

new Horizons

Vol 13 No 4

July/August 2009

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

With around two thousand Christian denominations vying for your attention, it's easy to miss the important issues of life and religion. It's our hope that through *New Horizons* our readers will come to understand the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by His apostles in the clearest of terms - and recorded for us in the Scriptures. Over the centuries that truth has been buried, dug up, buried again. Our desire is to restore the simple apostolic message. We hope you will be excited by what the Scriptures reveal about life, and the horizons beyond

Who We Are

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is an international association of independent local assemblies - Christians who meet together for worship, instruction in the faith and fellowship. Each assembly is self-governing according to Bible principles, but co-operates through our Conference with other like-minded assemblies to work towards agreed evangelistic goals

These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus: "...going, therefore, disciple all nations, baptising them...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded that we "...Shepherd...[and] feed my sheep".

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature - eg our bi-monthly Newsletter OUTREACH, NEW HORIZONS magazine, the BIBLE BASICS on-line home study course, and the 32-lesson Study Course. The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren

We cordially invite all independent fellowships of whatever size - and individuals - to associate with us in this worldwide ministry. Our *Statement of Beliefs* and a *Publications Catalogue* is available from any of our addresses or from our web site www.cgom.org. We are pleased to offer you, without charge, any of our publications

New Horizons is published by the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries*, an association of independent churches, to make known the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God

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If you would like a copy of our *Statement of Beliefs* please request it from any of the addresses listed

Churches of God Outreach Ministries
P O Box 54621
Tulsa, OK 74155-0621
USA
e-mail: information@cgom.org
1-800-611-8080
Editor: James McBride
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God, UK
PO Box 2525
LINCOLN LN5 7PF United Kingdom
Regd Charity No 283358
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
100 Northcote Street
Aberdare NSW 2325 Australia
e-mail: icg.aust@netcentral.com.au

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
PO Box 476 Don Mills Station
Don Mills Ontario M3C 2T4 Canada
www.canadianchurchofgod.com

or from:

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new Horizons

Issue No 76

July/August 2009

**It 'makes the world go round'.
Everyone, it seems, wants more. Is
money the root of every evil?**

Stock market fever. 'Keeping up with the Jones's'. A bigger house. New car. Credit 'shopping pollution'. The good life. Economic growth. And in their wake debt, bankruptcy, poverty, taxes, inequality, corruption, drugs, crime, suicide.. Money underpins all:

*Money is the root of all evil...
Gimmie some more
Gimmie some more
Gimme some more*

Money - we need it. The accumulation of wealth can be a positive benefit - we all need to save for 'a rainy day'. The Bible encourages it. Earth's bounty is a divine gift to provide resources for increasing mankind's prosperity. Human skill and ingenuity can turn 'earth' - it all comes from there - into an object of beauty, a practical device, comfort. Fair work deserves fair reward.

Yet 'the economy' preoccupies the minds of humble treasurers, business people, mortgage holders, shareholders, you and me - and Chancellors of the Exchequer. An army of accountants swarm in every nation, probing every tax loophole, every tax haven. In every nation there flows, like sewage, a stream of scavenging men and women intent on gain by any foul means.

Whole nations, Big Business

(remember Enron, the 'internet bubble'?), industry giants, banks, stock dealers - charities even - thrive in a culture of fraud and sly dealing. The man-in-the-street isn't averse to shady deals, to unquestioningly accept what 'fell off the back of a lorry'. The Internet swarms with scams intent on robbing you and me of our assets. The 'black economy' - avoidance of taxation - undermines good financial governance. The urge for a 'fast buck' and high taxes combine to fuel widespread financial criminality. VAT fraud has this past year cost European Exchequers a whopping €100billion. Insurance miss-selling has undermined the financial stability of countless savers. Pension funds have collapsed projecting bleak retirement prospects. Yes, money is indeed a root of every evil. Increasingly, true values are discarded.

Money - a Root of Every Evil?

**Funda-
mental
Cause**

Despite all this financial complexity the cause is neatly summed up in four words: 'You should not covet'. It could also be summed up in the words of one writer concerning the area in which he now lives: 'People are, in a material sense, poor. In terms of their life-style, however, they are among the world's super-rich'. Or, hear the apostle Paul: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we have brought nothing into the world, and it is plain that neither can we carry anything out. But having food and clothing, we will be satisfied with these' (1 Timothy 6:6-8, Ecclesiastes 5:13-15). Translated into cold

northern climes it means we should be content to have food in our bellies and a roof over our heads.

Money of itself, of course, isn't a problem. It is prudent - legally - to increase our wealth, to diligently and wisely exploit our talents and hone our skills for profit. Wealth lawfully gained by our efforts is a gift from God - and to be enjoyed in a godly way - for family, for charitable purposes, for service to God. (*see* Deuteronomy 8:18, Ecclesiastes 5:19, Proverbs 13:11, 22, Job 20:10.) Over-zealous Christians can violate this principle by 'giving all to God's work'. The apostle Peter, however, makes clear (Acts 5:4) that it is our personal responsibility to determine how we apportion our resources in the light of God's Word.

