

**The Newsletter
of the Churches
of God, UK**

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*providing
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Matthew 28:19-20*

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**What Do You Do
When You Meet?**

*'Don't forsake the assembling of
yourselves together'*

There are as many Christian meeting formats, it seems, as there are denominations. From the heavily formal 'high church' through to the 'happy-clappy' informality of modern evangelicals there is infinite variety. Do the Scriptures provide any fundamental guidelines?

- It may surprise readers to hear that the New Testament in no way suggests that the prime purpose of assembling together is 'worship'! That goes counter to the generally held belief that we come together primarily to 'worship the Lord'. It shapes the form of our assembly. The magnificence of worship in a great cathedral echoes that of the Temple in Jerusalem. More appropriate, however, is 'the synagogue model'. Temple worship was a rare experience for the Jews - maybe once a year, while the synagogue was frequently visited
- By definition worship is grateful man's expression of praise and thanksgiving to his Creator for all His blessings. But isn't that the whole of the Christian's daily life? Certainly our meeting together will include such - but it is not the prime function. We don't need to 'call Christ down' to our assembly - he is here, indwelling his brethren, as is our Father (John 14:23). We simply give thanks for their continued presence among us (Matthew 18:20)
- The apostolic model must surely be the most effective: *'...they continued stedfastly in the apostles'*
- *teaching* (Gk: *didache*), and *fellowship* (Gk *koinonia*: interaction), in the *breaking of bread* (Gk *klao*: sharing of food - cp v. 46) and the *prayers'* (Acts 2:42, Acts 4:24-30)
- The emphasis focused on the *apostolic teaching*. The brethren met primarily to learn and to share insights. Sound teaching was a sure defence against heretical teaching (cp I Timothy 1:3, 6:3, II Corinthians 11:4). Paul instructed Timothy: *'... Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine [teaching]'* (I Timothy 4:13)
- Indications are that the brethren - though all 'one church' - assembled in 'house-sized' groups (*see* Romans 16 *etc*), coming together only on special occasions (*eg* I Corinthians 11:18). It provided opportunity for mutual support: *'...let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another'* (Hebrews 10:24-25). Activities that are only possible with intimate interaction. In this way the brethren learned of each other's battles and victories and needs, and could unitedly pray for one another - and provide assistance as appropriate
- In this context the use of 'spiritual gifts' (Gk *pneumatikos*) (*eg* I Corinthians 12, 14) is more readily understood. While meetings were conducted *'...decently and in order'* (v.40) yet there was ample room for spontaneous participation and expression of these gifts
- So every church meeting is a 'business' meeting. We meet to hear what God is saying to us through the 'prophets' (speakers). **cont'd p.3**

Prophet Alert

Most readers of this Newsletter will be aware of the concept that God has a time plan, that the 'seven-day week' is representative of a seven thousand year divine plan. Man's rule will, in this scenario, end after six thousand years of human existence and be followed by the thousand-year reign of Jesus as 'King of kings and LORD of lords. This, alongside the perceived 'signs of the times', has fuelled the many attempts to establish a date for the expected 'Great Tribulation' followed by the return of Jesus .

Down the centuries there have been times when Christians have been confronted by events that were interpreted as being signs of the imminent end of man's rule. There was a flurry of this interest in the mid-eighteen hundreds - and in the last half of the nineteen hundreds. Even now there are self-styled 'prophets' proclaiming 'the end is nigh'.

History is littered with incarnations of wannabe 'Elijahs' and enough 'two witnesses' to fill a stadium. They have come - and gone. Sadly, they leave a legacy of dashed hopes among their deluded followers. Indeed some - remember Jim Jones, David Koresh - lead their loyal followers to gruesome deaths. Others will lead you off to some desert place or wilderness.

It is vital we take note of God's warning in regard to these false prophets: '*...when a prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah has not spoken: the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, thou shall not be afraid of him*' (Deuteronomy 18:22). Don't be cowed by his charisma or by persuasive words or his wielding of his vaunted authority. *Don't follow him*. Just observe! This, of course, assumes that you have been alert and not sucked in by his 'story'. Said Jesus: '*...beware false prophets*'.

