

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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providing
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information and
Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

representing



New Truth...*the search*

In each of us there's at least a glimmer of a desire to learn something new. The apostle Paul met this when he visited Athens: '*...More than anything else the people of Athens and the foreigners living there loved to hear and to talk about anything new*' (Acts 17:21 CEV).

No-one, surely, would claim they 'know it all'. That's true in any field of human endeavour - in science, in philosophy, in economics. And certainly religion should not be excluded, though many Christian sects do indeed believe they have all that needs to be known, and their teachings are thus set in stone. Curiosity may have 'killed the cat', but it also drives human progress.

Jude, of course, wrote that we should '*... earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints*' (v.3). Paul, to Timothy, confirms this view: '*...the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*' (II Timothy 2:2). Wise King Solomon wrote: '*... Everything that happens has happened before; nothing is new, nothing under the sun*' (Ecclesiastes 1:9 CEV). Jesus, too: '*...teach all nations ...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*' (Matthew 28:19-20).

Those statements have been used by some to cap the knowledge they already have. 'What I now believe says it all'.

But consider. Does your church denomination teach *Sunday* church observance? Or, for that matter, *Christmas* as the birthday of Jesus? Now how does that square with what Jude and Paul told their hearers?

Just a little bit of research - try most encyclopaedias - will make clear that those two stalwarts of the faith knew nothing of their observance. Surely that means those beliefs are not apostolic teaching. Therefore should you not follow Peter's advice to '*... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*' (II Peter 3:18)?

The implication of the apostles' words are that all our 'knowledge' must be in harmony with what they taught - nothing more, nothing less. Another apostle, John, wrote: '*...I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book*' (Revelation 22:18-19). This applies to all of the divine revelation.

Over the past two millennia layer upon layer of error has obscured the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. It's a brave - perhaps arrogant - man or woman who claims they have pinned it all down! Yet millions slavishly follow the teachings of one or other - male or female, dead or alive - charismatic leader. They 'go to church' and as they enter check in their mind at the door.

In a sense there is no 'new truth'. Truth *is* there in the Scriptures - somewhere. It is the divine wisdom, the '*pearl of great price*' for which we are to sacrifice all.

We are to diligently read the Scriptures - and apply them to our daily life. We are to be people who '*...have ears to hear*' - are attentive to what Jesus taught personally and through his apostles. We are urged to '*...prove*

all things; hold fast that which is good' (I Thessalonians 5:21).

Truth

Down the centuries Christian thinkers have uncovered strands of truth from the Scriptures. But - as in science - always that 'new truth' is open to scrutiny. New light from various disciplines - archaeology, philology, astronomy *etc* - modifies previous certitudes.

Without God's Spirit man (the 'natural' man) is unable to 'see' - understand - spiritual truths. But with the Spirit influencing us, our mind is open to them, however hazily (I Corinthians 2:12-14). When we accept an aspect of God's Word that will open a door to further understanding. Reject a 'new (to us) truth' and we stay in the dark. (A parallel to this is the growth of scientific knowledge.)

Only the original Apostles and prophets were fully and perfectly inspired. Men have since arisen who shed light on buried truth - but always their teaching is open to scrutiny and must not be paralleled with The Twelve and Paul. To do so blinds us to the possibility of 'new truth', and growth in the '*grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*'. 

Tradition

'Tradition'. It's comforting to lie back on hundreds or thousands of years of a traditional belief. It avoids brain fog! No need to rummage through ancient archives or search musty encyclopaedias. And when a particular belief is presented to us week after week - well, who's to query it - especially if it comes from a trusted professional.

An example is the age-old belief that the sun revolves round the earth - as propagated for centuries by the Vatican 'professionals', the clergy. Religion - perhaps surprisingly - often gets between us and truth. Take what most Christians accept as their weekly 'holy day' - Sunday. Not so, of course, as any honest Bible dictionary will confirm. Just tradition.

