

outreach

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Gospel Focus

Jerusalem in the 30sAD buzzed with excitement as thousands of Jews—including numerous priests and Pharisees—were persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah and the long-promised Saviour.

They responded to the simple message that despite their past commitment to Judaism yet they each needed to personally understand that they had crucified that same Saviour. They experienced guilt and shame—and a burning sense of their sinfulness and need of forgiveness. Distraught, they asked Peter what they should do.

The apostle pulled no punches, explaining that they needed a radical change of heart—to repent. Mere outward observance of ordinances, however important, isn't enough. Paul warns Timothy of those '*...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*' (II Timothy 3:5). The outward structure (Sabbath, holy days *etc*) is there but they lacked the empowering of the indwelling Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Way of Death

Sin separates us from the Deity. It has blighted mankind and all our works since we first rejected God's way in favour of our own devices. Unless dealt with our destiny is that we crumble into dust. Only by heartfelt repentance, acknowledgement of the sacrifice of Jesus and commitment to his revealed way is reconciliation possible.

Feeling sorry for yourself isn't repentance! Writes Paul: '*... godly*

sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, a repentance not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world finally produces death' (II Corinthians 7:10).

Two millennia of the distortion of this good news of salvation has dulled the terrible nature of Calvary. But our alienation from God is no less complete than with Peter's hearers. Nor the urgent need for repentance—for sin is no less sinful today!

The Difference

Peter's focus in that first outreach sermon was on what makes a difference—the Holy Spirit: '*..."Repent," replied Peter, "and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, with a view to the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*' (Acts 2:38).

Whether a person's life is 'good' or 'bad' is *not* the bench-mark for salvation—the planet is peopled by millions of both! The indwelling Spirit alone is the key: '*...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*' (Romans 8:9).

The Spirit imparts new (spiritual) life to us, witnessing to us that we are (like the child in the womb) in process of a new birth: '*...The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*' (v.16). Such have the constant awareness that they are the Almighty's 'sons and daughters', that they are children of the Father (II Corinthians 6:18).

Action

The good news that our sin can be forgiven is available to all. Respond

'Salvation' is the opportunity to become part of the Family of God, His everlasting spirit Kingdom

to God's invitation and the rewards are immeasurable—an eternity working in harmony with our Saviour—heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ—in the outworking of the Father's plan. It's a plan veiled from the world but revealed to us through God's Spirit:

'...Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God' (I Corinthians 2:9-11)

The apostle adds *'...the mystery having been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but now was revealed to His saints'* (Colossians 1:26).

And to the brethren in Colosse, he adds: *'...of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance'* (Colossians 3:24). And not only heirs of a mere temporal estate but *'...those being called might receive the promise of the everlasting inheritance'* (Hebrews 9:15).

By a quirk of history or through hard graft or by hook or crook individuals build vast estates to pass on to their progeny. But as history reveals—they in their turn crumble to dust or pass from the family. *Our* inheritance is immeasurably different. It is *'...an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for you'* (I Peter 1:4).

As children of the Father true believers are assured of a permanent inheritance stretching through the endless millennia ahead. As notes the apostle, we are now being prepared for the immensity of this incredible endless future: *'...giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit [capable] for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light'* (Colossians 1:12). It is a process of tender supervision by a loving Father: *'... Have you forgotten the encouraging words which God speaks to you as his children? "My child, pay attention when the Lord corrects you, and do not be discouraged when he rebukes you. Because the Lord corrects everyone he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a child." Endure what you suffer as being a father's punishment; your suffering shows that God is treating you as his children'* (Hebrews 12:5-7).

This is the plan—and you can have a role! *Will you take on the challenge?* **Ω**

The Amalek Factor

Family feuds often fester for generations. One recorded in the Bible lasted a thousand years—and by some accounts continues to this day. Its cause was the jealousy incurred by the action of a son of Isaac. Esau (Edom) despised his birthright inheritance, selling it to his brother Jacob for a meal to satisfy his momentary hunger (Hebrews 12:16).

The moment came in the divine plan when the Creator looked for someone He would trust. Abraham was selected and his mettle proven. To him was allotted the promise of a perpetual kingdom as His representative nation, to be passed on through his son Isaac and his descendants as a blessing to the entire world.

Initially intent on killing Jacob, after twenty years Esau was reconciled with his twin brother. But not so Esau's illegitimate grandson, Amalek (Genesis 36:12), who came to be leader [Agag] of a powerful nation (the 'Amalekites'). He stirred the feud—and incurred a devastating judgment from God stretching down the centuries. God would never cease to oppose him. Subsequent history vindicated God's choice of Jacob.

