

*The New Horizons
Newsletter*

Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Brexit or Break-up?

A political storm erupted in the wake of the United Kingdom referendum on our relationship with the European Union. The Prime Minister resigns and Her Majesty's Opposition is in disarray. Politicians—the mad, bad and sad—scramble for supporters in their bid for high office. The 'losers'—many of whom didn't vote—scream for a re-run to get the 'right' response.

Promises made and broken, principle abandoned, old loyalties discarded, friendships shattered. False statements and wild threats during the campaign have made a sceptical public even more so. Where have the 'wise' gone?

Prophetic Insight

The ancient prophets give us a clue. The course of history is one of—*neglect* of history. We repeat past mistakes, never learning from them. Isaiah passes on God's message: '*...once again I will do things that shock and amaze them, and I will destroy the wisdom of those who claim to know and understand*' (Isaiah 29:14).

Then Jeremiah, addressing the apostate and by then degenerate House of Judah adds: '*...Your wise men have rejected what I say [KJV: 'the Word of the LORD'], and so they have no wisdom. Now they will be trapped and put to shame; they won't know what to do*' (Jeremiah 8:9). 'Wisdom' appears to have deserted our modern national leadership as they meddle with the fundamental principles that have for a thousand years underpinned our national polity—

principles first laid down at the beginning of civilization by the Creator.

Crumbling Foundations

The bed-rock of national cohesion—the family—has been dealt a series of hammer blows. Adultery and co-habitation are accepted as normal. Divorce is all too common, with its painful cost to family relationships and to the national purse. Sterile same-sex unions are legalized. Widespread access to pornography pollutes the young and vulnerable and distorts healthy personal relationships.

In its pursuit of more tax income government policy encourages the destructive gambling and alcohol industries. The economy is enshrined as the national god, financial institutions go uncontrolled and basic morality is side-lined.

Nor are our courts any better. As notes the prophet Isaiah: '*...Injustice is everywhere; justice seems far away. Truth is chased out of court; honesty is shoved aside*' (ch 59:14). Perhaps we haven't matched the degradation of Isaiah's contemporaries, but daily we learn of violent deaths and other horrific crimes: '*...blood touches blood*', as killers are released back on the streets and other criminality goes unaddressed.

Ancient Values

There does yet remain, thankfully, a faint echo of Christian values. No nation has ever been 'Christian', but the Christian faith—though often distorted—has influenced our people for over a thousand years *cont'd p.3*

Reminder:
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Letter from England

Hello

The British people have spoken, a small majority (though over seventeen million or 52% of votes cast, with 18% failing to vote) having voted to part company with the European Union. Only London, Scotland and Northern Ireland voted by small margins to remain. . (But only 40% of Scotland's eligible electorate voted to stay in the EU!) Unsurprisingly, some of the minority are crying foul and have demanded a further referendum 'to get it right next time'.

Exit from such a long-standing union isn't likely to be easy, with its economic, political, social and emotional entanglements—it will inevitably have its downside on all fronts. Viewed positively the decision means that the United Kingdom will have regained lost control of the levers of power. The concern is how those who will be in control will respond. Our newly-appointed Prime Minister has the task of implementing the wishes of the populace for regaining national sovereignty and reconciling those who wished to remain under what is the yoke of the European superstate.

As with individuals, every nation has its own stamp, its own national character, forged over its history from its earliest beginnings. As noted elsewhere in OUTREACH the British character has its roots long antecedent to the arrival of the various waves of related people groups, all of whom had what has been described as 'a genius for self-government'. No surprise that, despite the downward moral tailspin of the last half century, there remains a desire for freedom.

Freedom, however, has a price. That 'moral tailspin' is widely viewed as a libertarian *advance*, a casting off of useless taboos and restrictive attitudes. The source—the Christian Scriptures— has lost what influence it has had over the past millennium. Church, Sunday School, religious instruction in schools—all have lost their restraining influence. The nation has largely (we still have a morality residue) rejected the underlying principle of success: '*...Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a shame to any people*' (Proverbs 14:34).

Q *I am no longer able to attend the Bible festivals. How may I observe them at home?*

It is understandable that because of ill-health or for financial considerations a time may come when travel to the festivals isn't an option. And indeed, while it is 'second best'—we miss out on fellowship and Bible-related activities—we can continue to participate in some of the blessings that accompany their observance.

As a guide, we have published a short article

'*Righteousness*'—right conduct—is defined as '*...all God's instructions*', as summed up in the 'Ten Commandments' (Exodus 20). '*Sin*' is defined as the abandonment of those instructions (1 John 3:4). We can hope our new leadership will draw guidance from this divine law and turn the nation around. But perhaps that is a pipe-dream!

