

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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providing
leadership
information and
Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

representing



“WHO IS ‘THE BEAST’?”

It’s one of many questions that preoccupy believers. ‘Who is ‘the Beast’? Who is the ‘King of the South’? Who is the ‘False Prophet’? When will Jesus return? Will Christians be ‘raptured’, and when?

Endless hours—over centuries—have been, and are, invested searching the Scriptures in attempts to figure the answers. Endless, too, are the ‘solutions’ to what is, indeed, a topic of interest to all committed Christians. Indeed just about everyone has an interest in what the future holds.

Getting It Wrong

Prophecy can be of some fascination, but the multitude of variant speculative interpretations should sound a warning. In reality it’s a vain pursuit to chase after a solution to prophetic conundrums.

As a Christian, what will happen to you if you get any of the above questions wrong? What if, in God’s scheme, you wrongly identify ‘the Beast’? What if Jesus doesn’t return in 20**? Or if the ‘6000 years’ is just a ball-park figure? Or if the ‘rapture’ simply doesn’t happen?

You may, of course, be disappointed exactly as God plans. Not too early and not too late but on time. *His* time. He knows exactly what the inspired prophecies signify. Because He inspired them and will bring them to pass.

Further, some prophecies are dependent on human reaction. Jonah, for example, uttered a very specific divinely-inspired prophecy concerning ancient Nineveh. It didn’t happen—because the people positively responded to God’s challenge.

A Sure Foundation

We can, though, be certain about some aspects of the future. They are guaranteed, and based on solid Biblical foundations:

- this present world order *will* totter to its painful end
- Jesus Christ will return to our planet
- Jesus warned against speculations as

to the time of his return

- he will overthrow all human kingdoms in power at his coming
- every human surviving the end-time will come to acknowledge the sovereign authority of Jesus
- the new world order will last ‘a thousand years’ without a break
- all wars will cease, all armies disbanded, all nations at peace
- all human ills will be healed
- the spirit of evil that stalks—and rules—our world will be restrained
- government will be without corruption, benign, minimal
- all who now truly follow Jesus Christ, who have his Spirit, will share as trusted partners in his government

A Prophecy for You

There’s another prophecy that is as certain as sunrise, and it affects every man, woman and child on the planet. Here it is: **“It is appointed unto men to die once, and after that the judgment”**. Die now and all the above will still take place on schedule and as God ordains. But live on into the end-time and you must make some life-saving decisions.

Awful times will come and millions—billions—will die due to human mismanagement. Should this happen in your lifetime there’s a way for you to face the future with confidence.

- recognize God’s sovereignty
- turn your life around and be baptized
- accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour
- Stay faithful to him until the end

[request: **What Do you mean—‘Repent’**]

Internet Access

Many readers of *Outreach* now have access to the ‘world wide web’. You are invited to visit the **CGOM** website at

www.cgom.org

Dozens of past articles from this newsletter and many of our other publications and services may be viewed there - or downloaded to your printer. You can also e-mail us at coguk@aol.com or at cgom@cox.net

Tabernacles 2004 in Canada...

sponsored by *Church of God Outreach Ministries* and hosted by the Canadian Church of God, Toronto at Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

A warm and enthusiastic group of people kept the Feast in beautiful Collingwood, Canada at the Toronto Ski Club. There were 65 registered, and visitors from other sites also came frequently. Recognition must be given to Len Labunetz and the Toronto church for the warm welcome and great planning for events that gave everyone the opportunity to fellowship and enjoy good food.

Messages were varied and uplifting. Pat Dennis presented four sermons and two Bible studies. Bill Rollins and John Shavers completed the sermon schedule with video messages while Donald Dow, John Barbaro, and Harold Wright filled the sermonette slots. Sheila Merchant and Aletha Dennis led songs while a variety of musical talent, including the children, supplied special music. Rodrigue Therault was responsible for recording the services.

