

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20

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CGOM
Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION

Another 'Easter' season looms. Thankfully it doesn't carry the weight of gloom that precedes and follows the three-month Christmas season. (Though 'hot cross buns' were in the shops mid-January.)

'Easter' is about renewal and is focused on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the 'heart of the earth'. Not infrequently—though not in 2005—this pre-Christian celebration (Easter) roughly coincides with the Bible commemoration of that awesome event.

Biblical Observance

Perhaps surprisingly, multiple thousands of Christians still observe the festival at the time and in the manner God appointed. It's not called 'Easter' - which derives from the pagan spring goddess Eostre—but named *Days of Unleavened Bread*.

That's the term used in Scripture—and one that dates back centuries before the Christian era.

There are seven of these annual days at this time of year, two of which (first and last) are designated as 'holy convocations'. (That is, times when the people of God gather to mark this time of renewal and to recall the resurrection of Jesus.) *When* they occur is determined by the ancient calendar still used by the Jews.

Within modern Christianity this Biblical festival is considered 'legalistic' and fit only for the theological dustbin. Yet the fact that Jesus and his

apostles never abandoned them should give pause for thought. Indeed the apostles continued to observe it throughout their lives, as, universally, did the early church. The apostle Paul notes that the Corinthian church was observing the festival (I Corinthians 5).

Christian Significance

The name '*Unleavened Bread*' gained significance from the circumstances of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, although very likely it was observed before then. They had to leave hurriedly with no time to allow the bread to be fermented. The festival, however, has vital significance for Christians.

As with all the rituals, observances and sacrifices under the 'old covenant', *Unleavened Bread* is rich with symbolism of Jesus.

'Leaven' (yeast) is symbolic of corruption.

Bread usually includes it and thus is called 'sour' while unleavened bread is 'sweet'. Jesus also spoke of '*the leaven of hypocrisy*'.

In a sense, the Christian has no need to be reminded of the resurrection of Jesus, for within each Christian is the divine Spirit – an ever-present internal prompt that Jesus is alive.

cont'd p.2

The Lord's Supper

The solemnity associated with 'Good Friday' is, on the Bible calendar, observed as the '*Lord's Supper*' - an annual remembrance of the sufferings and death of Jesus. It was instituted by him on the evening before the Passover.

The calendar used is that in use by the Jews anciently, and gives a more accurate time for this season than the current Roman calendar.

[Calendar cards are available from any of our offices]

Lord's Supper: April 22

.....Friday evening

Unleavened Bread: April 24-30

..... begins Saturday evening

request the free articles:

Unleavened Bread

...some questions answered

Passover...a double celebration

Commentary

When Does Human Life Begin?

There is ongoing debate about the beginning of human life. Does it begin at conception? After the birth, with the baby's first breath? Or somewhere in between, in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd trimester of the mother's pregnancy? Is the *unborn* a human life?

The answer to these questions becomes very clear with a simple statement of undeniable fact. *Human life does not begin in the womb; it is continuous from Adam and Eve.* Each individual separates from life that is already present, and is formed by the union of an existing living organism (ovum, sperm) from each of the contributing parents.

Human life consists of an unbroken chain from each individual through its parents and preceding generations back to Adam and to God, who Himself breathed life into Adam. God then separated a part of that life to make Eve a living being (Genesis 2:21,22).

From those two parents all human life exists in a *continuous line* back to God our Creator. Ω

Lawrence Gregory, Pastor, Tulsa COG

Resurrection... cont'd from p.1

We are human, however, and we do need a recurring external prompt. So we annually recall, as appointed in Scripture, the suffering of Jesus by means of the Lord's Supper [[see Box](#)] as a focus for remembrance and as a witness to the world. Then for seven days—representing the entirety of our daily life—we annually through the avoidance of physical corruption (leaven) recall the spiritual beauty of the character of Jesus and our own need to emulate him. As wrote Paul: "*Follow me as I follow Christ*".

It's a spiritual discipline that is more appropriate than the (thoroughly un-Biblical) donning of an 'Easter bonnet', rolling eggs, eating chocolate rabbits, lying to our children and watching the sun rise on 'Easter' morning accompanied by a worship service! Ω

request the free articles:

Easter—Is It Christian? and The Easter Story

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

STAYING TOGETHER...

