

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20*

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The King's Speech

Few of us—at least in ‘the West’—in this life, want any form of government other than what we call ‘democracy’. We have looked at other ways to order society—and turned away. Democracy, though it comes with different faces, is about the best we can come up with.

Democracy is flawed, but it hinders the excesses of our human nature. It places a road-block in the path of those who would rule us with an iron fist.

In Britain each new Parliament is introduced by the Government’s blueprint for the next five years—the ‘Queen’s Speech’. It reflects the ruling Party’s underlying philosophy.

Change Ahead

The new administration in the United States claims that change is available—‘...we can change’. The United Kingdom is weeks away from the hustings and a new Government as yet undetermined. Both nations face horrendous economic and social challenges.

Radical change, however, is coming—but it is not democratic. And it is not within the remit of mankind to choose the leadership or the governing philosophy or the Government personnel. All ‘candidates’ are already undergoing a selection process. And the manifesto has been published around the world.

The coming Ruler, of course, is

Jesus the Messiah. He will be ‘...king over all the earth’ (Zechariah 14:9), His throne in Jerusalem.

Democratic Flaw

A fundamental flaw in the democratic system is that elected Government must bend an ear to the will of the people to survive. Necessary when we are dependent on other humans to rule us, and given the dubious quality of leadership which all too often is self-serving, unwise - and indeed ultimately destructive.

As for ‘the people’, we are motivated by our individual personal desires. And what I want isn’t necessarily what’s good for all. But the ‘collective wisdom’ - however inadequate—of the people is a necessary brake on the slide towards totalitarian rule—the present direction of government worldwide.

The King's Manifesto

But what if the leadership were totally dedicated to our welfare, had perfect wisdom—and the power to impose change despite opposition. Such a Leader is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Here is His Manifesto for change:

- foremost will be the restoration of the true faith as He instituted it at man’s creation; this is the Gospel message—that there is but One God who is jealous for His revealed way of life
 - ...the suppression of all man-made religions with their false gods and their idols
 - ...the observance of His weekly and annual worship days as revealed in the Scriptures

ALWAYS THE SAME

One key to a proper understanding of the Christian Bible is the foundation principle that God doesn't change His core nature. How He deals with His creation may appear to vary—but always His actions reflect His nature (eg '...God is love') and advance His purpose.

So those of God's actions which offend us simply imply that we don't properly understand. Why, for example, did He permit Satan to intrude into Eden? Why the worldwide destruction of the Great Flood? Why the 'ethnic cleansing' of the Canaanites? Why the scattering of His chosen people? Indeed—why allow Jesus to suffer so cruelly?

Whatever the answer to such questions, the *New Testament* writers accepted the Old as the true reflection of the Creator God. Indeed the *New Testament* requires an understanding of the Old to be properly understood. Peter, for example, quotes it thus: '*...the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*' (1 Peter 1:25). The real Gospel message, that is, differs not at all from the teachings of Moses and the prophets.

Peter's message backs what Jesus said to the two disciples after his resurrection: '*...How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said?*' (Luke 4:25). Jude, too: '*...I must write and ask you to defend the faith that God has once for all given to his people*' (Jude v.3).

We can derive from this that all our Christian belief is embedded in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The role of Jesus as Messiah. The nature of man and of God. The divine purpose. Resurrection and eternal life. And how and when to come before Him in worship.

Let's look more closely at that last item - *worship*. For these 'holy days' represent perhaps the most ancient of religious observances—anywhere, in any faith. Were they discarded by the church?

Implied is the concept that we ought to find out

when we should assemble to worship as laid out for us in 'Moses and the Prophets'. Unless, that is, Jesus authorised change. Can we find changes to the time for worship anywhere in the writings of the New Testament?