The four children in Sabbath school were a joy to work with. This was their first feast and they asked if they could build a festival booth. The children gathered branches and pine boughs with the help of their mother. Then on Sunday afternoon, with the help of Aletha Dennis, Alfred Fargher, and their mother, Ann, the Bouzinenos children built a booth behind the meeting hall. No nails were used. Everything was lashed with twine. Included with the booth was a

fire pit with kettle for cooking, a mat for reclining inside the booth, a “palm tree” (made from a birch log with red leaves lashed to the top), and squashes and gourds. The booth was dismantled after sunset on the Last Great Day after many photos were taken. In order for the children to have a memorial of their first feast, they used class time to build individual booths to take home. Included in this activity were four visiting children. On the last day, the children sang “*This Little Light of Mine*” and gave everyone present a small candle as a reminder to let their light shine throughout the coming year.

Activities included a pizza dinner and hymn singing after services on the first day, a steak dinner (with the steaks cooked to perfection by Rod Therault and delicious side dishes provided by all those who attended) on Monday, a Fun Night on Tuesday and a potluck on Wednesday evening. Refreshments were always available after services and most took advantage of the opportunity to fellowship and get to know one another in a relaxed atmosphere.

Apart from the activities at the meeting hall, the area provided opportunities for a boat tour on beautiful Georgian Bay, golfing, horseback riding, scenic caves exploration, and “tree top walking” on ten inch wide bridges suspended as close to the tree tops as possible. For those with a sweet tooth, there was a Ben and Jerry’s ice cream shop and a Chocolate Factory where they could make their selections.

If you like intimate feast settings with emphasis on Christian fellowship and a relaxed atmosphere, you might want to plan on attending this feast site next year. You’ll enjoy the warm welcome you’ll receive.

submitted by Pat Dennis Ω

WHEN YOU MEET

As a Christian do you feel on your own, at odds with ‘the world? Increasingly, anyone desiring to follow Jesus and his way feels isolated. The world simply doesn’t tolerate such ‘silliness’. So it’s a relief to be able to get together with like-minded believers.

Many, of course, are unable to meet for reasons of health, distance, finance *etc.* But it remains a Biblical injunction that we ‘...forsake not the assembling of yourselves together’. It’s in such contact that we can share our spiritual gifts, have a refuge from the inevitable trials of daily life, learn from the experience of other brethren, pray for one another. Think of all those ‘one another’ texts of Scripture which are effective only through face-to-face contact. But what do you expect of such an assembly?

A Model Church

There’s a place for the ‘big celebration’—as during the seven annual feasts revealed by the Creator when many brethren can assemble to rejoice together, and to hear good Bible teaching. It’s a time of special refreshment.

For most Bible Christians, however, scattered as we are around the nation, this is not a weekly Sabbath opportunity. The New Testament model, however, is a more apt pattern for weekly assemblies.

Then, the brethren met informally in suitable homes and in

quite small numbers. Indeed there may have been several such assemblies in one city—as in Rome (*see* Romans 16). They shared elders and deacons, and came together on occasion for annual celebrations (*eg* for the Lord’s Supper—I Corinthians 11). They would, too, come together to hear guest speakers—as the apostle Paul. They were truly ‘one church’ in that city.

request the related articles
The Small Church
What is an Elder?

Such an arrangement had clear advantages. With but a dozen or so families in each location that vital part of ‘church’—relationships—is optimized. The brethren assembled are not a ‘herd’ but become an intimate family. They learn each other’s needs. They share their joys and their sorrows. Personal challenges can be aired in confidence and relevant experience shared. They can, there and then and as a group, pray for one another with intelligence and compassion, and carry the burden of those prayers through the week. Practical needs are met. Brethren, in other words, serve one another.

