

# outreach

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

PO Box 2525  
LINCOLN  
LN5 7PF  
England

*e-mail:* coguk@aol.com  
*web-site:* www.cgom.org  
*Editor:* James McBride

*Regd Charity No 283358*

**May/June  
2010**

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## **GOD—do you need Him?**

Around the world, and for literally billions of us, our title question is a no-brainer. He has a variety of profiles, but however he is perceived—whether Hindu or Muslim or Jewish or Christian—the answer is *‘of course I need Him’*.

Step into our Western world, however, and often it’s a different story. Millions go about life without a thought of the need for a divine Being in their life, much less a relationship with Him. And still less is there a concept of in some way causing Him offence.

That, indeed—not causing Him offence—is at the heart of all mankind’s troubles. In the Scriptures such offence is labelled *sin*. And because sin separates us from the Father and all that is good for us *‘... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [ie suppress] the truth in unrighteousness’* (Romans 1:18). *‘Wrath of God’*—that is, the inevitable consequence of harmful behaviour.

### **Sin Defined**

Most of us have a fair perception of right and wrong. It’s instinctive, rooted in self-preservation. We understand, for example, that it’s wrong to kill a fellow human, to lie, or to steal. Even though all too often we suppress such truth for our own benefit.

But society dulls our conscience!

Egged on by dark forces, all our institutions are geared to humanly devised solutions—ignoring the pattern for a good society outlined by our Creator. The effect? *Chaos*, personal and national.

### **Cause and Effect**

The rising tide of physical and mental distress is the natural consequence of other behaviour patterns (sins) that are now widely accepted as ‘normal’: serial marriage and cohabitation, adultery, sexual deviation, greed and avarice to name but a few. The adverse effects include fractured families, depression, sexually transmitted diseases and other health problems, addictions, debt and bankruptcy, religious confusion.

We walk around suffering all kinds of adversity not realizing much of it results from *sin* - our own and the sins of others. The only exit, the only cure, is to turn to the practical path appointed by the Creator—as outlined in the Christian Scriptures. (As our Creator He knows what’s best!)

What’s popularly known—and despised—as ‘God’s Laws’ is in fact *instruction*—His guidance as to how to live a successful life, ways to avoid much of life’s problems.

### **Divine Remedy**

Those in a faithful relationship with the Father—available only through Jesus—no longer carry a burden of sin, but have *‘...a conscience void of offence cont’d p.4*

## Parallel Worlds

Commitment to the Christian way of life catapults believers into conflict with the values embraced by 'the world'. Not at all surprising, for didn't Jesus say '*...in the world you will have adversity*'. Follow him—and life won't be the same again!

When God's Word implodes in our spirit it is all change. How we speak and behave and dress, what we eat (and how), how we relate to family and colleagues and neighbours changes. Even the days we set aside for worship and fellowship stir conflict—especially with family and perhaps former religious friends.

The apostle Paul puts it like this to Christians in Colosse:

*...Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry; for which things' sake comes the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience; in the which you also walked aforetime, when you lived in these things. But now put you also away all these; anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him*

Our dilemma is summed up by Jesus: '*...My kingdom is not of this world*' (John 18:36). In his prayer to the Father the night prior to Passover he stated: '*...I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are*' (John 17:11). And added: '*...they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil*' (v.15).

We inhabit parallel worlds. In one, the laws of the Kingdom apply (as summarized by Paul, above). Yet we are very much of this world and largely beholden to its institutions—though enabled to fully cope with adversity through divine grace, for '*...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*' (Romans 8:28).

Pay your taxes, said Jesus (Matthew 22:17-21). Obey

the laws of the land, wrote Paul (Romans 13:1-7). Use the law to your advantage, he adds by his example (Acts 25:11), be financially wise, attend weddings (as did Jesus at Cana).

### Secular Involvement

The Scriptures also provide a catalogue of righteous men and women who served in secular governance. Joseph and Moses in Pharaoh's Court, for example, Nehemiah in Persia under Cyrus and Darius. Or Daniel—a 'prime minister' in Babylon and Persia. Job, too, is believed to have had an important role in secular authority—'*...the greatest of all the men of the east*' (Job 1:3).

