

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

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**visit our website:
www.cgom.org**

*providing
leadership
information and
Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20*

*representing
Churches of God Outreach
Ministries*

Challenge to Faith

There's often an expectation in the mind of the Christian that commitment to Jesus Christ means an end to life's problems. And indeed it's true that Jesus holds the key to the solution for the challenges we face.

When everything seems to be falling apart, though, does that signify God has abandoned us? Questions crowd in. *Why me? Is God really 'up there'? Why are my prayers seemingly unanswered?*

Why you?

Nobody gets through their three-score years and ten without facing challenges. Not even believers. Illness, accidents, bereavement, family and financial challenges beset all of us, and eventually we begin to crumble from age-related conditions.

On top of this come the myriad inconveniences—big-day wash-out, car breakdown, a collapsed cake. All are part of 'life's rich tapestry' - a fabric too much of which is of our own weaving.

So—God isn't out to get you! He is, however, concerned for our long-term welfare, and part of our baptismal contract is acceptance of His apt correction: *'...But you have forgotten that the Scriptures say to God's children, "When the Lord punishes you, don't make light of it, and when he corrects you, don't be discouraged. The Lord corrects the people he loves and disciplines those he calls his*

own." Be patient when you are being corrected! This is how God treats his children. Don't all parents correct their children? (Hebrews 12:5-7 CEV).

Just Coincidence?

When adversity, then—at whatever level—overtakes you, don't assume that it's 'just coincidence'. That car breakdown may be a part of some 'great eternal plan'! Best to assume that there's a lesson in it for you—from God. He cares: *'...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him' (II Chronicles 16:9).*

Solutions

Paul encourages us to self-examine: *'...But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged' (I Corinthians 11:31 RV).* But with what shall we compare ourselves? The world's solution is that you do what seems right to you. God says—'No, that's the way to big trouble': *'...You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead' (Proverbs 14:12 CEV).*

However, there is a gold standard: *'... the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13).* To our own responsibility to examine ourselves in the light of the standard set by Jesus in his humanity, and to change, add the spiritual power to change that comes with the indwelling Spirit of God (II Peter 1:4). That standard is detailed for us in the Christian Scriptures. Ω

Framework for Faith

Come October, Christians from many denominations will gather for what to many is a strange activity for Christians. They will be observing the *Feast of Tabernacles*—a week-long annual ‘convocation’, but one that is usually associated with Judaism. So—why do many Christians observe it?

It’s easy to trace the festival’s roots. It is a ‘...*feast of the LORD*’ (Leviticus 23:4) which He incorporated into the worship of Israel as they were freed from slavery in ancient Egypt . That was around 1500BC. The Israelites observed it intermittently, but it was still being observed by the Jews in the time of Jesus (John 7:2).

Jesus observed it, as did the apostles and the entire first-century church. It was the framework for the substance of the spiritual

OUTREACH has, for some months and for reasons of funding, been issued only on the internet. We now hope to once again—at least occasionally—send it to our mailing list in print form. For our print mailing list the ANNUAL REPORT of the *Churches of God, UK* is now repeated.

ANNUAL REPORT

The year ending March 31, 2008 was a quiet year for the *Churches of God, UK*. The main outreach was the distribution of our magazine *New Horizons*, and responding to readers' questions. We are indebted to our colleagues in Tulsa - notably Richard Gawith - for printing *NH* without charge to us. (It is edited in the UK.) The magazine is now in its twelfth year of publication. Articles from *New Horizons* are added to the website (www.cgom.org) and draw many visitors.

Our readers are widely scattered throughout the United Kingdom, making face-to-face contact a challenge. We encourage the brethren to meet with like-minded assemblies wherever they are available. It's a disappointment that, because of high postal charges and reduced income, we have had to axe our overseas readers from the mailing list.

The on-going series of internet *MiniStudies* - now numbering sixty-three issues - deal with commonly asked Bible queries. They are also available in print on request.

It remains our aim to support individual believers and independent assemblies by means of our extensive range of Biblical articles - in print and on-line - and sharing of our

teachings of Jesus. Indeed to this day it is one marker that identifies the true Christian faith established by Jesus, just as Ramadan is a marker of Islam, and Divali of Hinduism, and sun symbolism (Christmas, Easter *etc*) of traditional Christianity. While all religions pay at least lip service to the last six of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), no other faith observes the first four.

Tabernacles is but one of three festival seasons - spring, summer, autumn - appointed by God for His worship. They represent both the material and the spiritual ‘harvests’. *Tabernacles* is rich in meaning in regard to the temporary nature of mankind and of our environment, with special reference to God’s end-time harvest into His Kingdom.