Instruction, too, is personal. Such an assembly should be led by a competent elder of the church ‘*full of wisdom and the holy Spirit*’ and ‘*apt to teach*’. In a group of this size a ‘sermon’ isn’t a monologue or a harangue. Point-by-point the message is explained and applied to individual needs, with on-the-spot input from the brethren. Misunderstandings can clearly be addressed.

We would encourage our readers to press for this style of ‘church’, and are happy to share our experience. Ω

Portrait of Decline?

It's reported that the Methodist Church is in decline. That the Church of England—at least in the West—is in decline. And sliding down the numbers scale, so too many others, among them the *Worldwide Church of God* (WCG) and many of its numerous 'offspring'.

For those of our readers unfamiliar with the WCG, a brief portrait. This church group once commanded the religious airways, notably in the USA. It gleaned donations annually of over \$150 million and around the world had local churches with a total membership of some one-fifty thousand, and influential in some national government circles. It once posed as 'the one true church'. Now it is a shrunken shell with a vastly reduced income, has abandoned its palatial headquarters and has little influence beyond its membership.

Following the death of the denomination's founder in 1986 many members—unhappy with the new leadership and their imposed doctrinal changes—left to form 'sub-denominations' presided over by disaffected former leaders. Over the years some of these have in turn divided into ever smaller groups. Many such divisions, however, have resulted in the formation of independent local congregations. That process continues.

Death of Unity?

These splits are seen by many as unacceptable, doomed to shatter 'church unity'. Which is understandable from the viewpoint of 'one true church' - a single organized named body inclusive of 'all true Christians' on earth at one time. (And there are some of WCG's offspring who believe this of themselves.)

Most Christians, however, who have resigned from the 'one church'—for whatever good reason—do *not* consider that they have abandoned the Body of Christ, the true church. They join another group (denomination or independent) or they live as a solitary Christian dependent for spiritual nourishment on literature and taped messages. Likely, there are now more of these brethren scattered around the world than are in association with an organized group of this tradition.

Back to Basics

The *Outreach Ministries*, however, see this separation into independent local assemblies as a step towards true unity. The independent church stands between the powerful denomination and the lone Christian—neither of which reflects the pattern established in the New Testament church..

The mid-first century church was indeed organized. But it was organized within the *local* assembly - each with its own local leadership primarily answerable,

scarily, to the Head of the Church, Jesus. [*see our article [What is an Elder?](#)*]

Each of the brethren wherever they fellowshipped, whenever they lived, was a part of the organism that is the true church of God. All were bound together by the same indwelling Spirit. Others may attend the various fellowships—but only the Spirit-begotten were part of that spiritual organism. Each brother, each sister, was under the direct tutelage and care of the Father. Each assembly was overseen by Jesus Christ (*cp* Revelation 2 & 3).

Why?

The twenty-first century churches are being nudged in that same direction. The larger denominations are hemorrhaging members. A lone member here, a family there, sometimes an entire congregation. Some exit for doctrinal—often petty—reasons. Or because of tyrannical and overbearing leadership or, sadly, because of unresolved personal conflict.

Schooled in the *Worldwide Church* culture of subservient obedience to an all-powerful ministry, the heady taste of 'freedom' has led many to rightly question that culture. It may take years in a personal wilderness for some to adjust. Too easily many become lost in that wilderness.

Healing Recipe

It's a challenge to grow spiritually when in isolation. That is recognized in Scripture. Circumstances of health, distance *etc* can, of course, limit access to an appropriate assembly. (So why not work to start your own!) But each Christian is spiritually gifted to build up the brethren in a distinct way—most effective in the context of a community of brethren. *Gifts are two-way—we need each other.*

And not only individuals. For independent congregations, too, cannot long survive in splendid isolation. Both in doctrine and in practice it is all too easy to go off the rails. While not all beliefs are 'essential for salvation' (and most such 'deviations' not contrary to clear Scripture should be tolerated) yet isolation—whether as an individual or as an assembly—can lead even to distortion of core Bible teaching, to weird practices and to unnecessary division.

