

outreach

CONFERENCE 2002

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries holds our annual Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma from March 8-10. The agenda focus is on outreach, and your prayers for insight and good success will be appreciated.

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

PO Box 2525
LINCOLN
LN5 7PF
England

Telephone: 01526 861217
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

Regd Charity No. 283358

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*providing
leadership,
information and
Biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:19-20*

New readers of *Outreach* may not know that our Conference is representative of like-minded independent local congregations which co-operate voluntarily in a variety of projects - such as the recent ad in the USA Today newspaper.

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries (CGOM) is also supportive of isolated Christians and can provide a variety of Bible-based publications and taped sermons. New congregations - anywhere in the world! - are welcome to draw on the wealth of experience within our existing associated groups.

Many local groups have the desire to reach out beyond their immediate area - indeed, to the wider world. By pooling our resources, our effort and our vision we can make this possible.

Independent congregations are welcome to send delegates and to share in the debate. Details of the agenda and location may be obtained from any of our addresses.

Confused about 'church government'?
Request the free article

Church Leadership...A Biblical perspective

Lord's Supper:
Tuesday evening March 26

Unleavened Bread:
March 28 - April 3

A leaflet on home observance is available from Lincoln

The Bible is the foundation of the Christian faith. But do you understand the basics?

*...who was Jesus?
...what is man?
...do we have a 'soul'?
...will you go to heaven? Or hell?
...when should you worship?*

*Request the free study course
Bible Basics*

PARALLEL WORLDS

Christian live in a time warp! Get serious about following God's guidance in the Scriptures and you find yourself out of this world - in business, personal relationships, politics and even in religion.

That shouldn't come as a surprise, for Jesus said 'My kingdom is not of this world'. Embark on the life in Christ and you are a new creation with different values, different thoughts. Yet we continue to live in the world with all its ungodly and perverse systems.

That can be frustrating. Your long-time friendly neighbor wrecks his family in an adulterous relationship. Your boss cooks the books. Government ministers pursue selfish ends spinning lies into a web that affects the nation. The media is saturated with every imaginable perversion. Then you find your long-held religious beliefs simply don't match the clear Word of God. What God says is evil the world calls good. What God has revealed as the way to a happy and successful life is trodden underfoot by the nicest people.

So for the Christian, life can be something of a battleground. But the outcome - if we resist till the end - is glorious: *we will live for ever as joint-heirs with Christ of the entirety of the universe*. And right now God offers us all the support we need to be victorious. The apostle Peter tells us "For his divine power has given us every requisite for life and piety, through our coming to know him" (II Peter 1:3)



Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

The Spring Festivals

The 'New Year' in Western civilization is generally viewed as a time to re-examine our priorities, to make lifestyle resolutions. Public gyms are filled with perspiring men and women seeking to peel off Xmas excess. Cigarette sales dip. But isn't the depth of winter a strange time for new beginnings. Nature is at a standstill, daylight almost non-existent, it's cold and dreary, depression sets in.

Bible students are aware that anciently it was different. On the calendar then used widely throughout the Middle East, 'new year' began in spring. Days lengthen, trees bud, all nature stirs and humans get a spring in their step. Surely a time to celebrate. It has been so since man's creation.

Deliverance

God saw it that way, too. The first month of the year, He said, is in early spring. In the Bible it's called Abib, and later the Babylonian name *Nisan*. was used (This year, 'new year's day' is March 14.) In this month God placed the first of several annual festivals. These festivals were not just a chance for a knees-up, not only a celebration, but had significance for God's grand design for mankind.

The Creator arranged Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery for this time of year. Towards the end of the 14th day of this first month the Israelites sacrificed a lamb, and that night they were protected from God's judgment on the Egyptians, and freed. It was a time for rejoicing in their new-found freedom, as do the Jews to this day - a 'night to be remembered'. It was the beginning of a seven-day festival, known as *Unleavened Bread*, which began with the eating of the Passover lamb.

First century Christians, following the example of Jesus and the apostles, also observed the festival (*eg I Corinthians 5:6-8*) as many do today. During the seven days the only bread eaten is 'unleavened' - *ie* unyeasted, 'flat' - symbolic of our resurrection life with Christ, and our striving to 'put on' his character. As did the first Christians we also remove any raising agents from our homes. The New Testament teaches that yeast symbolises corruption, hypocrisy, false teaching, sin generally. *Unleavened Bread* is a festival, a joyous occasion.

The first and the last days of the festival are annual holy days, during which Christians cease from their regular work for worship, fellowship and instruction from the Scriptures. (There are *seven* of these holy days each year.) Many introduce the festival with a special celebration meal with family and brethren.

Remembrance

Jesus was killed - sacrificed (*I Corinthians 5:7*) - at the time the lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple, a fulfilment of the 'typology' of the occasion. But he had suffered the night through - indeed had suffered throughout his ministry. Christians remember this - and his death - annually at the time highlighted by Paul - on '*the night he was betrayed*' (the beginning of *Nisan 14*) by means of the bread and wine of the *Lord's Supper* (*I Corinthians 11:20-26*). [Note that in Bible times each 'day' began at sunset.]

In contrast to *Unleavened Bread* the *Lord's Supper* is a solemn occasion when brethren meet together as a 'family' whenever possible. Virtually all Christians in the tradition of *Outreach Newsletter* join in this memorial of our Saviour's suffering and death after the sun sets on the 13th *Nisan* - the time Jesus met with his disciples and instituted the remembrance.

Judgment and Service

The apostle Peter sums up the occasion: "*He carried the burden of our sins in his own body on the cross in order that we might die to sin and live for uprightness. By his wounds you have been healed*" (*I Peter 2:24*).

It is at this season of the year, especially, that we examine our lives in the light of the pattern set for his followers by Jesus. Paul told the brethren in Corinth: "*A man should examine himself, and only when he has done so should he eat any of the bread or drink from the cup*" (*I Corinthians 11: 28-32*). He goes on to point out that all of us will be judged by God - but only on matters we have not ourselves straightened out! God's judgment may be through illness or even death (v.30). Clearly a solemn time.

Another practice Jesus urged on his disciples during that supper focused on the Christian's role as servants of one another. He - their 'Master and Teacher' - kneeled down and washed their feet (*John 13:1-17*). He told them: "*If I then your Master and Teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet, too. For I have set you an example in order that you may do what I have done to you*" (*vv.14-15*).

We do this literally - but like the festival of *Unleavened Bread* it is a symbol, a reminder, of the kind of life we are to live as followers of Christ throughout the year.

[If you have any queries about these Spring Festivals and their observance please don't hesitate to get in touch] [ital]

request the free articles:
Passover - a Double Celebration
Passover - Is It for Christians?