[If you aren't convinced then request our booklet *Why Do You Observe Sunday?*]

The same applies to the observance of the 'Christian' festivals: Easter, Christmas, saints days *etc*. It is easy to prove that Jesus had - has! - nothing to do with them. They are, simply, tradition - practices that were absorbed by the church from their non-Christian neighbours centuries after the words of Jude: '*...earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints*' (v.3). 'New truth' ceased with the demise of the apostles.

A State Is Born

Leaders of the twenty-seven nations that now form the European Union voluntarily handed over, October 18, their national sovereignty to form a new 'united' states of Europe. (It has yet to be ratified by the national Parliaments.)

The new State will have its own President and its own Foreign Ministry and Diplomatic Service with a view to central control of foreign policy. A 'nation' in all but name. To comfort the likes of reluctant Britain the notion of a common National Anthem and a National Flag was shelved - though these are already widely in use. Otherwise no aspect of policy is forever ruled out of the central control of the Commission.

Such a union has for centuries been a dream of the intelligentsia - and of the Vatican, promoters of a 'Holy Roman Empire'. Indeed the Bible depicts such a union of political power and religion to be engineered in the end-time - though with unpleasant consequences for the entire world. Happily for mankind it will be short-lived, overthrown by the return of Jesus the Messiah as King of all kings, and Lord of all lords. Human rule - aided and abetted by Satan - will end and a Golden Age of peace begin. 

Some Christian bodies recognize this challenge. They worship on the seventh-day Sabbath. They avoid Christmas, Easter. They observe the Biblical worship days - called in Leviticus 23 '*the feasts of the LORD*' and '*My feasts*'.

But even among some of these bodies Biblically unsubstantiated tradition spreads its tentacles. Especially, this applies in a tightly-structured group. Too often the members are abjectly submissive to the leadership's teaching. Too bad if it is error.

Often the unbiblical traditions are given birth by a charismatic leader. Even long after his or her death the traditions persist. Most, thankfully, are innocuous - they don't affect our salvation, though they may obscure a clearer understanding of the Scriptures.

Some such beliefs often cluster around a prophetic interpretation for which the Biblical evidence is at best tenuous. However, for some brethren they take on the aura of 'Bible truth' and the followers simply accept it as 'gospel'. It can lead to great disappointment or to unwise action!

Paul, however insists that we - all the brethren and not just 'clergy' - '*...prove all things; hold fast that which is good*' (I Thessalonians 5:21). We must not 'leave our brains at the door' as we enter the church, but be careful to follow Paul's instruction. 

The Feast of Tabernacles 2007

in Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

Several dozen brethren gathered at the Georgian Peaks Ski Club in the beautiful Blue Mountains at Collingwood, Ontario, Canada for a wonderful 2007 *Feast of Tabernacles*. Situated along the South East shores of Georgian Bay off Eastern Lake Huron, and bounded to the South by the parallel Blue Mountains, it is rich in scenery, orchards, fishing, historic sites, and its unique ski area. It offers many other opportunities of interest to add to the Feast experience.

The leadership of Len Labunetz as Festival Coordinator and the support of the Toronto congregation of the Canadian Church of God, and other attendees, made this Feast, as so many others in the past - and hopefully into the future - a truly memorable Feast site. The overall emphasis on rehearsing the purpose, teaching, and fellowship of the *Feast of Tabernacles* made it a truly uplifting spiritual experience, rather than just a vacation time of escape from the ordinary.

The 15 messages (sermons, sermonettes, Bible Studies) were given by John Barbaro, Donald Dow, Lawrence Gregory, Jeff Henderson, John Shavers and Harold Wright. Song leading was by Larry Arnborg, Jeff Henderson, Lawrence Gregory and Sheila Merchant. Piano accompaniment was by Sidney Merchant and Bob Hussey. Special music was by Sidney and Sheila Merchant. The Sound system and recording was by Rod Theriault. A special thanks to Melanie Barbaro along with her husband John and Donald Dow for keeping the daily food and coffee service available. Just about everyone contributed in some way with food, fun, fellowship, singing, offerings *etc*, making it a really great *Feast of Tabernacles*.

