

# outreach

---

## The New Horizons Newsletter

New Horizons  
Box 25250  
6 Slington House  
Rankine Road  
BASINGSTOKE  
RG24 8PH

e-mail: [coguk@aol.com](mailto:coguk@aol.com)  
web-site: [www.cgom.org](http://www.cgom.org)  
Editor: James McBride

January/February  
2016

visit our website:  
[www.cgom.org](http://www.cgom.org)

providing  
leadership,  
information and  
Biblical teaching

Matthew 28:19-20

representing  
Churches of God Outreach  
Ministries

**CGOM**  
Churches of God Outreach Ministries

## God's House

*'I will dwell in the house of the  
LORD for ever'*

Israel's King David rejoiced to ascend the steps to the Temple precincts to worship the LORD and to thank Him for the care and support He provided (Psalm 23). Christians, no less, similarly gather in assemblies, in 'church', Sabbath by Sabbath.

Following the outpouring of the Spirit on the first Christian Pentecost, those who had repented: *'...Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people'* (Acts 2:46-47).

But such a bonding by the brethren wasn't the only reason for fellowship, for *'...they spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers'* (v.42). And there was much to learn—and unlearn!

The infant church was almost entirely drawn from Judaism with a small number of Gentile converts to Judaism ('proselytes'). Jesus during his ministry had pointed out that Judaism as taught by the Scribes and Pharisees was far off-beam from the religion revealed by God through Moses. It had become stultified by the added traditions that cut off true heart religion. It had added doctrines that were at best a distortion of that true faith. There was indeed much to unlearn.

The apostles, fresh from nearly six weeks in daily contact with the

risen Saviour (Acts 1:3) being taught the fundamentals of Christianity, were tasked to *'...[teach] them [new disciples] to observe everything I have commanded you'* (Matthew 28:20).

## Consistency of Teaching

Even as the church 'grew up' the same pattern prevailed. Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote: *'...I considered it a necessity to write to you to encourage you to contend for the faith delivered once and for all to the saints'* (Jude 3). Towards the end of the first century Jesus had this to say to the Ephesian church: *'...You put to the test those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you found them to be false'* (Revelation 2: 2).

The apostle Paul had warned that same church: *'...I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will arise, speaking [perversions of the truth] in order to draw away the disciples after them'* (Acts 20:29-30).

Throughout the early church there was consistency in what the apostles taught: *'...Timothy...shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church'* (I Corinthians 4:17). Paul praised the Christians in Rome because *'...you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered'* (ch 6:17). The apostles referred always to that parting instruction of Jesus (Matthew 28:20).

To fulfill this commission, the apostles gathered the new disci-

ples into assemblies, each overseen by an experienced elder, and the writer of Hebrews noted:... *not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as is the custom of some, but exhorting, and by so much more as you see the Day drawing near* (ch.10:25). Each overseer was responsible to ‘...pay attention to the public reading, to exhortation, to teaching’ (I Timothy 4:13) - always in the context of the unchanging apostolic teaching [Gk.*didasko*].

Given human nature such uniformity of doctrinal teaching inevitably involved minor variation, as is clear from what Jesus wrote to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3). He recognizes all of them as being part of His church—but has cause to criticize each. He criticizes idolatry (pagan non-Biblical worship), false teaching, immorality, spiritual laxity.

None of the local assemblies addressed in the New Testament were doctrinally perfect! The leadership taught the apostolic doctrine and practice and encouraged the brethren to be faithful to it. But each Christian is responsible to Christ for his or her response. And each leader (*‘the angel [messenger] of the church’*) is responsible to Jesus for what he teaches! *Scary!* (James 3:1)

What a contrast to contemporary Christendom! *‘One in doctrine’* remains mere aspiration. **Ω**

### **The Local Assembly**

***And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people (Acts 2:46-47)***

Luke, the writer of *Acts*, provides us with an overview of the infant church’s activities—a pattern, much neglected, for the church of God through the ages.