Conspicuous Consumption

What hurts, on the other hand, is the dedicated pursuit of money. Paul again: 'For the love of money is a root of all evils, by means of which some having lusted after it were seduced from the faith, and they themselves pierced through by many pains' (1 Timothy 6:10). Pursuit of gain for its own sake, for self-indulgence, can divert us from that narrow path that leads to eternal life. But especially by those *not* 'in the faith', where there isn't the restraint of the teachings of Jesus.

The urge to acquire a larger home or the latest mobile phone or tv or hi-fi or new-model car, or Christmas overspend, or to satisfy a craving for nicotine or so-called 'recreational drugs' or harlotry or gambling, - all conspire to fuel Britain's trillion pound plus debt mountain. Such activities do indeed bring 'pain', for 'the payback from sin is death'.

Reprinted from July/August 2007 issue

Money... cont'd from p.2

Such behaviour requires money and is, in the Scriptures, called 'covetousness' [avarice, inordinate desire for more]. God warns against it in His guide to human happiness: 'You shall not covet'. Jesus, too: 'And he said to them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses (Luke 12:15).

Rather, says Jesus, invest in the intangible: 'But treasure up for you treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust [wear and tear] cause to perish, and where thieves do not dig through [break in] and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matthew 6:20-21).

Look around your home. How much goes beyond keeping you at the comfort level? 'Have money will spend' is a common attitude. In the UK, over £1billion is stashed away in unused domestic hardware. And how much of it drips from your credit card? The average credit card debt in Britain is over £3000.

Credit fuels economic growth. But limit its use to what you can affordably repay - allowing for emergencies. Invest your resources, wisely, in pro-

jects that enhance the lifestyle of the underprivileged. Invest in activity that will reach beyond the grave. Invest in those things which cannot perish.

Above all invest in what is 'treasure' in God's eyes. This latter we discern as we steep ourselves in His Word. What does God see as 'the pearl of great price'? 'How much better is it to get wisdom than gold', wrote King

UPDATE

Mired in the global 'credit crunch, we now need no reminding as to the significance of the misuse of financial resources. Since this article was written two years ago the Bible injunction: '...you should not covet' has been fully vindicated.

Solomon (Proverbs 16:16). Gold - anything that we consider precious. *Wisdom* is the principle thing (ch 4:7; see also 8:11).

Paul advances the same message: 'Set your mind on things above, not on things that are upon the earth' (Colossians 3:2).

Your investment is an indicator as to 'where your heart is'. What do you consider to be your 'treasure'? Jesus again: 'Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you' (Matthew 6:33).

Accumulating in this life for 'heaven' - for your eternal future - ensures that as a part of the Kingdom of God you will have free access to everything that is good for you!

It's a concept to be meditated on as the Christmas splurging season approaches! **Ω**

flecting his philosophy, his outlook and teachings.

Usually they were baptized by him or on his behalf (eg John 4:1, Acts 19:3). Several of the disciples of Jesus, indeed, had been John's disciples—even after his death

The core of discipleship is a *relationship* with 'the master'. So we can be well taught and we can be baptized—but unless we are in a personal relationship with him we are not truly a disciple.

Most of the first Christians were Jews, and pious Jews at that. They believed as Jesus did—mostly! They observed the same holy days. They had the same core beliefs and were zealous for God's Kingdom. What made them Christians, however, was that they now had a personal relationship with their Saviour. And, as is clear from the New Testament, without compromising their core religious observances.

One Master

Who, then, is your Teacher? The Christian world is studded with disciples of a host of them. Believers cling to the teachings of J N Darby, John Wesley, Ellen White, Herbert Armstrong—the list goes on and on, with new Christian gurus appearing frequently to scar the face of Christendom. And none of whom reflect the perfection of The Master.

Again—to whom are you a disciple? There can be but one—Jesus the Messiah. God in the flesh. It is to him that we are related, through the indwelling of the Spirit, his brothers and sisters. That's how we become truly *his* disciples. All other spiritual attachments must be arm's length.

We can indeed learn from skilled exponents of the faith—though we are not their disciples. Always their teaching should be examined in the light of the Scriptures, the Word of the Master Teacher. **Ω**

Whose Disciple Are You?

The Pharisees had them. So too John the Baptist. And, of course, Jesus. All had disciples. As Christians we consider ourselves to be the disciples of Jesus, the Messiah.

Jesus left instructions for us to *disciple*: '...Go to the people of all nations and make them my disci-

ples. (Matthew 28:19). In support of discipling we are to *go*, to *baptize*, and to *teach* all the instructions of Jesus. But what is a disciple?

The word is, in the Scriptures, almost always applied to a person or persons—his, my, John's *etc*. They 'sit at the feet' of a person, as a pupil and are firmly attached to him, re-

The Christian Scriptures make clear that beyond this fragile transient existence lies a new state—a spiritual state. But as humans we have a temporary existence. The annual *Festival of Tabernacles* is symbolic of man’s brief sojourn on earth. It embraces several layers of meaning

Since earliest times, and universally, worship of the deity has, unsurprisingly, focused around the harvest seasons—spring summer, autumn. Our physical life, though short, depends on earth’s bounty. These times of divinely-appointed worship are rooted in the very physical creation: ‘...*God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years*’ (Genesis 1:14).