If you consider its observance, please ask for details of locations. Request the free article:

Tabernacles...mankind in the flesh

Autumn Festivals 2008

Trumpets	September 30
Atonement	October 9
Tabernacles	October 14-20
Eighth Day	October 21

INCOME 2007/8

Donations:	
...UK	£1230
...Overseas	£ 678
Tax Rebate:	£ 316

£2224

OUTGOINGS 2007/8

Postal:	£ 549
Stationery:	£ 134
Print:	£ 48
Internet:	£ 336
Bank:	£ 147
Utilities:	£ 224
Travel:	£ 474
News:	£ 373

£2285

experience in helping to establish new assemblies. To this end we invite such groups - and individuals - to associate with us and with the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* (based in the USA).

Financially, the year was quite difficult, seriously limiting our desired activity. We value your prayers for increasing success in serving the brethren, as we ‘*provide leadership, information and Biblical teaching*’ **Ω**

Waiting for God

Some Christians live in a state of ‘suspended animation’. We are ‘waiting for God’. That is, we are living in the expectation that the return of Jesus is imminent. One devout believer I know never left home without leaving it spick and span—just in case Jesus came back while she was away.

Jesus, she said, could come back at any moment. It is a view shared by millions. When he returns all the faithful will be lifted up to meet him. The concept is known as ‘the secret rapture’—though it’s not a word found in the text, but a term perhaps expressing the emotion of that event.

The Scriptures do indeed teach the certainty of his return: ‘...*This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into Heaven [or, the skies] will come in just the same way as you have seen Him going into Heaven*’ (Acts 1:11). Elsewhere we read that ‘...*For if we believe that Jesus has died and risen again, we also believe that, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who shall have passed away*’ (I Thessalonians 4:14). Further ‘...*we [ie the living faithful] won’t go up to meet him ahead of his followers who have already died*’ (v.15 CEV). But will that coming be ‘secret’?

Signs of His Coming

God has not left us in ignorance, but has laid a treasure trail of signs pointing to the return of Jesus.

- First—we don’t know when! (Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7)
- Mankind will be experiencing normality. Life goes on (vv. 37-39)
- Like the visitation of a thief, most will not expect it—or they would have been prepared (Luke 12:39-40, Revelation 16:15)
- Suddenly, believers will be plunged into tribulation (Gk *thlipsis*)—hated, betrayed, persecuted, many martyred by ‘...*all nations*’ (Matthew 24:9)
- It will be the worst of times—ever, past and future (v.16)
- At that time, believers in Judaea—on certain ‘signals’ - are urged to drop everything and ‘head for the hills’
- Jesus then returns towards earth to establish his earthly reign
- He commands the believing dead to rise—announced by the sounding of the (last)

TABERNACLES 2008

Dear Friends,

The *Feast of Tabernacles 2008* is just around the corner. How very quickly it comes each year!!

Below is some information for those who might wish to consider one of the **CGOM sponsored sites**. Wherever you attend, enjoy the fellowship, give of yourself to your fellows - and return home with a renewed spirit!

The three CGOM-sponsored sites this year are:

Collingwood, Canada – hosted by the *Canadian Church of God*
For more detailed information: www.candianchurchofgod.com, then click on their *Feast Notes* link

San Antonio, Texas – hosted by the Church of God, San Antonio
For more detailed information: www.churchofgodsa.com

Tulsa, Oklahoma – hosted by the Tulsa Church of God
For more detailed information: www.tulsachurchofgod.net/fot/

Check back often for updates on the speaking and activities schedules!

Visit these websites at your earliest convenience and please consider joining us at one of our sites! We would love to have you celebrate with us this year. If you haven’t yet made firm plans for elsewhere, give CGOM a consideration!

Also, if you can offer service in some capacity, please contact the coordinator of the feast site.

Again, regardless of where you attend, have a wonderful and profitable *Feast of Tabernacles 2008!*

Richard Gawith

Tulsa Church of God, www.tulsachurchofgod.net

trumpet, (I Thessalonians 4: 16, I Corinthians 15:52)

- Many of those resurrected will have been martyred in the previous distress (time of ‘...*the tribulation, the great*—Revelation 7:14)
- Some will have died in the tribulation, others will have ‘come out’ of it, having experienced it (Revelation 7:14)
- Although highly symbolic, those in this first resurrection will rise to ‘...*stand by a sea of glass*’ (15:2). It may be a reference to the ‘firmament’ that supports Christ’s throne (Ezekiel 1:26ff, Exodus 24:10, Revelation 4:6)
- The ‘*seven last plagues*’ on earth follow
- His coming will be seen worldwide (Revelation 1:7) as his glory spreads around the planet