The Anglo-Saxon model of 'representative democracy' allows—at least for now!—Christians locally and nationally to potentially influence (or express an opinion on) key issues. Our 'world view' based as it must be on the Christian Scriptures, however, is too often contrary to that of 'the world'. But that should not hinder our taking a stand by peaceful and legal means and '*...with a conscience void of offence towards God*'—for example through a vote.

Locally, we can exercise a godly influence—as, for example on a school board or a parish council. The maxim 'It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing for evil to triumph' (*Edmund Burke*) applies to every one of us! It echoes King Solomon: '*... If you forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;*

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*If you say, Behold, we knew it not; does not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keeps your soul, does not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*' (Proverbs 24:11-12). Sounds like an invite to do jury service, or to be a faithful witness!

In fact, there is no great divide between God's requirement upon Israel in regard to our 'living in the world' and His obligations for Christians today.

The Word of God instills in us the wisdom the world lacks. When he had explained to the Twelve the 'parable of the sower' (Luke 8), Jesus added: '*...When any one lights a lamp, he does not cover it with a vessel or hide it under a couch; he puts it on a lamp-stand, that people who enter the room may see the light.*' In other words, when we know God's ways—whether secular or spiritual—it's our responsibility to share it in a practical way. Ω

**Read:  
Are the Ten Commandments 'Religious'?**

## JESUS: LORD OF THE SABBATH

Leslie A Turvey (from *LifeLines*)

On the seventh day God created a day of rest and rejuvenation for you and me. And since he created it, he is also supreme in authority over it.

God saw everything that he had made and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day....And on the seventh day God... rested from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it. (Genesis 1:31-2:3).

Once again we recall the God who made everything, the God who rested on the seventh day, and sanctified it, was the one we call Jesus Christ. He verified this when he told the pharisees, and us, the sabbath was made for man, and not the other way around. "Therefore," said Jesus, "the son of man is Lord also of the sabbath (Mark 2:27-28)."

Jesus said the sabbath was made (Mark 2:27). It didn't just happen. And it was made for a purpose. Throughout the bible, with perhaps one or two exceptions, the sabbath connotes rest, hearkening back to God's rest on the seventh day of creation.

So the first purpose of the sabbath day is to be a weekly reminder of creation. Ben Zion Bokser wrote, "The sabbath celebrates God's work as Creator. It opens our hearts to the vision of the world as the theatre of God's creative endeavours. And it sensitizes us to the knowledge of our own privilege as participants in the stupendous drama of God's creative work unfolding itself in the world." *Wow!*

When God, the one we know as Jesus Christ, rested, he gave us the example that we must rest too. He emphasized this when he commanded, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work therein (Leviticus 23:3)."

Although many people believe sabbath-keeping is a burden, if Jesus were here today he would likely ask, "Since when is resting a burden?" When the Israelites were rescued from Egypt after centuries of working seven days a week from sunrise to sunset, they complained of many things, but stopping work one day in seven wasn't one of them.

Another command from Jesus is we are to keep the

sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8). The word holy carries with it the connotation of health. So the day God set aside for rest was made for the health of mankind. If we properly observe God's holy sabbath we will rest our bodies from daily labour, rest our minds from the multitude of decisions we need to make each day, and be spiritually rejuvenated by directing ourselves toward the God who made the day sacred for our benefit.

Aside from the benefits derived from observing the sabbath day, it's not up to us to usurp the seventh day for ourselves. Jesus specifically stated, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God (Exodus 20:10)." It was created by him: it belongs to him.

If we, as a nation, kept God's sabbath holy, industry would shut down for twenty-four hours, all trade and commerce would come to a standstill, and families would spend the time together, rather than running off every which way to pursue their own interests. Sabbath visits to Grandma's home would become popular again.

But God's sabbath is not only for rest. Leviticus 23:3 states, "The seventh day is...a holy convocation; you

shall do no work therein." The Hebrew for a holy convocation means a sacred public meeting. Meeting together for worship is a requisite for everyone. By keeping God's weekly sabbath holy on a national scale, no one would have the excuse "I have

to work that day." All the excuses would be taken away.

In his book, *The Almost Forgotten Day*, Mark Finley wrote, "God's seventh-day Sabbath is a dynamic symbol of loyalty to, and freedom in, Jesus Christ. It commemorates the fact of creation. He made us.... We are His. In an age of evolution, the Sabbath calls us to our roots. It speaks eloquently of our heritage."

