

## The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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## A TRUMPet Call?

Euphoria from half the nation's electors as newly-elected Donald J Trump takes over the most influential political office in the world, President of the United States of America.

The other half? Bitter disappointment, tears—and riots—follow the announcement. Then violence and invective followed (from those who condemned it in the election run-up). Due democratic (of a sort) process was faithfully followed, but that didn't satisfy the 'losers'.

### American Dream

President Trump was born to an immigrant mother climbing the success tree to reach this highest office. During the campaign he talked tough and rough, offending many. Not so dignified for an aspiring President, though now that 'it's in the bag' a different 'The Donald' may show!

Every time we have a change of leadership (wherever we live) there's hope of 'better times'. Each time it will be different, we think. A new broom will sweep in policies that will usher in Utopia—or at least put more money in my pocket.

It doesn't happen—or not sustained for long. For history shows mankind simply doesn't know '...the way to peace' (Heb. *shalom*: a Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, completeness, prosperity—Romans 3:17).

Will the Trump Presidency be any better? Can America - still the world's most powerful nation—truly be 'great again'? That greatness was the result of the diligent use of the vast resources gifted to the nation—coupled with the acknowledgement of their true source, the Creator of all things and the fulfilment of millennium-old promises.

That relationship with the Creator,

however tenuous it was, has been broken. The principles on which the nation was founded (based largely on the Christian Scriptures) have been undermined.

Disappointment, despair, disenchantment, alienation from the nation's leadership—all contributed to the cry from the heart that surfaced as a massive rebellion against the alien and out-of-touch values imposed by successive administrations.

But it's not just the United States, for the same populist sentiment is widespread among the Western democracies, with 'right-wing' parties in the ascendant—several of which, notably in Europe, have elections looming. Political tremors are shaking the nations!

### Divine Appointment

It's tempting for Christians to see such seismic changes as the 'end of the age' as predicted by Jesus Christ. In due time that's a certainty—but His inauguration date is not spelled out! At an unspecified time selected by the Father He will, as promised, facilitate the return of Jesus from Heaven, as political and religious Supremo, to wrest the reins of government from every human ruler.

For now, a variety of 'prophets' are positioning President-elect Trump as a saviour—or, as a destroyer. The only certainty is that whichever role he may assume, he is in office by divine authority—the 'man for the moment'—and he will be called on to answer for how he performs in office.

A sixth century BC Babylonian King was given such a lesson: '*...to the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest [lowest] of men*' (Daniel 4:17). That's a concept unexplored by present-day leadership.

God intimately knows *cont'd over*

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each of us and how we may respond to circumstances. The Egyptian Pharaoh of the Exodus (who ‘hardened his heart’ against the LORD—Exodus 8:15) was thus selected by Him: ‘...in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to shew in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth’ (ch 9:16). We know the well-documented consequences!

The people of Israel in the eighth century BC sank morally to rock bottom. To correct them God raised up the fierce nation of Assyria: ‘...I use Assyria like a club to punish those with whom I am angry. I sent Assyria to attack a godless nation’ (Isaiah 10:5-6). The population was deported from their homeland and have not returned to this day.

A century and a half before his birth, King Cyrus (of the Medes and Persians) was prophesied by Isaiah to initiate the restoration of the people of Judah, taken captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar: ‘...You [Cyrus] are the one who will rule for me; you will do what I want you to do: you will order that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the foundations of the Temple be laid’ (Isaiah 44:28). Ezra the priest (Ezra 1) records the fulfillment of the prophecy.

### An End to Prophecy

‘Trump good’ or ‘Trump bad’? Is the President-elect a parallel to King Nebuchadnezzar who enslaved the nation of Judah? Or does he parallel King Cyrus who facilitated their restoration? Secular pundits leap on bandwagons heading in both directions. And so, too, do the religious pundits each claiming insight as to our world’s trajectory over the next few years—their projected ‘end time’.

Each ‘prophet’, of course, has (in his own eyes) the ‘right’ interpretation of the Bible prophecies. But the prophecies as given *are* right—and will in time be proven so to the last jot and tittle. And maybe someone will inadvertently ‘hit the jackpot’ and get it right—but evidenced only by the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecies. Truth is, *there’s no virtue in speculation*.

Century after century has witnessed the failures of prophetic interpretation—even to our own era: Christ will return in 1000AD, 1844, 1914, 1975, 2000AD, 2012—and 2017, 2019, 2021, 2033. (Well—those last four have not yet stood the test of time.) Wrote Paul: ‘...we know in part and we prophesy in part’ adding, ‘...now we see through a mirror [indirectly], but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know completely, just as I have also been completely known’ (I Corinthians 13:9, 12).

### New World Order

The bed-rock of Bible prophecy, the foundation on which all our futures is built, is the coming ‘new world order’. It is certain. It is ‘in the bag’. It is the imposed direct rule of the Creator, the Kingdom and Family of God, over all mankind.