How, then, can we be sure we are not deceived by the

Sacrifice - why?

God Himself first killed an animal - using the skins to cover our first parents' nakedness. Later, Abel sacrificed one of his flock - an act acceptable to JHVH. The practice continued with and without divine approval. The godly followed God's guidance. The ungodly perverted the practice, sacrificing both animals (and of the wrong sort) and their own children to 'no gods'.

To take the life of a living creature can be traumatic - it's not for the squeamish. But it is not so heinous as to take the life of a being (man) made in the image of God. Hence God's instruction: '*...Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For in the image of God made he man*' (Genesis 9:6). That divine image was shattered when Adam chose the way of covetousness - and introduced death to all his human descendants.

That act ushered in the millennia of self-inflicted human misery, sickness, wars, pain. Only a blood-stained sacrifice can portray the horror of that act of our father Adam. But no animal - or indeed human - sacrifice can atone for that. More was required, and the

proclamations of an 'Elijah' or a 'witness' or a self-styled 'prophet'?

- One day there will indeed appear not one but two truly God-appointed prophets: '*I will [commission] my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth*' (Revelation 11:3). Their commission (in Jerusalem) is described in this chapter
- They will do their work by divine power and will have no need of financial supporters
- Most likely they will have established their credentials beforehand - by a record of fulfilled prophecies
- Their identity is not revealed in Scripture. It has been suggested that God may restore ancient prophets to life as His witnesses. Or angelic beings. Or humans. But no-one knows!
- While we should be aware of the 'signs of the times', we must be very cautious about accepting dates for prophesied events. Many Christians believe the 'six thousand years' are complete - though we are now some twelve years beyond the accepted date - based on Creation at 4004BC
- Caution, too, as to the time elapsed, for historical - and Biblical - dates are notoriously unreliable. In Judaism, only 5768 (not six thousand) years have elapsed since Creation. Further, the typology of 'the prophetic week' may simply mean that God has imposed a limit on the time man can continue to ignore Him. His plan *will* mature - in His time
- The only 'sure word of prophecy' in this matter are the words of Jesus: '*...And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come*' (Matthew 24: 11-14). The key is that we 'endure to the end', faithful to our calling and to our Saviour Ω

sacrifice of animals could be but the faint reflection - a type - of a far greater sacrifice.

That sacrifice had to be human. It had to be perfect, pure, undefiled by sin. No man was like that. So in God's perfect time the Word divested Himself of His majesty and took on Himself human nature - subject to the trials of human existence. Born as Jesus of Nazareth he resisted sin and became the perfect sacrifice, the perfect atonement, for the sin of all humanity of every faith and of none. That's what we remember when we as Christians assemble for the annual 'Lord's Supper' - a solemn memorial of his awesome sacrifice - '*...till he come*' (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) Ω

Spring Festivals 2008

Lord's Supper: Fri evg April 18
 Unleavened Bread: April 20-26
 Pentecost: June 8

St Patrick - his day

Celebrated worldwide, 'St Patricks Day' recognizes this early Christian as a stalwart of the Roman church. This does, however, fly in the face of historical fact, as the following extract of a biography indicates.

Patrick was born - 360AD - in southern Scotland, the son of a deacon who was himself the son of a presbyter in the Celtic church. He began his evangelism in Ireland when he was about thirty.

None of his sparse writings state which day he observed, but the Celtic church at that time rejected the teachings of Rome, and observed the seventh day Sabbath. The Celtic church rejected Rome. Patrick was 'claimed' by the Roman church only several centuries later.