Safe in the secure care of our Saviour we need not fear the future, no matter how dire nor how it may personally affect each of us. With righteous Job we may say ‘...*though he slay me, yet will I trust him*’ (Job 13:15); and, in the face of his personal ‘tribulation; ‘...*shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*’ (ch 2:10) **Ω**

The Great Escapism

The study of prophecy is a pursuit beloved of many, and from all faiths. We want to know what the future holds—for us personally, and for the world at large. As the Christian Bible reputedly is one-third prophecy it's no surprise that Christians are no less fascinated by it.

As we have now reached the (perhaps notional) six thousand years since 'creation', there is a flurry of interest in 'the time of the end'. Thousands of prophecy books have been published, especially since the mid nineteenth century, each presenting the author's interpretation of end-time events.

Escape

The focus is often on what is termed 'the great tribulation' - a short period of total mayhem on earth, and a uniquely terrible event (Matthew 24: 21). For some, the focus is on avoidance—how can we escape its ravages. Various solutions are proposed: for example, a pre-tribulation 'rapture, or a 'place of safety' here on earth or elsewhere.

First it should be noted that God's people have frequently experienced not protection but fierce persecution and often martyrdom. Hebrews 11 is a litany of such. Indeed Jesus said: *'...if you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me, you will save it'* (Luke 9:24 CEV). A statement which—wrongly— has encouraged some Christians to actively seek martyrdom. He predicted betrayal and death for some in that end-time (Luke 21:16).

What if you get it wrong, believing perhaps in avoiding martyrdom (saving your skin) by means of 'the rapture' - and that concept turns out to be a misunderstanding? Or, you believe that during the tribulation you will be whisked away—protected—to some remote location in the Middle East or Montana? Will you 'miss out'? It may be helpful to look at a couple of escape accounts in the Scriptures.

A Safe Place

What if God did indeed have a 'place of safety' for the righteous?

Abraham's nephew Lot - a just man, but living in a degenerate society— was unaware of the LORD's plan to deal with that society. Angels were sent to lead him and his family out of Sodom (Genesis 19). Perhaps unwilling to leave his home and possessions '*...he lingered*'. States the record: *'...At first, Lot just stood there. But the LORD wanted to save him. So the angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and led them out of the city'* (Genesis 19:16 CEV).

The account of Lot's 'escape' is mirrored in the end-time: *'...At the sound of a loud trumpet, he will send his angels to bring his chosen ones together from all over the earth'* (Matthew 24: 31 CEV). Brought, that is, to *'...meet the Lord in the air'*, together with the faithful dead since creation (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

God's messengers *'...took [Lot] by the hand'* and dragged him to a remote safe place. And in the end-time? *'...Remember what happened to Lot's wife. People who try to save their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives will save them. On that night two people will be sleeping in the same bed, but only one will be taken. The other will be left. Two women will be together grinding wheat, but only one will be taken. The other will be left'* (Luke 17:32-35 CEV). Did those 'left' —like Lot's wife—refuse? Had their love for Christ *'...grown cold'*?

The prophet Elisha was encircled in a mountain-top township by a hostile army—scaring the wits out of his servant. Elisha himself had no fear. For, he told him, *'...they that be with us are more than they that be with them'* (II Kings 6:16-18). They were protected by *'...fiery horses and flaming chariots'*- a spirit host. As wrote the Psalmist: *'...You will not be harmed, though thousands fall all around you'* (Psalm 91:7 CEV). The all-powerful God can also protect as He sees the need—*right where we are*.

Whether or not we know the precise details of future events, God will ensure protection where appropriate. Hear Jesus:

'...No one knows the day or the time. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows. So watch out and be ready! You don't know when the time will come...It is like what happens when a man goes away for a while and places his servants in charge of everything. He tells each of them what to do, and he orders the guard to keep alert. So be alert! You don't know when the master of the house will come back. It could be in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or in the morning. But if he comes suddenly, don't let him find you asleep. I tell everyone just what I have told you. Be alert!'
(Mark 13:32-37 CEV).

When Jesus returns—as he will—those who accompany him are *'... called, and chosen, and faithful'* (Revelation 17:14). Stay faithful to him—be victorious to the end—and you need not fear whatever the future may hold. Ω

<p>FINANCES (COGUK) - December 2002 INCOME.... £211 OUTGOINGS... £174 Legacy: £4984</p>
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