God's church is about relationships, primarily with our heavenly Father and with Jesus our Saviour. But also, importantly, with one another

Living the Christian life isn't easy at the best of times. Jesus calls us to full commitment, to follow in his steps, to live as he lived. That 'way' means turning our former lifestyle upside down. It affects how we dress (not sandals!), what we eat, who we marry, which days of assembly we observe, our humour, our relations with others, our sexual behaviour, what we read and view. Even what we think. Wrote the apostle Paul: "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:1)

Today, such committed folk are few and far between—scattered as isolated families, single individuals, and living in a world that despises Christian values. Only rarely is there opportunity for regular fellowship with like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ.

'Going to church' for many is, too often, a weekly rote. Just get it over with then back to the golf course or DIY or the hobby. But 'church' isn't a building. Church is the body of those who believe in Jesus as Saviour. *His Body*. Each Christian is a member of that Body—perhaps a 'finger' or 'lung' or 'leg' *etc.*

None of us would choose, if it's healthy, to be without any part of our body. In health all of it functions harmoniously as a whole, and we use it wisely. When any part has a defect we do our utmost to restore it to health.

Get Rooted

A disembodied arm or leg isn't much use, and should it become detached it will die. Church is like that. It's a spiritual organism, each 'member' with a vital function. We don't 'go to church', assemble together, just for what we can get from it. It's a two-way street. You, if you have God's Spirit, have been gifted by Jesus Christ to enable the local church to function.

It's possible, of course, that you may not be able to physically be part of a local assembly. You may be far removed from where it meets, or not physically or financially able. That's known in Heaven. You must, however, by whatever other means, associate with an assembly that you know to be trustworthy and faithful to the Word of God. *You* have something to share with the brethren, *and* a need to learn from them—for none of us is spiritually self-sufficient.

Whether or not you can 'attend church', let Jesus be your motivation in every circumstance. Ω

The Parachute

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience!

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb. "I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!" Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he had looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat; a bib in the back; and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor." Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. He also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory -- he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachutes. *Unknown*

New Horizons

- What is important in your life?
- Are you concerned about the moral welfare of your children?
- Does life have a purpose?
- Worried about your finances?
- What happens when you die?
- Is there a fiery hell?
- Does it matter how we behave?
- Does God speak to us today?

These are some of the many questions that bother us. They are addressed in our bi-monthly magazine *New Horizons*. The articles are short, readable and to the point. Distributed as of now in eighty nations it is always free to our readers, supported as it is by friends of the *Outreach Ministries* worldwide.

You are invited to ask, without obligation, for a subscription. No-one will call on you unless you request it, and you may cancel anytime. You are, too, welcome to comment on or ask us questions about the issues discussed, and other Bible - or personal - matters

Trouble in the Anglican Camp

The Anglican community worldwide is at odds with itself. Currently, the issues of *women bishops* and of *homosexuality* are exercising Synod and threatening to divide the church.

Christianity, of course, has its roots in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures, and it's undeniable that there are in them some matters '*hard to be understood*'. Neither women bishops nor homosexuality, however, may be listed among the 'unknowns'. On both issues there is clarity.

Take '*bishops*'. The term is indeed used in the New Testament, and means *overseers*. He—always a he—was the leader of a local assembly of Christians. The overseer was one of the local brethren who was naturally and spiritually gifted for the role. The apostle Paul outlined (II Timothy 3) the required qualities.

The assemblies were quite small, and there may have been several such in any one town, as in Rome (Romans *ch* 16), each with its own 'bishop' or overseer. In Philippi there were several. He was the servant of those brethren and answerable to Jesus, the Head of his church, for their spiritual growth and conduct.

Back To Basics

But over the centuries has evolved a hierarchy of office from the local Reader through to Archbishop—or, in Roman Catholicism, the Pope. No such offices are found in Scripture. In some parts of Christendom the head is an 'apostle' - a man who, like the Pope, has the ultimate say on doctrine and procedure, and, too often, the willing blind subservience of his flock.

In the local assemblies of early Christianity, there were various spiritual functions. An example is the *evangelist* who, as an expression of his abilities and often supported by a local assembly, would be involved fully in outreach and in supporting other local assemblies. Timothy was such a man.

Naturally, those who were most effective in their role would be recognized outside their local base—'famous in the congregation'. They would be called on to serve the larger church.