*"Historically, the Celtic church observed the seventh day of the week in accordance with Holy Writ. A professor of church history at Princeton wrote, "It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week." (Professor James C. Moffat, *The Church in Scotland*, p. 140)*

*Another historian wrote, "We seem to see here an allusion to the custom, observed in the early monastic Church of Ireland, of keeping the day of rest on Saturday." (Blair's, *History of the Church in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 86)*

The Catholic historian, Bellesheim, also states the sentiments of Queen Margaret, for he wrote, "The queen further protested against the prevailing abuse of Sunday desecration. 'Let us' she said, 'venerate the Lord's day, inasmuch as upon it our Saviour rose from the dead: let us do no servile work on that day'...The Scots in this matter had no doubt kept up the traditional practice of the ancient monastic

*Church of Ireland, which observed Saturday rather than Sunday as a day of rest." (Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland*, vol. 1, pp. 249,250)*

*William Skene wrote, "Her next point was that they did not duly reverence the Lord's day, but in this latter instance they seem to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early monastic Church of Ireland, by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labors." (William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol. II, p. 349,1877)*

*There was a great missionary student of Patrick's schools in Ireland by the name of Columba, "the son of Feidlimy, the son of Fergus." (J.H. Merle d'Aubigne, *The Reformation in England*, vol.1, p. 30) He was born in Donegal, Ireland, in 521 A.D., and was sent to Scotland as a missionary. "I will go' said he, 'and preach the Word of God in Scotland.'" (*Ibid*, p. 30) Columba also kept the Bible Sabbath or Saturday which God commands in His decalogue. His last moments are recorded in history. "Having continued his labors in Scotland thirty-four years, he clearly and openly foretold his death, and on Saturday, the ninth of June, he said to his disciple Diermit: 'This day is called the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest, and such will it truly be to me; for it will put an end to my labors.'" (Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, vol. 6, p. 139)*

*History is very clear on the origin of Patrick and the day that he kept as the Sabbath, but let us go to the Holy Scriptures and find out WHY Patrick and the early Celtic Church kept the seventh day or Saturday as God's holy rest! "It was the Sabbath among the Briton Christians 596-664, and then was still so with those who withdrew to the Isle of Iona and to Ireland rather than to submit to the laws commanding and enforcing Sunday observance." (Alonzo T. Jones, *Lessons From the Reformation*, p. 360) Detailed history reveals that "In A.D. 664, Oswald, king of Northumberland, ordered Sunday observance. And the Sabbath keepers, 'rather than to submit to it,' withdrew to the Isle of Iona and to Ireland." (*Ibid*, p. 319)" [Internet](#)*

When You Meet...cont'd

- We meet to cement and make friendships, to learn our brethren's needs, to pray for those needs, to supply those needs. We meet to share our food in a comfortable and relaxed and spiritual context. And every meeting is a '(Father's) business' meeting in which we learn to be...witnesses unto [Jesus]...unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8) - and plan the ways and means for our assembly to fulfill that mission [Ω](#)

Read *Word in Action* (p.4) for a practical example

Further reading: The Small Church
available by mail or on our website:
www.cgom.org

Word in Action ...cont'd from p.4

disagreement with CGI but wanting to stay away from hierarchy. I went with them just to be supporting.

This bible study now means more to me than many sermons. Some sermons are exciting, thought-provoking and even refreshing. I hope to be invigorated by many more in my life. But a bible study means I must prepare for it. I am involved in it. I am part of it. God is working with me, not on me! I hunger for it from Sunday morning to the next Sabbath. In between daily duties, I think about it. I suspect it even pumps up my metabolism."

We think of our group as a family unit. We don't come together as formal organizational meetings do, but rather we gather as a family, complete with a meal, God talk and being concerned with each others' welfare. For us, this is what it's all about. To actually see fruit developing in the brethren right before our eyes as they mature is so encouraging. Our goal is not to build a large fellowship. Our deepest desire is for brethren to experience what Jesus wants them to do - to teach the word of God using the gifts He has given them - and then go do it.

Olivia and Ray Doyle, Canada

Christ is portrayed in Moses as:

The Deliverer, The Mediator, The Passover Lamb, The Religious Feasts, The Exodus, The Manna and The Water, The Rock, The Tabernacle, The Mercy Seat, The High Priest and The Tent with men.

