruler of all that is. In the far reaches of past eternity He conceived a plan and is carefully nurturing it to fruition.

First came the physical Universe—the ‘canvas’ on which to paint His magnificent design. The jewel in the crown of that material creation was planet Earth. Then on the Earth He formed the pinnacle of Creation—mankind, male and female.

Perfectly designed, perfectly formed they were to assume headship and authority over the physical creation:

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have domin-*

*ion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth*  
Genesis 1:26ff.

### Godly Offspring

Why ‘male and female’? Because only through procreation by a man and a woman would the divine purpose be fulfilled. It’s a theme that pervades the entirety of Scripture.

Our first parents could have chosen—God gave them the freedom and ability to choose—to live forever, producing godly offspring for the Creator. It was not to be. They failed to follow the divine Manual and their innocence ended. They had chosen death.

God’s plan was—*is*—to generate a family of beings in His image. Not a family of robots but men and women who *choose* to follow Him, willing to experience all that life throws at them but who remain faithful until death to the divine will as revealed in the Christian Scriptures.

### Consequences

The choice made by our first parents was devastating for them and for their progeny. Without the continuing divine presence they—we—have forfeited the opportunity to live forever. Without the divine Manual—still available for all—the human race ‘*grows worse and worse*’ generation by generation.

Indeed at times we, the human race, became so depraved that the only chance of survival was to eliminate all but the godly. It happened in the time of Noah. It happened at Sodom and Gomorrah. It happened with the Amorite nation.

### A Unique Divine Calling

Indeed the time came when God said to the Israelites: ‘...*you only have I known of all the families of the earth*’. Because of Abraham’s unique choice, his willingness to submit to his Creator, he and his descen-

dants were selected to be God’s representative nation through which He would work out His purpose. At Sinai they committed to follow Him: ‘*All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient*’ they said. (Exodus 24:7). **cont’d p.3**

### **In Christ, our human potential is boundless**

Everybody knows about fingerprints. Of all earth's billions, no two people have the same pattern. Each of us is unique. But did you know that no two hearts are alike? Or stomachs, eyes, livers, nerves, blood vessels? Or brains?

You are, in fact, extraordinary!

On physical examination it is quite apparent that each of us in a very special way is a unique person. Even the shape of the liver differs from one person to another. So, too, its colour, and how it reacts inside its special environment. And its size. The same is true in principle for every organ. This, in part, explains why medicine or surgery is a hit or miss affair - an art form!

Our brains, too, differ. The functions of this crowning and vital organ can be mapped out in rough on the cortex. Yet no neurosurgeon can have an accurate knowledge of a particular brain without careful and detailed pre-investigation using all manner of scans and psychological tests.

As one research neurologist, K.S. Lashley points out, "...individuals start life with brains differing enormously in structure." And, "its diversities within the species are of the same general character as are the differences between related species." As that successful and very human psalmist, King David of ancient Israel, exclaimed, *"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvellous..."* (Psalms 139:13,14).

But does such uniqueness have any practical significance?

Indeed, it does. Did you ever wonder why your partner feels pain or cold

or heat more acutely (or less so) than you do? It's because of the striking variation in the sensitivity of our pain or other receptors. Some have little or no pain sensation - a fact which might influence your choice of occupation!

Of ninety-seven prize fighters tested in New York, all but ten had a low pain sensitivity! And don't we wrapped-up office types marvel at those bare-chested hirsutes working happily in sub-zero cold?

Then there's colour vision. "That curtain is green," you say. But your wife's perception is "blue." Who's right? Well - both, for we each see colours in a special way. Knowing about such differences might lead to more toleration within the family and on the job or golf course!

You are, indeed, extraordinary. But - so what?

#### **Power-up Your Brain**

The bottom line is that each of us has a very distinctive mind. We're each a unique "bundle of nerves" - in the Bible it is described as the "spirit in man" - that's capable of immense development, and whatever our age. The brain consists of a billion inter-connecting neurons mostly present from birth - the "most complicated machine in the entire universe". But the numbers decrease with age, for millions of cells die daily.

"No hope for me, then" you say? Not so, for your brain can grow whether you are seven or seventy. Whether we're young or old, neurologists now tell us that any learning activity actually increases the size and weight of the brain. And not from eating fish but from mental effort. Said wise King Solomon, *"An intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them"* (Proverbs 18:15). The suc-

# YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY

cessful human being is one who forever questions his views and looks constantly to improve himself or herself. Such are not stuck in a rut. Nor need *you* be! All of these factors imply that none of us need feel "a write-off". Simply because during our schooldays we were branded with a particular IQ we needn't feel inferior - not even to our boss. For you are talented in ways that are not inferior to his and are probably complementary. This applies, too, within family relationships!

That old - but ever new - book, the Bible, is a rich vein of practical business wisdom. So, grasp firmly what Paul said in his letter to the Roman Christians: *"God has given us the ability to do certain things well"* (Romans 12:6). Each of us - and that includes you - has an incredible potential for personal development. The mathematical genius Albert Einstein once reckoned that we use only .02% of our capacity! We each have a storehouse of unused talent in a combination that is unique to us. We each have, in business terms, our "unique selling points".

So, accept yourself for what you are - a special blend of strengths and weaknesses. Like the employee who hid his talent (Matthew 25:25), the only failures are those who die without taking advantage of their inborn capabilities, and those who don't recognize and offset their weaknesses. Said Helen Keller, "I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God."