The brethren met in one another’s homes socially and when assembling for worship (Romans 16:5 *etc.*). They met to pray for one another and for the spiritual direction of the church (Acts 4:24-31). The Hebrews were urged ‘... *not abandoning [our meeting together], as is the habit of some, but encouraging each other, and by so much more as you see the day drawing near* (ch 9:25).

Where there was a need among the brethren they shared their personal resources (ch 2:45) and supported the work of the church (ch 4:37).

Central to the daily life of the brethren was diligent study of the teachings of the Twelve apostles: ‘...*They spent their time in learning from the apostles* (Acts 2:42). Jude had cause to remind the church of this: ‘...*I considered it a necessity to write to you to encourage you to contend for the faith delivered once and for all to the saints* (Jude 3). **Ω**

## **The Glory of God**

***‘they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD’ (Psalm 138:5)***

God commissioned Moses to construct for Him a ‘house’, a Tabernacle, ‘...*let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them*’ (Exodus 24:8). His presence lived there for four centuries until the time of Samuel (I Samuel 4:22), when Israel suffered the ignominy of an ineffectual and corrupt priesthood, and defeat by the Philistines who captured the ark of the covenant - for which the Tabernacle was built. The ‘glory’ was gone.

A century later the ark was placed in Solomon’s Temple (I Kings 8:6), and ‘...*the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD*’ (Ki 8:13). But two hundred years pass and God again withdrew: ‘...*I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face*’ (Hosea 5:15). God’s nation, Israel, had spurned Him and ‘dealt treacherously’ (*read ch 5*) [*Glory*: In this context, God through His Spirit visibly manifest, traditionally known as the *Shekinah*.]

Veiled in flesh, that glory returned in the person of Jesus Christ when he came to tabernacle among us: ‘...*The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth*’ (John 1:14). It is a glory he shared with his chosen disciples just before his death: ‘...*I have given them the glory which You have given Me*’ (John 17:22).

In the pattern of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the Lord dwelt over the ark of the covenant between the cherubim, within the ‘holy of holies’ (Hebrews 9:3). The ante-type in this era is ‘...*Christ in you, the hope of glory*’ (Colossians 1:27). It will be fully manifest in the resurrection: ‘...*when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*’ (I John 3:2).

Paul describes it thus: ‘...*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory*’ (Colossians 3:4). John saw Jesus in glory (in veiled form) : ‘...*his head and his hair were white as wool or snow, and his eyes looked like flames of fire. His feet were glowing like bronze being heated in a furnace, and his voice sounded like the roar of a waterfall*’ (Revelation 1:13-15).

In his first letter the apostle John writes: ‘...*Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure*’ (I John 3:3). It takes a lot of personal effort to ‘...*lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us* (Hebrews 12:1) We are not, however, alone in the battle, for we ‘...*Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*’ (v.2). And, ‘...*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*’ (Philippians 4:13). **Ω**

## Insight from Paul

*The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God*

Like all aware citizens Christians are faced daily with the news headlines. How do we react to excessive immigration? What about corrupt practice in politics and in business? Is our justice system adequate? How should we react to different lifestyles? Global warming? Is this (or that) a just war? *Etc.*

Paul's world, too, had its challenges especially for Christians. Overshadowing all life was domineering Rome with its imperial edicts that endangered Christians. Idolatrous practices stretched their tentacles into every aspect of life. Society, like our own, was submerged in a sea of promiscuity.

The apostle's focus, however, was on those the Father had invited to be part of His Family—His church. State, world and Church have different agendas: '*...You have died with Christ and are set free from the ruling spirits of the universe. Why, then, do you live as though you belonged to this world?*' (Colossians 2:20). And: '*...We have not received this world's spirit; instead, we have received the Spirit sent by God*' (I Corinthians 2:12).

But we still live in an ungodly world and have to deal with it day by day: '*...You would have to leave this world to get away from everyone who is immoral or greedy or who cheats or worships idols*' (I Corinthians 5:10).