In coming days ‘...in a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet; for a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed’ (I Corinthians 15: 52). For, ‘...the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with a commanding shout of an archangel’s voice, and with God’s trumpet’ (I Thessalonians 4: 16).

That return of Christ as ‘...King of kings and Lord of lords’ (Revelation 19:16) will herald an unprecedented thousand years of peace and prosperity for all mankind. Making his return a necessity, however, the institutions that underpin civilization will crumble to dust. Destructive forces, a ‘day of darkness and not light’, will engulf us’.

We must each heed the warning signs and become spiritually prepared.

### Our Place in the World

As Christians our views on polity are in general at odds with the spirit of the times. Let’s heed Paul’s admonition: ‘...I urge first of all that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgiving be made on behalf of all people, on behalf of kings and all those who are in authority [Gk. preeminence], in order that we may live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable before God our Saviour’ (I Timothy 2:1-3).

In other words, *don’t panic*. Our lives are in God’s safe hands and it is for us to pray—not that our leaders will bring in Utopia—they don’t know how—but for those who control the levers of power that they will so order conditions that we *can*, until Christ does return, live peaceably and godly. We live in peace, we live in conflict. In either state we are sustained by our loving and caring heavenly Father. Ω

### In the World...

As Christians we are ‘...in the world but not of it’. We each benefit richly from the positive institutions that undergird our Western society. And we also experience the dead hand of those who tread all over God’s way of life. Paul’s words to Timothy are relevant: (I Timothy 2:1-3). We are citizens of two worlds.

It is thus our duty, in the words of Jesus, to ‘...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s’.

God, to fulfill His purposes, patiently over time and in all nations ‘grooms’ those He wants to fill the highest civil offices — notably in the Israel nations. He raises up the ‘man for the moment’ - whether a Pharaoh or a Churchill or a Hitler. He works with any political system, whether democracy or dictatorships or patriarchal.

In our (flawed) democratic systems the LORD influences the voters to His desired end, but the outcome is inevitably a mirror image of the contemporary character of the electorate. Christian believers will be in tune with ‘the mind of Christ’ - a hugely different set of values from that of the world - and will overwhelmingly choose God’s way in the democratic process.

## Prophetic Jigsaw

Jigsaws can become an obsession. We're not satisfied until that final piece (if we can find it!) drops into place. It's the same with prophecy, and that can be equally frustrating.

The 'pieces' are scattered throughout the six thousand years of the Scriptures and the cover picture is largely missing. But that doesn't stop some of us endlessly trying to complete.

There are, of course, the 'straight bits', easily identified and satisfying to properly arrange: God has a plan. Man has lost the plot. Christ will return. God's Kingdom will come. But what of all the other, the obscure, pieces? Where do they fit into the frame? And when?

Our world is chaotic, changing daily, hourly. Shocks abound: Twin Towers, Brexit, the US election, Syria, Africa, another Islamic terrorist incident, an assassination. What's 'just round the corner'?

What does it all mean? Which event is a fulfilled prophecy? Like breaking wave followed by breaking wave 'historic moments' pass away, patched over by another 'international conference', succeeded by another crisis. Try throwing the jigsaw into the air—and make sense of the resulting pile of pieces on the table! Prophetic interpretation hasn't been much different.

Various 'prophets' snatch events from the air-waves and other media and attempt to make a cohesive pattern conformable to their personal view of the prophetic outcome. (There is, note, widespread disagreement.) Precious time and resources are absorbed in assembling detailed reports from the latest news bulletins. By tomorrow they are forgotten—just history. The pieces no longer resemble our big picture.

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## Letter from England

Greetings again

I wonder what our readers make of the box in the next column—*Festivals 2017*? Apart from two of the listed festivals (*Lord's Supper* and *Pentecost*) they will be unfamiliar, even strange, to most Christians.

Yet these were the festivals, along with the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, observed by all believers in the early church—both Jew and Gentile. You see, Christianity was not a 'new' religion. The coming of the Messiah fulfilled the Old Testament promises and types, but left unchanged the worship *structure* of the true faith as revealed by God to the fathers—that is, God's revealed festival calendar. (The Judaism of Jesus's day was an empty distortion of that faith, hence the opposition to it by Jesus.)

The structure of worship centred on these annual festivals, now observed by many Christians around the

As 'strangers and pilgrims' on earth Christians can do little to change the world beyond their immediate sphere of influence. We do pray for those who wield the powers of State that they will so order conditions that we can live peaceably and quietly in a way pleasing to our Father (I Timothy 2:1-2). (And won't that be good for *everyone*!)

When 'the end' will come is indeterminate. The Scriptures describe the scenario to expect (eg Matthew 24:38ff, II Thessalonians 2) and warn us to 'watch' [Gk. *gregoreo*]. To stay awake. To 'keep our lamp trimmed'. To be constant in deploying our spiritual gifts. *To be spiritually prepared*. To remain faithful to Jesus Christ to 'the end' no matter what afflicts us or no matter when that 'end' comes.