On the other hand - *cont'd over*

**The Terrible Ten...cont'd from p.1** increasingly, our western democracies - are rent by religious disharmony. Unity of belief - if it is God's revealed faith - unifies a nation. (Wherever a false religion is imposed on a nation it tends to become totalitarian and intolerant.)

God's Law is not "religious"! In reality there's no conflict whatsoever between law and true religion. Yet our nation's leaders show a strong distaste for it. And perhaps surprisingly many of our religious leaders are intent on doing away with the divine Law! So - no religious bias in any of these laws. Just plain common sense. Just sound regulation of human society.

Indeed that's what *The Ten* are. These Laws were imparted to humanity at our very beginnings. Observe them and we will live in peaceful harmony. Transgress them and we get hurt, because we are designed to function best as we live within them.

#### Plan B

Adam - mankind - chose a different path. Before long he began to walk his own way - a downward path that we have, with few exceptions, ever

since followed. With disastrous results. Happily, our merciful Creator has a well-prepared 'Plan B'

God foresaw human unwillingness to follow the Manual. The 'egg was scrambled' and could not be restored by human ingenuity! Only a divine plan could reconcile us to our Creator.

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Why on earth, then, are these practical laws - perfectly designed to regulate society - so opposed? Are atheists immune to burglary, muggings, murder, divorce?

#### The End of Civilisation

Today we face the end of human civilisation. Man has ignored the Manual and despised the Maker. The "machine" is disintegrating and is ready for the scrap-heap. Until the United Nations, Al'Qaeda, the IRA, other terrorist factions, our various

national governments, our local councils, our families base regulate our lives by the Ten Commandments society will continue to decay - and will increasingly experience serious consequences.

Already the decay of our civilisation is apparent to all in our overflowing prisons, feral youth, dysfunctional families, soaring incidence of STDs including HIV/AIDS—now almost pandemic.

#### A Personal Response

And until you personally base your life on this Law you will continue to suffer all that life throws at you. For the Ten Commandments define sin - again, not in truth a "religious" word!

Sin is the transgression of what the apostle Paul called "*the holy and just and good*" Law of God (Romans 7:12). But sin simply refers to all that's wrong with individuals and society. Ignore God's Law, destroy it or disobey it - the end result is the same - death. Death for every society, every culture, and for you.

Society will prosper, but only under the coming worldwide reign of Jesus Christ. *But not until then.*     Ω

#### EXTRAORDINARY...cont'd

don't accept yourself as you are! Our present attainments are but a step along the way. Much of what we have learned is transient. Science is temporary, with new discoveries forever throwing out old concepts once held as sacrosanct. What we "knew" as children is probably no longer true. And what we learned about God in Sunday School or at mother's knee is just as likely not to be true! Didn't Jesus warn us about "*tradition*" (Mark 7:6-9)?

#### Man the Pinnacle

When God created mankind - yes, He did! - He noted that everything He had created was "*very good*".

Indeed, mankind was the very pinnacle of that creation. He said: "*Let us make man in our image after our likeness*" (Genesis 1:26). (The speaker, by the way, is the one who became Jesus Christ - Colossians 1:15-17.) Even though we are "*of dust from the ground*" yet we have the potential - through repentance and the subsequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God - to become a part of the divine Family. We can become truly "children of God" (Romans 8:12-17).

God only has immortality - not man (I Timothy 6:16). We don't have dwelling within us some kind of immortal soul freshly dished out at our

birth. We are not, as human beings, god-like. But we can - through Jesus Christ - become in God's image just as He originally planned!

You - who were made to become in the image of the divine - have an abundant array of undiscovered and unused talent. Use it in the service of God, of your local fellowship, of humanity - and of yourself.     Ω

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## MiniStudy

### **Sabbath—a day to remember**

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

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

- First, the ‘day’ itself is observed from sundown on Friday to sundown Saturday. This is, in Bible terms, the *seventh* day of the week. It is a day that has remained in unbroken sequence since the beginning of time
- Sabbath is a time designated by the Creator as ‘holy’. That is, it is a day to be carefully distinguished from the other six days
- It is a day for physical joy and refreshment. We ‘rest from our labours’, our regular day-to-day business activity. It is well-known that mankind needs this regular recurring pause in our busy schedule. The Sabbath puts our acquisitive lives in perspective
- But Sabbath is especially a time for refreshment of the human spirit. It is a time to burnish our relationship with our heavenly Father and our Saviour through prayer and meditation on His Word. And a time to cement our relationships with our families and our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is also a time to assemble for instruction from competent teachers
- The seventh-day Sabbath is a sign of our covenant, made at our baptism, with our God. It is a perpetual sign given by the LORD at creation to identify the people of God—a sign that has defined, and on occasion cost the lives of, obedient saints down the ages
- The *weekly Sabbath* and the *Day of Atonement* were, at their inception, the only holy days designated in Scripture as full ‘Sabbaths’. That is, no secular work not of a humanitarian nature should be done, and chores minimized. The other holy days are also for fellowship, instruction and physical enjoyment but without the physical strictures of the Sabbaths

In sum, the seventh-day Sabbath, for Christians, is not a burdensome chore but a welcome break from the daily grind, a pause in our daily lives that brings rich reward. It is not a complex system of ‘dos and don’ts’ but a willing personal expression of our submission to our Creator God and our Saviour, and of our liberty in Christ. Each of us is free to observe it within the principles of the Scriptures Ω

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