

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20

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MIDDLE EAST PROPHECY

"This is it" was the voice of 72% polled on the question *Are present events the beginning of Armageddon?* Every time the Middle East flares similar thoughts are expressed by Christians and a variety of prophetic interpreters.

We have, of course, been here before. Ever since the Jews returned to 'the promised land' and in 1948 established the State of Israel - with international approval - there have been 'wars and rumours of war'. But the crises passed, though not without bloodshed.

However, momentous events are predicted to envelop the area. When? At the 'time of the end'. Many Christians - and indeed Jews and Muslims - believe we have now entered that era. There's an expectancy that Messiah will come soon. [Request the article ***The Time of the Signs***]

Caution

Many have undertaken to unveil the end-time prophecies - and all have so far come to grief! Comprehensive scenarios have been developed, time-lines elaborately drawn, dates specified. And we are still waiting. It has been said that we can be sure of a prophetic interpretation only when the event happens! *So caution is essential.*

Thousands have absorbed particular views - the rapture, for instance. Or that the Pope is Antichrist, or that Europe - or America - is 'the Beast', or computers and bar-codes are the mark of the Beast. We need to 'sit loose in the saddle!' (*More important is that we are personally ready to face Jesus Christ.*)

Apart from personal readiness the Bible is almost silent as to what actions we need take. Jesus gave two pointers - and only to the people of God (Christians and Jews) living in Israel: when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies and when the 'abomination of desolation' is set up - then get out to the hills. No word of waiting for

the phone to ring or for an e-mail message from a guru telling you to pack your bags.

Questions

The past eighteen months have been horrendous in what has been called 'God's Land'. Bombers, snipers, suicide bombers, retaliatory strikes. All because of an unanswered question: *Whose land?* Jews are certain - it was deeded by God to them. Arabs claim it, too, and whatever the rhetoric are dedicated to completely expelling the Jews.

Another question: *Is the Jewish claim perpetually valid?* Recall that the northern House of Israel were expelled (for idolatry) - by God - from their share of what undoubtedly is God's Land and were replaced by foreigners. Judah, too, for seventy years anciently was 'ethnically cleansed' - by God and Babylon - from their share of the Land because they neglected the divine Sabbath. And again dispersed in the second century of our era. Can we be sure that the Jews have now returned at God's direction?

Certainly the prophecies are clear that they will at some time be restored to 'Palestine'. Here's Isaiah (ch.11): "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand a second time to recover the remnant of his people.... [He] will assemble the outcasts of Israel [*ie* the 'lost' northern Ten Tribes] and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (vv.11-12). And all this *after* the return of Messiah, Jesus (vv.1-10).

Jacob's Trouble

Many Bible students see the presence of the Jews in 'Palestine' as a fulfilment of this prophecy of Isaiah. Since 1917 when Palestine was delivered from Turkish rule the Jews have been returning - with now over five million in the Land. (Though there have been Jewish settlements and institutions there for centuries.)

In that scenario, the 'European Holocaust' of the 1930s and 1940s was the prophesied 'Great Tribulation' - for the House of Judah. However, the Tribulation - or

It's FILEY!

The *Churches of God, UK* have secured an option on the Evron Centre (behind the Concert Hall) in Filey, Yorkshire, for this year's *Festival of Tabernacles*. The Centre has been newly refurbished and the hire cost is moderate. A final decision will be taken very soon.

For those brethren - from home or overseas - who prefer the intimacy of a small group this is the place to go! Those who have attended here for past festivals (this would be our eighth visit) have thoroughly enjoyed the location and the fellowship. All interested in our work are heartily welcome.

Fuller details will follow soon. See below for dates

Pentecost: Sunday May 19

The autumn holy days this year are:
Trumpets September 7*
Atonement September 16*
Tabernacles September 21*-28
* beginning the previous evening

PROPHETCY... cont'd

'Jacob's Trouble' - is in Scripture limited to approximately three years, concluding with Christ's return. And as *Jacob's Trouble* it includes both Israelite Houses.