In contrast, the large megachurch organization tends to ignore personal spiritual gifts. Doctrine—truth or error— is set in stone and 'handed down' to be blindly obeyed by 'the flock'. False teaching becomes orthodoxy. There is no space for growth nor for understanding.

A tried and tested remedy is *communication*. The early church assemblies were [\[cont'd p.4\]](#)

CGOM Letter

Dear Friends and Partners of CGOM

The New Testament book of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 ends with these words "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love". Sermons and books without number have been written on the subjects of love and faith.

But what would it be like to *live without hope*?

For one such person living without hope was not an option. And so at the age of 55 he recently chose to end his life by stepping in front of an oncoming train. Friends and family are shocked. They were not aware of this man's ongoing depression. Even medication was unable to erase this depression. And so this person, loved by friends and family, took his own life because he was without the hope of living a life without depression.

Dear friends, it is our job to show the world that there *is* hope! The hope of a world without fear, war, disease and hunger. And yes, even now, a world where people can love life and experience great joy — regardless of your physical surroundings.

There is no cost for this hope and joy! It is offered freely by the One who has the power to make everything just written a reality. It is offered by the One who loved you so much that he was willing to die so that you would not have to live without hope.

His name is Jesus Christ — the Son of God.

And that, put very simply is the job of *CGOM*. People working together to proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of hope!

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is here to help share that hope. With this letter we offer you the opportunity to request two free articles *Born With a Purpose* and *Message of Hope for the World Tomorrow*. Simply send your request to any of our addresses. Use them as tools to review God's Plan for your life and as a way to help others find hope and encouragement in God's plan for them.

CGOM is serving more people than ever with booklets, Bible Studies, all manner of literature and our popular web site, www.CGOM.org. But numbers and statistics do not tell the story. The real question is this: how many people have been given hope — hope to keep on going, to keep on living because they now see that Light at the end of a dark tunnel. The Light of Jesus Christ.

Let us continue into the new year working together to proclaim the Gospel of Hope to a sick and depressed world.

We appreciate your prayers and ongoing support for the success of this work we are doing together.

Churches of God Outreach Ministries

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request—no charge, no obligation
Born With a Purpose
A Message of Hope for the World of Tomorrow

Decline... cont'd

in contact with one another. They listened to respected leaders of other congregations. They helped struggling churches materially. They co-operated in the exciting task of sharing the Gospel.

The *Outreach Ministries* is an informal association of independent assemblies focused on such principles. We work with any group that in general shares our *Statement of Beliefs*—an agenda generated over decades.

Anyone in Charge?

An insidious danger resulting from isolation and from independence is the wholesale rejection of all religious oversight. That, as stated, lies *within the local church* and not in a distant headquarters which collects—and too often misuses—'tithes', tightly controls doctrine, stifles the Spirit in each Christian.

We would therefore urge all brethren who formally meet together in appropriate numbers to prayerfully select a Spirit-led, trusted and Biblically-literate guide to oversee them. And then to submit to that man's oversight. The holy Spirit will make clear the right person by means of their tried and tested spiritual fruit.

Our article *Guidelines for Leadership No 3* gives Biblical criteria to help you make the right choice of leadership. The *Outreach Ministries* is happy to share our experience with you. We can be contacted at any of our addresses. Ω

Wise words from Proverbs 29

- Show me a righteous ruler and I will show you a happy people....
- *When the king is concerned with justice the nation will be strong; when he is only concerned with money he will ruin his country....*
- If a ruler pays attention to false information all his officials will be liars....
- *If the king defends the rights of the poor he will rule for a long time....*
- When evil men are in power crime increases. The righteous will live to see the downfall of such men....
- *A nation without God's guidance is a nation without order. Happy is the man that keeps God's Law....*
- Arrogance is a man's downfall but a man who is humble will be respected... Ω

FINANCES (COGUK) - November/December 2004
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