In view of God's affirmed opposition to such change that can be ruled out. The Lord said: '*... Obey all the laws and teachings I am giving you. Don't add any, and don't take any away*' (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Lesson from History

Jeroboam, the first King of the separated House of Israel, for political reasons ignored this advice. He changed the time for observance of one

of these God-appointed festivals. Ever afterwards he was branded by the Lord as the one '*... who made Israel to sin*' (I Kings 14:16). It launched Israel's long decline into idolatry—and ultimate exile.

Festivals 2010

Unleavened Bread	March 30-April 5
Pentecost	May 23
Trumpets	September 9
Atonement	September 18
Tabernacles	September 23-29
Eighth Day	September 30

The early Christian church under the guidance of Jesus and the apostles re-instated (and daily lived) 'the old-fashioned religion' in its new spiritual form. The brethren continued to assemble for worship, fellowship and instruction—but on the days previously set apart (made holy) by the LORD. [*See the above list for this year's dates.*]

In the centuries following, Christianity failed its *101 History* class. As in ancient Israel it compromised with the idolatrous practices of that era, while anointing them with Christian significance. Thus the Roman Saturnalia became Christmas, Spring fertility worship substituted for the Passover season, sun worship day was, wrongly, called Sabbath.

God's Appointment

The Spring festivals appointed by the LORD (Leviticus 23) are upon us. Around the world thousands of Christians are remembering the life and sacrifice of our Saviour in the annual observance of the Memorial Supper and the following seven-day '*Days of Unleavened Bread*', when food that contains a raising agent (leaven) isn't eaten.

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King's Speech ...cont'd

our sin solely through the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah

- the universal application of His blue-print for sound government of the nations
...the application of a fair system of criminal justice—as outlined in 'the Ten Commandments'—that recognizes man's inherent moral weakness: justice tempered with mercy
- disarmament of all nations. with their military resources turned to the pursuit of mankind's welfare
- the implementation of sound, godly economic principles globally, nationally and personally—and for the good of all
- an end to man's desecration of the planet and its resources

Initially, the King will apply benign persuasion to guide the traumatized survivors of the coming calamities into the right paths. But His Ambassadors, armed with supernatural Spirit power, will everywhere lead mankind to a transformed nature through the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Mankind will through the holy Spirit be transformed inwardly—wilfully and joyfully submitting to the divine will and reaping the consequent temporal and eternal benefits.

In the years—perhaps centuries—following the inauguration of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of (religious) lords Earth and all mankind will gradually be transformed. Sound godly education will guide to universal physical and mental good health, to stable family life, to prosperity for all.

Above all, the Devil—largely responsible for promoting all that is ungodly in us—will be restrained while the work of rebuilding God's earth pro-

In the future, the mountain with the LORD's temple will be the highest of all. It will reach above the hills, and every nation will rush to it.

People of many nations will come and say, "Let's go up to the mountain of the LORD God of Jacob and worship in his temple." The LORD will teach us his Law from Jerusalem, and we will obey him. He will settle arguments between distant and powerful nations. They will pound their swords and their spears into rakes and shovels; they will never again make war or attack one another.

Everyone will find rest beneath their own fig trees or grape vines, and they will live in peace. This is a solemn promise of the LORD Almighty
Micah 4:1-5

Rendezvous of Friends

An ancient tradition in first-century Judaism is the *Kiddush*. It's a practice that has relevance for the Christian observance of the Memorial of Jesus' death, and sheds light on events of that awesome evening.

In the afternoon before each Sabbath and each holy day a group of friends would meet to share the normal evening meal (Gk *deipmos*, 'supper') and to focus on religious discussion. As the Sabbath dawned (*ie*, at dusk) the meal would be interrupted by the host, and the Sabbath or holy day sanctified [set apart] by the blessing of a cup of wine.

[*Evening*, in the ancient world, was as fluid in timing as with us. It was more in line with our concept of *afternoon*—between midday and darkness.]

On the '*Preparation of the Passover*' (John 19:14) the discussion would naturally be influenced by that event. (The '*Preparation*' was the early part of the day leading to the Passover sacrifice.) As a group of 'friends' (John 15:14) it is likely Jesus and the disciples would often meet in this way.