You are cordially invited to seriously plan on attending the 2008 Feast of Tabernacles in Collingwood, Canada. For information contact Len Labunetz at 1-416-781-9215, or Donald Dow at 1-905-874-0695.

Lawrence Gregory

in San Antonio, Texas...

Warm South Texas weather greeted all those attending the Feast in San Antonio this year. As the brethren made their way to the Elks Lodge for registration and a catered "Get Acquainted" reception you could hear the excitement from the children finding their friends and happy greetings between the brethren when a familiar face was spotted in the crowd. The San Antonio Festival family always gives you the feeling of coming home to a family reunion.

Holy Day services began with the San Antonio Worship Team singing contemporary songs that they had been working on all year to set the tone of the Feast for us. Thanks go out to the wonderful job that they did throughout the whole

feast. Thanks also go to Martha Chavez who prepared the words of the songs on overhead so that we could all join in and sing with the Worship Team in rejoicing before our Lord each morning.

The children always play a big part at the Feast in San Antonio with scripture readings and prayers at the beginning of each service. It is always a wonderful sight to see our youth willing to take part in services and to joyfully participate in the Youth Choir that performed three times during the Feast singing uplifting contemporary songs under the direction of Ann Van Westen of Tyler, Texas.

Each day during the Feast we heard very inspiring messages brought to us by Julian Cruz, Michael Cruz, Jim Harding and Robert Graves. We heard messages about the White Throne Judgment, Being Thankful in all Situations, How to Stop Following and Become a Leader, The Kingdom of God Over Time and Praising God Through the Music, to name a few.

Each evening we were entertained by various activities and meals. One of the most treasured is to hear "INKA GOLD", a unique Andean musical group playing both traditional Andean and modern music on their interesting array of traditional Andean instruments. This group performs daily on the River Walk in San Antonio for visitors and we were quite blessed to have them take time out of their busy schedule to come perform for us.

Friday evening we all gathered at the facility to sing songs of praise to welcome in the Sabbath. Afterward *cont'd p.5*

Year by year the *Festival of Tabernacles* is embraced by increasing numbers of believers - this year, for example, some seven thousand (under the auspices of the International Christian Embassy) observed it in Jerusalem. They paraded through the city and were greeted by the Prime Minister of Israel and other Government ministers.

Many sabbatarian Churches of God have 'kept the Feast' for over fifty years in various locations around the world. Observance is a response to God's call to remember our frail and temporary humanity by dwelling for seven days in temporary dwellings and in company with our brethren. Tabernacles has, too, important prophetic significance.

The LORD calls *Tabernacles* a 'holy convocation' - a time to assemble for worship, fellowship and Bible teaching, and at a fixed time of year in the autumn.

The attached reports are from two CGOM sites

Danger...ghoulish glee. It's now the second largest annual celebration, pushing Easter into third. In the USA there's a \$2.5 billion spend and a projected £140 million in the UK. Ghouls, witches, horror masks - all 'a bit of fun'. It's the night that spirits, supposedly, walk the earth. That's *Hallowe'en*. It's the night - 31st October - that Satan has im-

planted as a fun time especially for impressionable children. An ensnarement to make out he's a nice kind of guy (II Corinthians 11:15). In reality he is the great Deceiver who has ensnared mankind and plans to one day demand universal worship. Not a day, surely, for Christian celebration!

Check our website for a free **Hallowe'en** booklet

24...22...20...17?

Puzzled? Well those are the suggested cut-off ages (currently 24 weeks) for abortions in the United Kingdom. Is the foetus viable? Can he or she feel pain? Is there 'good reason'? Such are the criteria used to end a budding life - perhaps a Beethoven or an Einstein.

Since the Abortion Act of 1967 about six million lives - in the UK - have been ended in this way. (Almost 50 million in the USA) ('This way' in many cases is too horrific to describe.) Of these, only two percent were considered to be life-threatening to the mother, or of serious foetal abnormality. The rest? Mostly aborted because a child would be an inconvenience or 'cause distress'.