The apostle's guidance to the fledgling church focused on personal morality. Keep your head down and stay out of sight of the State by submitting to its laws (Romans 13), but be ready to stand-up for your rights (Acts 25:11). Set a compassionate example to your pagan neighbours (Galatians 6:9-10). Let Jesus's behaviour be the template for your day-to-day living (Romans 13:14). Resist the incoming tidal wave of coarse behaviour and disrespect (Colossians 4:6). Don't compromise with pagan religious practices (I Corinthians 10:14). Stand fast in face of criticism and outright persecution (II Thessalonians 1:4ff).

Jesus urges us '*...I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*' (Matthew 10:16) Ω

Request the brief article:  
**Flee Idolatry!**

### Festivals 2016

<b>Lord's Supper</b>	April 21:Thu 20.00f
<b>Unleavened Bread</b>	April 23-29
<b>Pentecost</b>	June 12
<b>Trumpets</b>	October 3
<b>Atonement</b>	October 12
<b>Tabernacles</b>	October 17-23
<b>Eighth Day</b>	October 24

## Law of the Land

All civilized nations are underpinned by 'the rule of law'. Which laws are used is a matter of national sovereignty, and varies widely from nation to nation and from age to age in any one nation. Within each nation universal compliance with the established law is essential for national cohesion—hence the penalties imposed for non-compliance.

Ancient Israel's legal system was based on principles divinely-revealed in the beginning of history — indeed formed Israel's Constitution. Coming from the hand of the Creator it was as good as Law can get. The Laws of modern Anglo-Saxon nations reflect that of Israel, though meddling by successive governments, especially in recent years, has seriously undermined its effectiveness.

Yielding law-making to a foreign power undermines the foundations of national stability, as does the introduction of parallel legal systems—as the United Kingdom is soon to experience with the introduction of European law, and permission given for the introduction of Islamic *Sharia* law. (Already, over eighty *Sharia* courts are allowed to practice here.)

The latter—*Sharia*—includes elements of which a Christian may approve, though much is contrary to common humanity, and to divine revelation. To permit it, however, is divisive and will surely lead to civil disorder. Whatever we sow we will reap! Ω

## Letter from England

The last seventy years have witnessed unbelievable change. What were once pipe-dreams for science and medicine have become reality, with world-wide benefit. Diseases conquered, the environment improved, life-span for millions extended. Sadly, there has also been what few would dispute is a downside.

From Christian mono-culture to the confusion of multi-culture. From simplicity to complexity. From faith to Father Christmas. From austerity to super-indulgence. From relative contentment to consumerism. From honest business to widespread corruption. From solid families to confusion as to sexuality. From strong leadership to weakness.

The orgy of super-indulgence displayed over the recent Christmas—with barely a mention of what the festival is supposed to celebrate—should concern everyone, Christian or not. Fuelled by wall-to-wall advertising *via* the media, expectations have soared to new heights. Credit cards have burned red hot with little regard for the bill soon to grace the doormat. *Weight Watchers* gears up for an influx of new members. Divorce lawyers rub their hands in anticipation, and the *Samaritans* man the phone-lines 24/7.

Bible believers increasingly face a pagan culture that mirrors the worst excesses of first century hedonism. It is essential that we diligently study the Scriptures and call on the Saviour for His daily support lest '*...the love of many grow cold*'. As we at *CGOM* do our best in our limited way to publicize and teach the good news we urge our readers to earnestly support our efforts through your prayers.

*James*

## Repent! - of what?

Jacob was a good Pharisee. He diligently observed all 613 laws. He never missed synagogue on the Sabbath and was frequently in the Temple. Since childhood he hadn't missed a single festival and had fasted twice a week. Indeed he had travelled abroad as a missionary. He perhaps equalled the apostle Paul's claim to be a 'Pharisee of the Pharisees'.

