

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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IS THIS THE END?

It's a question now being asked by many Bible Christians. '9/11' it is claimed 'changed the world' and set us on the path to Armageddon. Can we now expect the imminent return of Jesus Christ, as he promised?

Pre-occupying the media is the Iraq debacle. But there's more. Terrorist factions are active worldwide. Africa still bubbles with hate-filled tribal bloodshed. 'Palestine' remains a challenge to peace-makers. Iran, North Korea, India, Pakistan threaten with their nuclear arsenals. Water shortages could spark international wars, as could oil. Then there's pollution, poverty, the AIDS epidemic and other diseases, economic gloom - ad infinitum, it seems. So - is it the end?

Prophecy Unsealed

It's in such conditions of worldwide turmoil that Jesus is predicted to return. That 'second coming' has a cast-iron guarantee - his word. Contrary to some Bible interpretations Jesus will not return to a welcoming world. It will be a time when his teachings will be hi-jacked by false prophets, his true followers few - and persecuted, even martyred.

The recently celebrated *Day of Trumpets* (September 27) depicts the horrors of the years just prior to Christ's coming. As a time check, the 'last trumpet' (I Corinthians 15:52) coincides with the resurrection to immortality of those who 'keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' (Revelation 12:17).

The earlier - six - 'trumpets' are detailed in Revelation 8 and 9. They are the content of the 'seventh seal' of chapter six. As none of the events represented by the trumpets has yet taken place some time remains before 'the end of the age' and Christ's coming. That time, however, may be short. The first four 'seals' point to the spread of false religion, to wars, to disease, famine and mass deaths from natural disasters - events Jesus warned would intensify but which would merely

precede end-time events. It's a snapshot of the twenty-first century, of our age!

Beginning of the End

According to prophecy, the land of Israel will in the end-time become a focus of world attention - as it now does after centuries of obscurity. And not just what happens to the Jews but also to the modern descendants of the Ten Tribes marks the true beginning of the end.

The recent Coalition intervention in Iraq may well have been stirred up by God to punish an evil and oppressive and dangerous tyrant. (Yes - God is still active!) But that doesn't mean He is happy with the Coalition nations. The drain on economic resources and on prestige, the rise of Islamic terrorism, and the realignment of nations may undermine the world's greatest ever superpower. The ongoing moral decay and religious decline of Britain and America is prophesied to bring about their downfall - the 'fifth seal'. See that happen and *then* we are in the end-time! But - 'the end is not yet'.

The end of this age of human misrule, however, is *near*. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is coming with the resurrected saints to put an end to all that is perverse in this world. He will reign as King of all human kings for a thousand years. Wars will cease. Disease and disability will be no more, earth will be returned to its pristine natural purity. Mankind will learn to follow 'the way, the truth and the life' that is portrayed in the life of Jesus.

Festival of Tabernacles:

October 11 - October 17

Eighth Day: October 18

Annual Festival

Thousands of Christians around the world will this month gather to celebrate the annual *Festival of Tabernacles*. It's an event - instituted by God probably in the beginning - that typifies the divine plan including the glorious thousand-year reign of Jesus, the 'millennium'.

Request the free article: *A Message of Hope for the World of Tomorrow* Ω

DO GOD'S WILL

How on earth can we determine what is God's will? Some Christians determine it by what they believe is a personal revelation. Others believe they are gifted to discern spiritual matters. Yet others will find God's will by simply by random selection from a 'promise box' or by allowing their Bible to fall open and then following what the eye lights on. Dangerous!

God does indeed reveal His will for individuals - but often through circumstances. In a sense, He backs us into a corner. Some folk wait for God to tell them when to move house. Why not weigh up the pros and cons - and decide? But always our perception of His will *must conform to Bible principles*.

You are convinced that God wants you to divorce your wife? *Think again* - what does God's recorded Word say? You want to eat pig meat or 'sea food'. Does God say anything about it in the Bible? Someone in church speaks in 'tongues' - with no-one to interpret. God's will? A particular theological argument takes your interest. Again, what say the Scriptures?

What is God's will as to when you formally fellowship with other Christians? False teachers have convinced most of Christendom to observe All Souls, Sunday, Christmas, Easter. Can you find those days in the Bible? No? To observe them and not to observe the days God has given is not doing God's will.

The apostle Paul urges us to "*...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" (Romans 12:2). It is God's Spirit interacting with our human spirit that makes that transformation.

Not least, God's will is indeed found in the Scriptures. Not through a random visit, but by diligent study and application. Examples abound - '*for our learning*' - in how God's people have handled situations, and how God has guided and corrected His people through the ages. The book of *Proverbs*, too, is a treasure-store of divine guidance. It's conveniently divided into thirty-one chapters - one per day.

Be diligent to show yourself approved to God! **Ω**

Garner Ted Armstrong

Some of our readers have been much influenced by the preaching of Ted Armstrong. Sadly, he died September 15, aged 73, in a Tyler, Texas, hospital - from pneumonia complications. We have expressed our regrets to his family.

Of late he was associated with the *Intercontinental Church of God*. The silencing of his powerful radio and television voice - heard around the world for nearly half a century - leaves a hole in the worldwide preaching of the true Biblical message.

If you have access to the internet you might like to request the **Churches of God Newsletter**. It publishes positive and encouraging articles from various Church of God sources. No charge!
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OBSERVE THE FEAST!

Keep the Feast? 'You don't need to do that - it's a physical activity for a physical people and devised by Moses to keep the people' out of mischief! Whatever - the '*Feast of Tabernacles*' certainly was a joyful time for them. And for Jews it still is. What about for Christians?

There is no dispute that the first Christians observed the festivals outlined in Leviticus 23. These 'feasts of the LORD' (not 'of Moses') were an annual celebration. In the first couple of centuries of Christianity the church had not yet imported religious festivals from paganism. No Christmas, no Easter, no Saints Days *etc*. The brethren observed the 'holy convocations' (religious assemblies) annually as had the people of God through the ages.

There is, of course, nothing wrong - in a religion of the spirit such as Christianity - in the observance of days. Nor in special meals, or symbols (*eg* the bread and wine of communion). All churches do these in some form. Paul, too, told his paganizing readers in Colosse not to judge Christians for their eating and drinking on holy days. Sounds like they were enjoying themselves!

Tabernacles is a time for Christians to gather in central locations in celebration. Not a holiday, but a fun time, a time for fellowship, for making and renewing friendships. Above all it's a time for hearing the Word of God proclaimed by competent exponents of the Scriptures - especially concerning the significance of the season. And for in-depth studies and discussions on the Word. For praise and thanksgiving to the great God who has called us to His Kingdom. Brethren depart the festival refreshed in spirit and prepared to face whatever the next year holds.

God had good reason to make the annual holy days a vital part of our Christian walk! **Ω**

NOTICE:

OUTREACH may be in suspension for an issue or two as the Editor is due for heart surgery in early October. Your prayers will be appreciated!

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