The Scriptures are clear that at in some future time our world and, especially, our related nations will abandon the pretence of worshipping the one true God of the Christian Scriptures and will exalt a false 'god' and his despotic human activists. It will be a time of mankind's self-destruction, prevented only by the intervention of Jesus Christ. As said the prophet, there will be '*...few men left*' (Isaiah 24:6, 23).

But *for now* the Father continues to draw to Himself those who will reign with Messiah in His Kingdom over that surviving remnant of mankind and their descendants—a Kingdom of peace and harmony among the nations subject to that same divine Law (*see* Isaiah ch 2).

Among our readers some may by their life experiences discern that invitation from the Father to become part of His Family, His Kingdom. It demands a decision to accept Jesus as your Saviour. It demands commitment to the challenge of life in a world hostile to His way. To become better informed please access the articles listed.

James

Check the following articles:

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/WhatDoYouMeanRepent.pdf>

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/ReapADestiny.pdf>

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/ComingToBaptism.pdf>

or request a printed copy

that suggests ways of benefitting. With the use of available technology, indeed, it is possible to find on the worldwide web sites which relay live services. *Read or request:*

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/ObservingTheFestivalsAtHome.pdf>

As a reminder:

Trumpets: October 3

Atonement: October 12

Tabernacles: October 17-23

Eighth Day: October 24

Insight from Paul

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

The apostle Paul, proudly, was an Israelite—specifically of the tribe of Benjamin (collectively, with Judah, known as ‘Jews’). As an ardent Pharisee he was steeped in the Scriptures—in his time, the ‘Old Testament’. He believed it. It was written into his spiritual DNA. It underpinned his theology.

Not surprising, then, that he had a fundamental understanding of what God has revealed regarding His plans for mankind—and, specifically, for Israel. What did he see is their role now that Messiah had come? Was Israel now consigned to the dustbin of history, useful in their time but now redundant to His plans?

Here is Paul’s summary: ‘...*God has not cast away his people which he foreknew*’ (Romans 11:2). The Jewish people ‘...*by many infallible proofs*’ were presented with their long-awaited Messiah—but rejected him. They were then, says Paul, cut off from the true vine, faithful Israel—though even in Paul’s day and to this day, some few embraced the Gospel.

Following the rejection of the crucified Messiah by the House of Judah the Gentile nations then had the opportunity to embrace the same Gospel message. That time period has its limits. When God in His timing draws a line the Jews will once again be ‘...*grafted in*’. Writes Paul: ‘...*blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins*’ (vv.26-27, Isaiah 59:20). Not just the House of Judah but also ‘all Israel’.

It is the time foretold by Israel’s prophets—a time when the *House of Judah* (the Jews) and the long lost (lost in name yet large on the present world stage) *House of Israel* (collectively they are ‘Jacob’) will be gathered from around the world where they have been dispersed and will be established in the Land of Promise. It is after Jesus has been enthroned in Jerusalem (‘Zion’). It is when ‘...*Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders*’. Note that Paul, with Isaiah, sees this restoration and the Deliverer as yet future. It does not refer to ‘the Gospel age’—and clearly not today’s world where violence is endemic, no only in the modern nation called Israel!

When God has attained to ‘the fullness’ of the Gentiles, or when they have failed to respond to his call to repentance (Revelation 9:20-21), the scene is set for Christ to issue from Zion to gather his people of Israel—both Houses: ‘...*Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be*

Brexit ...cont'd from p.1

. Successive waves of related immigrants (Britons, Angles, Saxons, Danes, Normans *etc*) have contributed positively to our shared national character, amicably assimilated fully into our culture, adopted our customs, and absorbed at least some of the benign teachings of Jesus Christ. The large-scale presence of other faith groups disrupts that unity.

Time and again from our island fortress we have, over the centuries, and often to our economic detriment, acted as a ‘hammer’ to subdue the violent excesses of our belligerent continental neighbours. Neighbours, yes—but always maintaining the integrity of our own God-appointed ‘home’!

Lesson from the Past

Our nation story has been a mix of success followed by complacency followed by moral decay. Then follows a wake-up call—sometimes heeded, sometimes not (*eg* two world wars). The last half century, however, has seen a steep decline in morality, in Christian practice, in sound government. The recovery of our national sovereignty will not change this!

Brace yourself for a painful correction. Ω

their God, and they shall be my people’ (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

The prophet Ezekiel confirms that the two nations will be united as one: ‘...*I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the [ten] tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand*’ (ch 37:19).

He continues: ‘...*I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them*’.