Keen to observe this festival he was up and about in Jerusalem early. As he hurried to the Temple he chanced on a commotion at a house where a few weeks ago some Galileans were holed up following the crucifixion of their leader. Curious, he stopped when he saw one of them haranguing the crowd.

The speaker's powerful voice rang out. It reminded Jacob of that 'baptizer' three or four years ago by the banks of Jordan. He had gone to hear him, also curious. He had been impressed by his teaching—despite him not being 'one of us'.

Someone said this morning's speaker was called Peter, a leading disciple of the man Jesus who claimed to be the Messiah. Peter's was quite a sermon! He was calling on us Jews—Jews from around the world gathered for the festival—to 'repent'. Ridiculous! Why do I, why do we Jews, need to repent? Anyway, he paused to listen.

Jacob had heard this Jesus a couple of times, and his teachings came flooding back into his memory. Yes, those things of which he had accused the Pharisees sure rang a bell. And yes, we are a self-righteous, unforgiving bunch of hypocrites. We do look down on 'the little people'. I can't remember the last time I showed compassion or, if ever, touched a leper as did Jesus. Those miracles were certainly extraordinary.

The more he thought about it, the more of the Scriptures he recalled, the more he considered his own attitudes—the more he was convinced he did indeed need to 'repent', to change his mind-set. What was the point of the rigours of Atonement if—he recalled the words of the prophet Isaiah—he didn't '*...loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not thyself from your own flesh?*'

Before the day was out Jacob was one of around three thousand of his fellow Jews to be baptized by this small band of the disciples of Jesus.

### Repent!

As 'Jacob' came to understand, we can, as do observant Jews, observe God's festival worship programme (the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and the Bible festivals) for a lifetime—and still miss the point. Conversion to the faith of Jesus is a *heart change*. The 'righteous' Pharisee (or church member!)

## New Horizons

*Readers of our flag-ship nineteen-year old publication may be interested in how it comes to life. The editing is in England, and then the bare text is sent to Tulsa where Richard Gawith ably and voluntarily makes it take on its readability quotient. He ads the cover picture and oversees the copy-editing.*

*The completed issue is printed in the United States and distributed worldwide, bulk copies being sent o us in Lincoln. The cost is borne by contributions from our readers and from associated assemblies.*

is still a sinner. No-one can be a part of God's Family simply and solely by external observances—no matter how diligently performed.

### Good Works

Nor are we children of God by 'good works' alone. Muslims, Hindu, Protestant, Catholic—and atheists—are deeply involved in feeding the needy or visiting the sick. It is humanitarian, and Christians do not have a monopoly. Wrote the apostle Paul: '*...What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive? I would gain nothing, unless I loved others* (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Not ritual observance, then, and not good works—unless motivated by the Spirit of God dwelling in us Love, 'charity', *agape*. It is '*...the love of God*' (John 5:42, Galatians 5:22), not naturally part of the human psyche but a fruit of God's indwelling Spirit: '*...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us*' (Romans 5:5). It is the expression of the mind of God, exemplified by the Saviour in both word and action.

Jacob had to have a heart-felt encounter with Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Measured against the back-drop of His inestimable character the horror of his own sin crowded in. Yes—God wants us to follow His guidance in how we worship Him, and to spurn every form of idolatrous worship (1 Corinthians 10:14); but submission to a set of rules to appear good, to boost our standing in the eyes of God and men—*no!*

Speaking to festival-observant Jews—now convicted by Peter's message that they had killed their Saviour and Messiah—the apostle Peter proclaimed: '*...Repent and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all those who are far away, as many as the Lord our God calls to himself*' (Acts 2:38-39).

For those who respond to God's invitation are called to a life of holy living (which, of course, includes the divinely-revealed 'form' of religion—II Timothy 3:5). Having received God's Spirit we embark on a lifetime of change, of transformation towards the perfection of character exemplified by Jesus, as his Spirit informs our conscience (Romans 9:1). Ω