This 'State-promoted terrorism of the unborn' is - on the practical level - blindingly short-sighted. That's six million maternal heartaches. That's a huge burden on our health services - for the initial treatment and for the potential long-term health problems (breast cancer, guilt for example). That's a potential six million fewer tax-payers. (Who needs immigrants!)

'First...do no harm'

Not, in all the present public discussion at Government level, is the moral dimension considered. Such mass slaughter slowly degrades - both those who take part in the process and the populace as a whole. Dis-membered arms, legs and torsos cast into a bowl take their toll on the human psyche.

Such procedures fly in the face of the very purpose for which our species was created. How much more humane - and sane - are the words of Israel's King David: '*...I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt. Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below [the womb], but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do*' (Psalm 139:14-16 CEV).

We can empathize with those 'maidens in distress' who for whatever reason have an unwanted pregnancy. It is for families and for Government to devise means to cope - without depriving potential sons and daughters of God of their eternal inheritance. Ω

Annual Festivals 2008

Lord's Supper:	evening of April 18
Unleavened Bread:	April 20-26
Pentecost:	June 8
Trumpets:	September 30
Atonement:	October 9
Tabernacles:	October 14-20
Eighth Day:	October 21

Q and A

A reader asks: *Why do you call the Last Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles 'the Eighth Day'?*

The term 'eighth day' derives from the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Nehemiah. The remnant of Judah, returned from Babylon, determined to observe what elsewhere in the Torah is called the *Feast of Tabernacles* (eg Leviticus 23:34). They were to 'dwell in booths' (Heb. *succoth*, tabernacles, temporary shelters) for the seven days of the feast: '*...Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he [Ezra] read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days* (Nehemiah 8:18).

The festival was a reminder that Israel '*dwelled in booths*' - temporary dwellings - the forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness, after the exodus from Egypt. (There is a much wider symbolism for Christians.) *Tabernacles* was for Israel a commanded assembly, when all the men were to go to Jerusalem for its observance. There they '*... went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim*' (v. 16).

There was, however, another - closing - festival. It followed immediately *Tabernacles* ended - the very next day, and in Leviticus, Numbers and Nehemiah it is called only by '*the eighth day*'. It followed what Ezra termed '*the last day*' of *Tabernacles* (v.18). In the Gospel of John it's recorded that Jesus '*...on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water*' (John 7:37-38). It is perhaps the most significant day of *Tabernacles*.

We thus use the term '*eighth day*' (Heb *shem-ee-nee*) to distinguish it from the last day of the seven-days of *Tabernacles*. It has a wholly different symbolic significance. Note that some churches confound these two days - the 'last day' of *Tabernacles* and the '*eighth day*' - which is a separate festival, and a holy day during which normal business ceases.

An article which further explores the meaning of the eighth day is available on request. Ask also for the article: **Tabernacles: mankind in the flesh.** Ω

FINANCES (COGUK) - Sept/Oct 2007
INCOME.... £812 OUTGOINGS... £482

Waiting for the Kingdom?

The 'Kingdom of God' is perceived by many Christians as the time, yet future, when Jesus Christ returns to take the reins of all human government for a thousand years - the 'Millennium'. And indeed that momentous - and joyous - event is guaranteed. But there is, as with so many aspects of Scripture, much more.

Many leaders of the early church recognized that the 'week' was prophetic. To date there have been about six thousand years of recorded history. Records fizzle out before that. The millennial reign of Jesus is pictured by the seventh-day Sabbath. In other words, human history is, in the hands of God, limited. Human rule - grabbed by sinful man from the benign hand of his Creator - will end in His good time, to be followed by a 'sabbath rest' of peace under His direct control.

At that time the Kingdom of God will reign supreme over the entire planet: *'...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea'* (Isaiah 9:11). Certainly not now!

This reign of Messiah, then, is the reign of the Kingdom of God on earth. The 'Kingdom' is not material but spiritual. It is eternal: *'...Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And your dominion endures throughout all generations'* (Psalm 145:13). The Kingdom is *'...from everlasting even to everlasting'* (I Chronicles 16:36) - not limited to a mere thousand years!