Given the complexity of our 'jigsaw' it is important that we avoid 'tunnel vision', that we remain open to alternative interpretations, that we don't trim the pieces to fit 'my view'. In other words: *sit light in the prophetic saddle!* When the pieces finally settle they will form God's perfect and complete picture.

Safe in the arms of the Father we need have no fear for the future—whatever form our 'tribulation' may take. Listen to King David (Psalm 91):

***'Live under the protection of God Most High and stay in the shadow of God All-Powerful. Then you will say to the LORD, "You are my fortress, my place of safety; you are my God, and I trust you." The Lord will keep you safe from secret traps and deadly diseases. He will spread his wings over you and keep you secure. His faithfulness is like a shield or a city wall. You won't need to worry about dangers at night or arrows during the day. And you won't fear diseases that strike in the dark or sudden disaster at noon. You will not be harmed, though thousands fall all around you' Ω***

world, and with a more insightful understanding of their significance - personally and globally.

I recommend to you one of our booklets which outlines these festivals. You may read or download it from our website (or request a print copy): <http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Booklets/HolyDays.htm>. We will be pleased to respond to any questions arising.  
James

<b>Festivals 2017</b>	
Lord's Supper	April 9 Sun evg
Unleavened Bread	April 11-17
Pentecost	June 4
Trumpets	September 21
Atonement	September 30
Tabernacles	October 5-11
Eighth Day	October 12

## Insight from Paul

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

Let's don a pair of virtual reality goggles and picture the apostle in the ancient city of Corinth (in modern Greece). He spent time there working at his trade, preaching, teaching.

It was a challenging time. The city (often compared with Rome) was a commercial centre but was also considered to be the most immoral and degenerate of all major urban centres of the time. The worship of Venus was at its core with the attendant pervasive depraved—largely sexual—worship. The Corinthian church was not exempt from its influence—as the apostle's letters illustrate.

As was Paul's custom his first evangelistic outreach was to the large Jewish and proselyte community. As always his focus was to persuade his hearers that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 18:5). As frequently happened, eg at Antioch and Thessalonica, the Jewish leadership organized opposition to him ('...opposed themselves') and blasphemed, causing Paul to focus, in Corinth, on the Gentile community (v.6).

He preached the same message. The apostle later wrote to them: '... I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (I Corinthians 2:2). It was the whole package—the '...faith once for all delivered to the saints'.

Following the example of Jesus (Luke 4:16) and all in Judaism, it was Paul's custom to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath day as designated by the LORD at man's creation. He continued this observance as a Christian—a follower of Jesus. Just prior to his visit to Corinth this was recorded of him: '...Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures' (Acts 17:2). And in Corinth: '...he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks' (ch 18:4).

The seventh day *Sabbath* was just one of the holy days appointed by the LORD for His people (Leviticus 23:2: '...My feasts'), and the apostle was faithful in observing them throughout his life. An example is his instruction to the brethren in the Corinthian church (largely Gentile: ch12:2) to observe the festival of *Unleavened Bread* (ch 5:6-8) - one of those listed in Leviticus 23.

*cont'd next column*

## ISRAEL in context

Tucked away on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean Sea, Israel is among the smallest of nations—but has huge impact on the global scene.

The nation, formed in 1948 with United Nations approval, occupies just 8000 square miles of territory, that's about one-twelfth that of the United Kingdom—which itself is about the same size as Oregon, USA. It has almost eight million inhabitants—one in five being Arabs, all of whom have equal rights with the Jewish inhabitants and return members to the Knesset (Parliament).

Contrast this with its neighbours, mostly Arabs and of the Islamic faith, who cover just over five million square miles with a population of 330 million—and with little democratic freedom.

Alone in the Middle East, freedom of religion is foundational in Israel, which with Government support hosts large Christian conferences in Jerusalem (eg the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem or the growing number of Messianic assemblies). Try openly proclaiming Jesus Christ or building a church in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Islamic nations! Yet *mosques* abound in Israel.

### Achievements

*Skype* a distant relative and you use Israeli technology. *Text messaging* is an Israeli innovation, as is the memory stick. The export of *desalination technology* supports twelve million in this arid terrain. No surprise, as Israel produces the highest number of scientists, produces more scientific theses, has more Phds and publishes more books than any other nation.

Economically Israel hosts the highest number of start-up companies globally and has a higher GDP than a combination of several surrounding Islamic nations, which have a total population of 117m.

Truly they have made 'the *desert blossom as the rose*'—with 450m more trees planted in their Land than there were a century ago.

*with thanks to Maoz Israel*

The observance was overruled by heretical bishops in Rome as—a couple of centuries later—they succumbed to pressures from the pagan world, substituting for *Unleavened Bread* an ancient pagan festival—now known as *Easter*, with its ridiculous infantile symbolism (rabbits, chickens, eggs, sunrise services!).

There is no Biblical authority for the Christian church to change any of God's holy days. Ω

*[See page 3 for the festival dates in 2017]*

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