Israel, wherever they may at that time be dwelling around the globe, will be led back by their Messiah to reclaim the inheritance deeded to the father of their nation, the patriarch Abraham. Ω

What Would Jesus Eat?

Artist's versions of the Last Supper have mushroomed over the centuries, most notably that by Leonardo Da Vinci, reproduced by the thousand. What is curious in the different versions is what is placed on the table!

Leonardo's masterpiece, for example (recently restored), has placed a dish of eels garnished with oranges. Others have depicted leavened (yeasted) bread, crayfish, pretzels, roasted guinea pig—even a suckling pig. The artist, presumably, making some form of symbolic statement or reflecting contemporary culinary tastes.

The Reality

The 'Last Supper' of course, is the final meal shared by Jesus and his disciples the night before his crucifixion. It was the evening before the annual Passover, and may have included those foods appropriate to that observance. (Jesus makes clear that he would never change those observances as recorded in the Scriptures, Matthew 5:17-18.)

For the annual Passover the central dish would be roasted lamb together with unleavened bread—*ie*, bread made without a raising element, yeast. Various herbs accompanied them, each symbolic. They commemorated the events surrounding the nation's freedom from enslavement in Egypt, a time to rejoice. Jesus would have participated in this. For Christians, too, the Passover symbols have special significance (*eg* I Corinthians 5 and 11).

There are, however, other fundamental reasons for the portrayal of the Last Supper as described above to be in error. Certainly no suckling pig on the table! What *would* Jesus have eaten?

Eat to Live

Our physical health and mental well-being are influenced by what we eat—witness the endless stream of dietary advice (which changes from day to day!).

Mankind didn't materialize from thin air but from the hand of the Creator as He organized the elements of the earth to produce a living creature that is '*...fearfully and wonderfully made*'. In our beginnings mankind was 'perfect', and provided with a diet perfectly adapted to the needs of the body as then constituted. The Creator instructed: '*... I have given you every plant seeding seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree seeding seed; it shall be food for you*' (Genesis 1:29). God made clear that by following His instructions they would continue endlessly in their physical existence.

One tree, however, was forbidden to them, and clear warning was given as to the awesome consequences of eating its fruit: '*...in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die*' (Genesis 2:17). Death was twofold: they 'died' spiritually, and the physical death process that moment invaded their bodies.

In Transition

Sin had enveloped mankind, and God introduced His remedy—sacrifice. Abel, on God's instructions, brought a lamb to sacrifice. and as part of the ceremonial he would participate in eating a portion (Leviticus 8:31). Their 'new' changed and decaying bodies—and the increased work-load—now required to be nourished by the inclusion of animal flesh. The weakened bodily constitution is also testified to by the shortened life-span of the patriarchs.

It's clear from the record that the patriarchs had been taught which of the diversity of animals were suitable for consumption: '*...Of every clean beast you shalt take to you by sevens*' (Genesis 7:2). They already understood, by tradition, that there is a difference between clean (edible) animals and unclean.

The LORD included this guidance in Israel's national Constitution, given under Moses, clearly defining for them in their written code of Law which animal flesh is suitable for food (*eg* Leviticus, 11, Deuteronomy 14). Jesus, himself of the House of Judah, fully conformed to this code. As he explained to John the Baptist who had questioned Jesus' desire for baptism: '*... Allow it now, for it is becoming to us this way to fulfill all righteousness*' (Matthew 3:15).

The Middle Eastern diet (and, of course, that of Israel) included the consumption of animal flesh within the confines of the 'clean and unclean' restrictions. Indeed we note that Jesus ate fish in the company of his disciples (Luke 24:41-42). Meat was a valued feature of their diet, especially at times of festival. And, of course portions of some animal sacrifices were eaten by the offerer, and by the priests. (Not all were sin sacrifices.)

As stated Moses: '*...you are free to kill and eat your animals wherever you live. You may eat as many as the LORD gives you. All of you, whether ritually clean or unclean [ie not a 'religious' matter], may eat them, just as you would eat the meat of deer or antelope [ie 'clean']. But you must not eat their blood*' (Deuteronomy 12:15-16). This latter reflects the guidance given to Noah (Genesis 9:4).

What Jesus ate conformed fully with custom *and* with God's instructions concerning food suitable for consumption. Christians—and indeed all of mankind—would do well to follow his example. Surely the Creator's guidance on the 'stuff of life', our food, should be heeded. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, edible foods are '*...sanctified [set apart, identified] by the Word of God*' (I Timothy 4:5). Ω

Read this related article:

<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/AreSomeFoodsUnfitToEat.pdf>

or request a print copy