Moses was a symbolic representation for Jesus:

Moses was saved after a king ordered the Jewish babies to be killed; the same is true of Jesus. Moses parted the water, Jesus walked upon the water Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness; Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness. Moses went up a mountain and gave an address, Jesus also gave a sermon on the mount. Moses administered the Old Covenant and Jesus administered the New Covenant [Internet](#)

A REAL BIBLE FAMILY

A stone seal bearing the name of one of the families who acted as servants in the First Temple and then returned to Jerusalem after being exiled to Babylonia has been uncovered in an archeological excavation in Jerusalem's City of David, a prominent Israeli archeologist said Wednesday.

The 2,500-year-old black stone seal, which has the name "Temech" engraved on it, was found earlier this week amid stratified debris in the excavation under way just outside the Old City walls near the Dung Gate, said archeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar, who is leading the dig.

According to the Book of Nehemiah, the Temech family were servants of the First Temple and were sent into exile to Babylon following its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The family was among those who later returned to Jerusalem, the Bible recounts.

The seal, which was bought in Babylon and dates to 538-445 BCE, portrays a common and popular cultic scene, Mazar said.

The 2.1 x 1.8-cm. elliptical seal is engraved with two bearded priests standing on either side of an incense altar with their hands raised forward in a position of worship.

A crescent moon, the symbol of the chief Babylonian god Sin, appears on the top of the altar. Under this scene are three Hebrew letters spelling Temech, Mazar said.

The Bible refers to the Temech family: *"These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city."* [Nehemiah 7:6]... "The Nethinim [7:46]"... The children of Temech." [7:55].

The fact that this cultic scene relates to the Babylonian chief god seemed not to have disturbed the Jews who used it on their own seal, she added.

The seal of one of the members of the Temech family was discovered just dozens of meters away from the Opel area, where the servants of the Temple, or "Nethinim," lived in the time of Nehemiah, Mazar said.

"The seal of the Temech family gives us a direct connection between archeology and the biblical sources and serves as actual evidence of a family mentioned in the Bible," she said. "One cannot help being astonished by the credibility of the biblical source as seen by the archaeological find." [Internet](#)

Word in Action

For our service together, we didn't want to copy other churches and their formats. The reason had more to do with how we viewed the work we wanted to do. The formal service, songs and sermonette/sermon is good up to a point. It is a good starting point for beginners in the faith. But, we wanted to explore different techniques for furthering the education of brethren who were ready to graduate to higher levels of experiential learning. We wanted to provide a safe environment for putting into practice the things learned. The same way Jesus taught His disciples first and then sent them out for practical training.

In a formal service, the majority of the congregation will sit and listen to instruction, which is why it is valuable for building a strong foundation. We chose an interactive style where everyone has opportunities to express themselves and work with each other to gain experience and build confidence in sharing the word of God.

Jesus told us to go into the world and preach the gospel, but not all the world will embrace it. There will be many who will oppose it. The believer needs training to encounter both. When Roman soldiers were in training, they sparred with each other. As a result, their own skills were strengthened, while at the same time, they learned how to handle others who were not like minded.

The apostle Paul describes in detail this process in Ephesians 6. When the believer puts on the whole armor of God, he is able to stand, fight and move forward. Our bible study is an expository format. Right now we are in the book of Matthew. We work our way through it from beginning to end and expose what God reveals to us in His word. We close with singing hymns, often sung a cappella.

We have a gentleman in our group whom I had met three years ago in one of the local churches of God. At that time, he was very quiet and soft spoken. He had difficulty expressing what was in his head and felt frustrated as a result. He didn't always agree with everything taught in the church, but didn't know how to cope with it. He has been coming to our group since we started and the change in him is remarkable. He has come out of his shell, he speaks much more confidently and when he listens to others with differing opinions, he now has the opportunity to respond and exchange thoughts and ideas. Talking it through, *with the goal of coming to understand God better*, has made all the difference for him.

Here is an excerpt from an e-mail from him:

"I have been a Sabbath-keeper since around 1982. Actually, each tenth year of my life has been a major turning point and this was one of them. I was a dutiful audience member where my major participation was to stay awake and what will I bring for a snack. About a year ago, more or less, a Sabbath bible study group was formed; not by any [cont'd p.3](#)

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