The Kingdom of God is in effect the Family of God. The apostle Paul tells us: *'...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption'* (I Corinthians 15:50). God, of course, is Spirit (John 4:24). Having temporarily relinquished his divinity Jesus is again Spirit (Philippians 2:6-11). At this moment, then, the Father and Jesus are the sole members of this everlasting Kingdom, this spirit Family. *But not for long.*

A Growing Family

Since the resurrection of Jesus multitudes of men and women have become part of that divine Family - *'...[I] will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'* (I I Corinthians 6:18). Christians are referred to frequently as God's children, His sons - *'...Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is'* (I John 3:1-2). Note: *'...now are we the sons of God'*.

Christians are thus part of the Kingdom - *now*. We are yet in the 'womb' - begotten, but to be born into the Kingdom at Christ's coming (I Corinthians 15:50-57). Until then the church of God will continue to proclaim the word of the Kingdom to all mankind - *'...then shall the end come'* (Matthew 24:14). It's a message the early church proclaimed fearlessly, as recorded throughout the book of Acts. Paul, in prison in Rome: *'...and when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening'* (Acts 28:23).

When that day of resurrection comes, all God's children will

San Antonio cont'd...

we enjoyed Mexican Paletas (ice cream bars) of various flavors including dill pickle. What a wonderful way to bring in the Sabbath with song and good fellowship.

Other activities we enjoyed were a country western dance put on by the group "Momentum", The "Spikey Mikey Cruz" Magic Show, a Hamburger Fest, and the Family Fun Show hosted by John and Rita Orgel. We had various acts including singing, letters from the Alamo read to us, fiddle music, harmonica playing, a karate demonstration and funny jokes told to us by one of our precious youth. The children also enjoyed special activities such as pony rides, a petting zoo, face painting and Dave and Busters sports arcade where they had a meal and games.

Sunday, September 30th was "Focus on your Family Day". Julian Cruz had placed emphases on the fact that the Feast is a family affair in the Festival brochure. This is the day to spend extra time with your spouse or family and help one another build memories that will last forever. With the Zoo, Sea World, Fiesta Texas, the River Walk, Witte Museum and the Alamo to see in San Antonio those memories were easy to build this day.

At sunset on Wednesday, October 3rd, the beginning of the Last Great Day, we held the service of the Blessing of the Children. Julian explained to us that blessing our children is not just for the ministry but for every parent and for any age child. Parents came forward to bless their children young and old. What a beautiful evening. We were also shown the video, "A Father's Love Letter" which is truly something to see. After this service we enjoyed a Chocolate Fountain with bananas, graham crackers, marshmallows, pretzel sticks, strawberries and cream puffs to swirl in the warm flowing chocolate stream.

Another important part of the Feast that needs mentioning was the outpouring of love when the Elks Lodge told us that they were collecting food donations to make Thanksgiving Baskets for the needy in San Antonio. Over \$600 of food donations were enough to make over ten Thanksgiving Baskets for those in need. The Elks Lodge was very thankful for our donations and would be delivering the baskets during the month of November.

The Last Great Day brought us the Youth Choir's final performance which included audience participation on the songs "He Reigns" and "Victory Chant". After Julian Cruz gave his final sermon of the Feast and with the final songs of "Here I Am, Lord" and "Till We Meet Again" sung, there were few, if any, dry eyes in the audience. Tearful hugs and sad farewells were being heard throughout the facility as once again our Feast had ended.

Grateful thanks to the many "Labor of Love Volunteers", brethren from various church areas who served the brethren throughout the entire Feast. Thanks also go Julian and Ofie Cruz and the San Antonio brethren for their many sacrifices, prayers, planning and sponsoring of this Feast site which is truly blessed by God. We look forward to returning next year for another "Family Reunion". *Hope to see you there.* **Ann Van Westen**

rise from the grave to *'...reign with Christ a thousand years'* (Revelation 20:4) - and eternally. **Ω**