Fast forward to the time of the deliverance of that chosen nation, Israel, from oppression in Egypt. The nation whose territory they had to traverse, Amalek, didn't like it and went to war with Israel. They fought dirty: *'...Remember what the Amalekites did to you as you were coming from Egypt. They had no fear of God, and so they attacked you from the rear when you were tired and exhausted, and killed all who were straggling behind'* (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). The LORD adds: *'...Therefore ...you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget it'* (v.19).

Despite their tactics Amalek, with God's help, were defeated (Exodus 17). But the feud didn't end there: *'...the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'* (v.16). They were later defeated by Gideon (Judges 6-7), by King Saul (I Samuel 14-15), and by David (I Samuel 27:8-9 and *ch* 30).

End of story? *No*—for a whole book of the Bible focuses on this same people, the Amalekites, four centuries later in the 5th century BC. The hero is the (Jewish) Queen Esther, the villain is Haman the Agagite. The account is embedded in the book of Esther. The saga of this ancient feud between Jacob and Esau comes to a head here, for Haman—raised by the King to be 'prime minister'—is in fact the hereditary heir of the now weakened Amalekite kingdom. (Agag is a title, like Pharaoh.)

Haman's purpose was *'...to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus'* (ch 3:6). Several times he is called *'...the enemy of the Jews'*. In the end Israel prevailed and Amalek was quashed. The feud has echoes in the group of nations confederate against Israel as recorded in Psalm 83—considered by many to be a prophecy **cont'd p.4**

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

The apostle is, to say the least, controversial. He is loved—and hated. A man with incredible insight into the Scriptures. Yet, mistakenly, said to be a man who ‘does away’ with the Old Testament Law. His companion apostle Peter was well aware that he was difficult: ‘... as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written to you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction’ (II Peter 3:15-16).

Even a superficial student of his writings can’t help but note that he has little to say about the observances of today’s Christianity. No Christmas. No Easter. No saints days. And, horror of horrors—no Sunday worship.

Observances today are mere child’s play: Santas, presents, eggs, rabbits—no substance, little relevance to reality. They are not even ‘*the milk of the Word*’.

Anticipating the path Christianity was taking, Jude warns us to ‘...earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints’ (v.3). Or as Jesus concludes his revelation: ‘Don’t add to the Scriptures and don’t take anything away’ (Revelation 22:18-19).

So what did Paul *do*? We find him diligently week-by-week continuing to worship and preach on the seventh-day Sabbath—‘...the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath...And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God (Acts 13:41-44).

But that’s not the whole story, for he is recorded as promoting the Biblical festivals (*see* Leviticus 23). Take, for example, the Gentile Corinthian church. He commends their observance of ‘Passover’—the seven day spring festival known as ‘*Unleavened Bread*’. Then we find him observing Pentecost: ‘...he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost’ (Acts 20:16). The *Day of Atonement*, too—even though he was at sea (Acts 27:9)!

The *Outreach Ministries* continue to observe all these days. We invite our readers to explore the Scriptures concerning them. We are happy to address any questions you may have. 

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Letter from England

Any public speaker today—in or out of the pulpit—treads on egg-shells. carefully choosing their words lest some poor soul takes offence. Complainants are amply supported by perverse laws and then run off to claim compensation or to make thuggish comments on the social media. Clearly all who address the public should present a strong case—but with courtesy and with sensitivity towards their audience. It’s almost a decade since blasphemy law was repealed in the UK, having been in place for four centuries. (Only Ireland has recently introduced such laws.)

‘Free speech’ allows us (while it lasts!) to express often controversial views—and for us the proclamation of the Gospel, though recent legislation could lead, indeed has done, to prosecution for the expression of Bible teachings.

We are each free to decide on our view of the existence or otherwise of a Creator God; though—given that overwhelmingly mankind believes in a deity—a degree of respect would be expected from dissenters.

Those who have concluded that there is no God are branded in the Bible as foolish (Psalm 53:1). It is the same mentality that shows ignorance of how God is presented in the Christian Scriptures—certainly not ‘utterly evil’, not ‘totally selfish’, not ‘quite clearly a maniac’, not ‘capricious, mean-minded and stupid’ as did one self-confessed atheist recently.

We are, here in the West, free to speak our minds—but for how much longer! God in His Word has revealed the path to temporal and spiritual success, a way all true Christians embrace. It is far from being ‘politically correct’. The apostle Paul’s words to Timothy are appropriate: ‘...I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct’ (I Timothy 2:1-2). Without His protection we are vulnerable.