On the seventh day of creation God rested, and made the day holy, not for himself but for mankind. But because he created the sabbath, and we call him Lord, the one we know as Jesus Christ, is also the Lord – supreme in authority – of the sabbath.

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**For further articles on 'the Sabbath Question' you are invited to request the May/June issue of *New Horizons* magazine also available on-line at [www.cgom.org](http://www.cgom.org)**

For millennia the seventh day—our Saturday—has been designated by God as a day to remember Him as the Creator of all things, and as a day of rest and spiritual refreshment. for all mankind. No-one has the authority to change the day.

*You are invited to contact us for more information*

## Times Like This...

Not all humans attain to the proverbial 'three score years and ten'. Babies die. Illness or accident strikes us down. Millions starve, or are killed or maimed or bereaved in wars. Elderly lose their faculties. Such have afflicted mankind since the first rebellion, the first murder. And Christians are not exempt.

There have, over the millennia, been bad times and good times: times of plenty, times of adversity. Wars, economic distress, famine, plagues, civil unrest—there's '...nothing new under the sun'.

So there's a strong temptation for Christians to view our current national and indeed worldwide problems as a clear 'sign of the times'. Rumours of wars and real hot wars crowd the headlines. Famines, too, and disease epidemics. Economists are even now, following the financial chaos of the last couple of years, predicting a 'double-dip' recession. In the natural world there's the shifting pattern of the climate. Then all those earthquakes and tsunamis, torrential rains and flooding, devastating tornadoes, and serious water shortages.

It's enough to drive anyone to assume 'it must be the end of the world'!

Such an awesome moment lurks in the lore of every major faith. And for Bible believers no less so. Jesus himself—for example in Matthew 24—made clear that such a time will come, and outlined the 'end-time scenario'. So, however many times it begins, falsely, to look like 'the end'—it's vital that we don't fall asleep spiritually. The 'wolf' will eventually and certainly visit!

### Be Prepared

Christians are not immune to the challenges facing our world. Wrote the apostle Paul: '...we know that the whole of Creation is groaning together in the pains of childbirth until this hour' (Romans 8:22-23). But, says Jesus, when 'the time of the end' does come: '... Be you also ready, for at an hour when you are not expecting Him the Son of Man will come' (Luke 12:40). And Jesus, of course, returns towards the conclusion of the most traumatic period of man's existence—Matthew 24 again.

So—how do Christians prepare?

- **primarily**, '...Test yourselves to discover whether you are true believers: put your own selves under examination' (II Corinthians 13:5), says Paul. Jesus warned: '...Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father' (Matthew 7:21)

## ...Need God?...cont'd from p.1

toward God, and toward men' (Acts 24:16). They may—do—sin, but because of that relationship they don't carry guilt. They are forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus the Saviour. With our personal exercise of choice and with divine support '...sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace' (Romans 6:14).

Only by means of a personal relationship with the one and only God does life make sense. *Yes, we need Him—all of us!* Ω

### Festivals 2010

Trumpets	September 9
Atonement	September 18
Tabernacles	September 23-29
Eighth Day	September 30

[Discover this from your Bible—and we can help with counsel and literature]

- **be diligent to know the Scriptures**, for '... many deceivers are entered into the world ... Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought (II John vv.7-8)
- **strive to imitate the character of Jesus**; study his life as portrayed in the Scriptures, and apply the lessons personally
- **be diligent in prayer**; it is a channel by which we receive God's grace to help us in adversity, and to conquer our weaknesses
- **maintain contact with like-minded believers**; commit to associate with a church of God and when possible attend in person (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- **maintain a vision of God's Kingdom**; hold fast to our faith until the end and we will be rewarded with abundant and unending life in the presence of our Saviour and our God

*His divine power has given us all things that are needful for life and godliness, through our knowledge of Him who has appealed to us by His own glorious perfections. It is by means of these that He has granted us His precious and wondrous promises, in order that through them you may, one and all, become sharers in the very nature of God, having completely escaped the corruption which exists in the world through earthly cravings (II Peter 1:3-4) Ω*

Request (or view on-line) the articles  
**God's Grand Design  
After the Resurrection**