Not unusually we hear of men and women who consider themselves 'called' to the priesthood or ministry or as a Bishop. Unless their call is within the Biblical parameters it is merely a wish or desire largely fuelled by self-interest.

It's unlikely the Anglican church will return to the Biblical pattern. Unless they do, however, they will continue to face often acrimonious division. *Ω*

Scientific Sanity!

"A British philosophy professor who has been a leading champion of atheism for more than a half-century has changed his mind. He now believes in God - more or less - based on scientific evidence, and says so on a video released Thursday. At age 81, after decades of insistent belief is a mistake, Antony Flew has concluded that some sort of intelligence or first cause must have created the universe. 'A super-intelligence is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature', Flew said in a telephone interview from England.

"Flew said he's best labelled a deist like Thomas Jefferson, whose God was not actively involved in people's lives... biologists' investigation of DNA 'has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved,' Flew says in the new video, 'Has Science Discovered God?'... Flew told *The Associated Press* his current ideas have some similarity with American 'intelligent design' theorists, who see evidence for a guiding force in the construction of the universe. He accepts Darwinian evolution but doubts it can explain the ultimate origins of life."

Associated Press

What's Eating You?

"New data has accumulated now to show that the human mind (consciousness) is the most important player in the drama of human health and disease. Diet and other environmental factors play a secondary role. As long as one eats only when hungry, in moderation, the food that pleases him/her and does not become a gormandizer, one need not lose sleep on the micronutrients and the molecules and atoms in the food.

"The food must be wholesome and as close to nature as possible. Preserved, spoiled, altered to suit the taste buds, and heavily adulterated food could be dangerous to human health. Fresh food, basically vegetable with plenty of fruits, and in moderation, is ideal. Fat is a very vital part of human food. Food without any fat could kill very effectively as every cell wall in the human body, of which there are one hundred thousand billion in all, is made up of cholesterol. The cell wall is the key to good health. Broken or weak cell walls that releases oxidants to the surroundings is the best invitation to all diseases.

"Present research data, taking all aspects (holistic) into consideration, have thrown up *negative thoughts, like hatred, greed, jealousy, anger, and depression due to frustration*, as the major players in the game of health, as well as chronic fatal diseases like heart attack, stroke and cancer. *It is, therefore, not what you eat that kills you but that which eats you that kills you.* Take heart and enjoy your good food in moderation. Live for others and enjoy good health till you die. Never attempt to live for ever. You can never succeed."

via Internet

In the Beginning...

A 'big bang'? A bacterium from space? Many scientists desperately seek explanations for Earth's origins and the origins of Life itself. But to be authentic, that source must exclude a Creator God! Logic of course, dictates that even a primeval 'big bang' isn't an answer—for all the energy and matter in the present Universe must have been 'stored' in that original exploding nucleus. So where did that come from?

Some in the scientific community (eg *Scientific Sanity* on this page) face reality and accept there had to be an Intelligence involved. The same logic applies to Life. That space-bound DNA had to originate somewhere. As did the complex laws that govern the physical and biological Universe.

Theories

Christians too, can be confused. Most of those who give it a thought go along with the current 'scientific' theory. In regard to life that's 'evolution', a morally offensive, short-sighted and God-rejecting theory. Other Christians are divided. They accept a Creator who acted '*in the beginning*' (Genesis 1:1), that God launched some inorganic material and some DNA and left them to do their bit. Hence, eventually, us.

Another stream of Christian thought is that God in six 24-hour days and starting from scratch formed the Earth and all life on it together with the rest of the Universe(s). Fully formed. An important argument proffered for this scenario is that there could not be death before Adam's sin. Hence the fossil bones (indicating death) exhumed from the earth must be from the present Earth—after 'the fall' and no more than six millennia ago. One objection to this is that the Bible references to death focus on humanity. Humans, made in the image of God, sin. Animals don't.

Others see an original divine creation, followed by billions of years during which the stars and planets took on their present forms—a kind of preparation for the outworking of the divine plan. Earth, then, flourished with vegetable and animal—but not human—life. At the appropriate time that phase of creation God ended by a great flood. As is recorded in Genesis 1: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. And the Earth [was] without form, and empty. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters...*". That is, Earth became that way, followed by a new creation at the pinnacle of which, this time, were our first parents—instantly and perfectly created, and in the image of the Creator God. Ω

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