Indeed the 'upper room' may have been a regular rendezvous when in Jerusalem. (It was pre-booked by Jesus for this final seven-day festival—perhaps, knowing his fate, he provided it as a safe refuge for the disciples at that distressful time! Luke 22:10)

During the course (John 13:2) of that *Kiddush* Jesus introduced the familiar emblems of bread and wine as a memorial of his death. The bread (Gk. *artos*) broken is not specified as unleavened (Gk *azumos*).

Next afternoon, at the time of the 'official' Passover sacrifice in the Temple, he died on the cross. He is '*...Christ our Passover [lamb], sacrificed for us*' (I Corinthians 5:7). [Ω](#)

Request the article:

Passover—a double celebration

Appointed Times

In a fast-moving world we are used to consulting our personal calendar—holiday bookings, home maintenance, school trips, public holidays; any of a multitude of activities which need our attention. God, too, has His calendar of events.

Wrote the prophet Habbakuk: *'...the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hastens toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay'* (ch 2:3). From the LORD's first interaction with mankind He has worked in accord with His 'appointed times'.

Initially God fixed a period of testing for us during which mankind could demonstrate our relationship with Him, and He could select those inclined to Him. It will end at a yet unrevealed moment determined by the Father. But there are numerous other examples of His precise timing, demonstrating His control of human affairs.

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- Abraham's offspring would be exiled from Canaan, and enslaved, for four centuries (Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:41)

- Israel were to—and did—wander in the wilderness for forty years (Numbers 14:33, Joshua 5:6)
- the Amorites were singled out for judgment in *'...the fourth generation'* from Abraham (Genesis 15:16)
- Judah was prophesied to be exiled for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11, Zechariah 7:3)
- the time of Jesus' appearance was revealed to Daniel: the *'seventy weeks prophecy'* (Daniel ch 9). For this reason he was widely expected in Judaea at his first coming
- Jesus was sent from heaven *'...in the fulness of time'* (Galatians 4:2, 4, Ephesians 1:10)
- not to be forgotten are God's precise designated times for public worship (Leviticus 23)
- and as *'...our Passover lamb'* (I Corinthians 5:7) Jesus died at the time of the Temple Passover service and at the precise scheduled time (at the evening sacrifice—our 3pm-4pm)
- Jesus accurately foretold his repose—seventy-two hours—in the tomb (Matthew 12:40)—fulfilled exactly as predicted
- still to be fulfilled are such specifically timed prophecies as in Daniel 12:11-12 [Ω](#)

ALWAYS THE SAME... CONT'D

In the Scriptures 'leaven' represents all that disfigures us spiritually—hypocrisy, false teaching, arrogance, malice, vanity (*'...puffed up'*) as represented by most Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' day.

It was during their observance of this festival that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *'...Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'*

The Jewish and Gentile Christians at Corinth were, at the time of Paul's writing, literally observing this festival.

Most denominations today, of course, observe the next festival on God's worship calendar—*Pentecost*, though not always on the appointed day. Others, however, have been replaced by traditional 'Christian' observances that don't have

their roots in the Scriptures.

Protestant Christianity claims to follow the concept of *sola Scriptura*—that our beliefs are shaped only by the Scriptures. Sadly, many non-Biblical beliefs have become indelibly entrenched in the mainstream faiths.

However sincerely these beliefs are held they have drawn the condemnation of Jesus himself: *'...It is useless for you to worship me, when you teach rules made up by humans.' You disobey God's commands in order to obey what humans have taught. You are good at rejecting God's commands so that you can follow your own teachings!'* (Mark 7: 7-9 CEV)

It is vital that all Christian believers carefully examine our beliefs, as did the Christians in Berea, who *'...day after day studied the Scriptures [ie, the Old Testament] to see if these things were true'* (Acts 17:11). [Ω](#)

Read the free article

The Faith Once Delivered