The prophet Ezekiel, indeed, sees both Houses *returning together* to the Land: "Surely I will take the children of Israel [both Houses] from among the nations...and bring them into their own land" (*ch 37:21*). It's a time - certainly not current in either House! - when "I will put my Spirit in you...one king [the resurrected King David] shall be over them...not defiled with idols...one nation...God in their midst for evermore".

Indications, then, are that the Jews in company with the modern descendants of 'the House of Israel' (mainly Anglo-saxon nations) face a future time of terror. Ezekiel (*ch 5*) tells us that one third will die in warfare, another third from subsequent disease and famine and the rest taken into slavery - only a relatively few surviving.

Without being dogmatic, it would appear that we can expect a future 'ethnic cleansing' of the Jews from their present land, to be for a short time displaced and dispersed. Despite a core of 'religious Jews', secularism is widespread and many Jews have turned to new age teachings, with widespread disregard of the Sabbath and Torah teaching - lessons unlearned.

Israelis Vexed

Israel is at present being pilloried by the world powers. The UN, Europe, Russia, Arab nations, the USA and Britain scream for their withdrawal from the 'occupied territories'. [How often is land conquered in war returned to the original occupant? All three of Israel's wars were instigated by Arab nations.] All nations, it seems, are intent on stirring anti-Jewish sentiment, with attacks on individual Jews and synagogues spreading in many 'civilised' nations - Germany, France, Belgium, Britain (where there are ten times as many Moslems as Jews!). It's an all too familiar scenario.

All these events fit the predicted end-time pattern. But hold on - we have been here before! *Just be alert, Christian!*

RELATIONSHIPS

Arising from an ad in *The Journal: news of the Churches of God*, we have been asked about our relationship with the 'North West Church of God'. This small independent group, led by Gerald Kirby, parted company from the *Churches of God, UK* at last year's Tabernacles. The group had decided to use one of several proposed alternative calendars for the holy days. It differs from that used by us and by almost all the sabbatarian churches of God. Because of this difference the group decided they could no longer fellowship with *COGUK*.

According to their ad in *The Journal*, they are in process of forming an association of independent churches in parallel to that with which *COGUK* co-operates - ie the *Outreach Ministries*, publishers of *New Horizons*, *Fountain of Life*, *Bible Basics*, etc.

The *Churches of God, UK* in Lincoln will continue to provide support for all individuals interested in the Scriptures, and to co-operate with independent groups. We will of course continue our evangelistic effort in co-operation with the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries*.

If you have not read our article *The Origins of the Calendar* you are invited to request a free copy from any of our addresses. The article is also available by e-mail in .pdf format

CGOM/COGUK

The *Churches of God, UK (COGUK)* is an 'umbrella' organization which co-ordinates those independent local assemblies and individuals in our tradition who wish to work together in the furtherance of the Gospel. As with the *Outreach Ministries (CGOM)*, we are not a 'church denomination'. We are, however, more than a 'service organization'.

Within the UK we encourage co-operation by these groups and by individual supporters of *COGUK* - in outreach projects and in joint meetings (as for the Festivals). From Lincoln we distribute various outreach publications and respond to readers' queries. And on request we direct enquirers to associated local assemblies. But *COGUK* does not have 'control' in any form over these assemblies; they are independent, autonomous - each with its own programme and structure. All our activities are financed solely by the freewill offerings of those who support our aims and purpose.

Although we are independent of the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* with which we associate, we are in accord with their structure, beliefs and purpose. *COGUK* also serves on their Committees and contributes to the Conference decision-making.

Request a copy of the *COGUK Statement of Beliefs*

www.cgom.org

We recommend that those readers who are hooked up to the internet (or if you have access through a library etc) visit our web-site. It is in process of constant updating, with new features being added to inform and help with your Bible questions and your growth in the faith. Add the site to your 'favourites' for quick access!