James

**Pentecost this year is
on June 4th**

False News

President Trump has highlighted the widespread implanting of ‘false news’ reports designed to influence or confuse us. It’s a matter not unfamiliar to Bible students as we wade through the swamp of incomplete information about Bible events.

Claims are made, for example, as to the location of the Ark of the Covenant (in Ethiopia, in Ireland, under the Dome of the Rock). Or Noah’s Ark (Turkey, Syria, Armenia). Maybe—the search goes on.

One Bible location supposedly cemented in place in Bible studies is the mountain from which the LORD set out the Ten Commandments for Israel. *Sinai* is it. Full stop. And much depends on that identification—there are no signposts to confirm! The assumed location determines the route of the Exodus which in turn affects where Israel crossed the Red Sea. The traditional site is at the third century St Catherines monastery in southern Sinai, now a major tourist attraction.

Trouble is, that site doesn’t fit the Bible description, and there have been no artefacts to confirm the location. Hence scepticism and claims that it’s all make-belief—no Exodus, no Commandments, no Ark. But re-draw the route of Israel out of Egypt and a different picture appears, one that perfectly matches the data recorded in the Scriptures—and archaeology.

Rather than heading south in the Sinai peninsula (the triangular area east of Cairo) Moses led them due east along the trade route known (even then) as the *Way of the Red Sea* (Numbers 14:25 *etc.*). They reached what is now the tourist resort of Eilat at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. The shortest route to Canaan their goal was north from there. God had different ideas (Exodus 13:17), and the Pillar headed south: ‘...let them return [turn] and camp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon. You shall camp opposite it, by the sea’ (Exodus 14:2). The route led to a wide beach-head (Nuweiba) about half-way down the coast where they assembled before crossing.

From this point, across the Gulf (about eight miles) is a pathway where the water is much shallower than either side of it, and along it Israel escaped from the Egyptian army, the Pillar guarding their rear. The Egyptians pursued but were overwhelmed by the returning tide. It is along this path that coral-encrusted chariot wheels have been photographed by several expeditions—on both sides of the Gulf.

This is located in northern Saudi Arabia, then called Midian, in an area now fenced off by the Saudis. It is in this area that we find ‘the mountain of God’, Sinai—just as the apostle Paul stated: ‘...mount Sinai in Arabia’ (Galatians 4:25).

However, in such matters we need to be cautious. Salvation is not affected if we get it wrong! 

Amalek...cont’d from p.2

for the end-time.

Again, Amalek/Edom is at its heart, in alliance with those Islamic nations still surrounding modern Israel. Their stated purpose is the same: ‘...They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance’ (v.4). Fifty years after Esther the prophet Malachi records God’s continuing displeasure with the descendants of Esau: ‘... I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom says, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus says the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever’. (ch.1:4).

To this day the territory of ancient Edom is indeed a barren uninhabited wasteland (Google map the area in northern Arabia!), whereas they had, on Jacob’s death, received ‘fatness’ as their inheritance. The nation has moved on, but we can assume its purpose remains unchanged.—as does the LORD’s.

The Amalek factor assures us that God is steadfast in His hatred of evil and will patiently—perhaps over centuries—pursue His perfect purpose. 

Edom Today

There’s speculation as to the present whereabouts of Edom/Esau. Some Bible students pin the label on Turkey, while there’s a much-disputed theory that they are represented by modern Ashkenazi Jewry.

Also aired is the view that Esau’s descendants and related peoples settled in Rome. Talmudic sources call Rome ‘the cruel empire of Edom’. We can hear echoes in the words of the Psalmist (137:7-8): ‘...Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did the day Jerusalem was captured. Remember how they kept saying, "Tear it down to the ground!" . A prophecy of 70AD equating Rome with Babylon? Or, perhaps events future to us?

The EU, founded as the *Treaty of Rome*, has at least a spiritual association with Babylon. Like Babylon—and Esau— it craves absolute power, is corrupt. Its leadership embraces the non-Biblical Roman faith. Indeed a succession of Popes have expressed their desire for Catholicism to be imposed universally in the EU—and beyond. And the EU has an inbred animosity to ‘Israel’.

The ‘spirit of Edom’ suffuses those who rule in the EU, and this is sensed by a large segment of the British and American populace who stand for individual and national freedom. A strand of prophetic interpretation envisages the eventual overthrow of the European dream of empire leading to world domination. The dream, in the meantime, is destined to become a nightmare for all of us. Recall Malachi: ‘...The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever’. 