Note that word ‘seasons’ (Heb *mo’ed*). Among its varied meanings is ‘festivals’ - so translated 19 times, elsewhere frequently referring to the place of gathering.

Festival of Tabernacles

The *Festival of Tabernacles* is an autumn festival as given by the LORD to ancient Israel: ‘...*The set feasts [mo’ed] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my set feasts’ [mo’ed]*’ (Leviticus 23:4, 34). It was enduring and was observed by Jesus and his contemporaries (John 7:2, 10).

On the surface, *Tabernacles* is simply that—a harvest festival at God’s appointed time. On the calendar then widely in use it began on the fifteenth day of the

seventh month—in autumn. The festival lasted seven days, and during it the Israelites lived in temporary dwellings (‘booths’, *sukkot*). This adds another layer of meaning, and represented their sojourning for forty years in the wilderness, living in tents, tabernacles

Here Today...

There is, however, larger symbolism. The festival emphasizes man’s temporary existence, both as individuals and as a species.

The apostle Paul refers to the human body as a ‘tabernacle’ (Gk. *skenos*, a tent, II Corinthians 5:1), a temporary—often fragile—structure. Peter refers to his death as ‘...*putting off this tabernacle*’ (II Peter 1:14)

The seven days of the festival may reference the whole time of mankind in the flesh. Symbolizing the temporary nature of man’s domination of the planet, in God’s plan there are six ‘day’s—each of one thousand years—during which man ‘does his own thing’, egged on by Satan.

Harvest Time

The three harvest festivals follow a pattern—a pattern of resurrections.

In spring, Jesus the *firstfruits* (I Corinthians 15:20). He is (Colossians 1:18) ‘...*the firstborn from the dead*’ - the first to ex-

Camping with God

perience a resurrection to a spirit-state.

Then follow ‘*a kind of firstfruits*’ harvest, followers of Christ who will be resurrected at the end of the ‘sixth day’ (It is termed ‘*the first resurrection*’ (Revelation 20:4,5).

Heaven on Earth

Autumn sees the *final harvest* - the last opportunity for humanity to become part of the divine family. The *Festival of Tabernacles* is also symbolic of this exciting future.

Jesus the Messiah and the resurrected saints will equitably govern earth for the next thousand years—known widely as ‘the millennium’ (Revelation 20:4). It is the time when man’s defective rule is set aside, superseded by the perfect government of God—as portrayed in the Scriptures.

It is a time of peace; all military academies will be abolished’. Justice will be administered worldwide firmly and fairly and with mercy- and to divine standards (eg Micah 4, Isaiah 2 & 11). With Satan restrained (Revelation 20:1-3), with but one universal true faith, with perfect government—the Gospel of salvation will be freely open to all.

The final day of the feast represents another resurrection—of ‘*the rest of the dead*’ (v.5) raised from the dead to physical life—and their first real exposure to the Gospel, the veil of deception removed (Isaiah 25:7) **Ω**

Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms

The Final Generation **The Last Days**

Bible readers are often puzzled by the apparent failure of Jesus to return from heaven. Wasn't he to come 'soon'? '...I come quickly', and '...the time is short' were first century claims carefully recorded in the New Testament.

Millions of Christians live in expectation of the return of Jesus. It will follow on the heels of universal chaos, mass destruction, and virtual extinction of the human race. Then follows a thousand years under the benign rule of the King of kings. As that has not yet happened - how do we explain those 'quickly' texts? Were the apostles just plain wrong?

A favoured response—by sceptics, some lapsed believers—is that the Bible record is simply a work of fiction. Jesus didn't exist. Someone started a new religion that was as mythical as all other religions. Others believe that what is portrayed as 'end-time events' were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. The vast majority of Christians, of course, live in expectation of the future return of Jesus. Can we make sense of the texts?

The notion that Jesus didn't exist nor found 'Christianity' has long been cast into the dustbin. Only the willingly ignorant believe that. So what do those 'I come quickly' statements mean? Was Jesus wrong? Or, did the apostles just get mixed up? Such questions cast doubt on 'inspiration'.

Christians in general—no matter what traditions they add—believe that neither Jesus nor the apostles were subject to error. That is the bedrock of theology; we can't pick and choose. We may struggle to understand the text as it has come down to us, but the foundation teachings are clear. (Hence the need to 'sit lightly' in the exegetical saddle.)

To be clear—no-one knows the date of the return of Jesus. Endless chronologies have proven wrong. Jesus, however, did give some signs of his imminent return—in Matthew 24, for example. Look out for them.

Since the days of the apostles an endless succession of mockers proclaim: '...Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation' (II Peter 3:4). Such are willingly ignorant of the divine plan. They reject the fact that God intervenes in history, and has overthrown entire civilisations to preserve and further that plan. The 'last days' will again witness such an intervention, writes the apostle - whether believed or scoffed at.

God in Control

Clearly, the generation that followed Jesus did not see his 'second coming'. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the words were spoken and we are still waiting! Were the Bible writers - and Jesus - wrong? Let's look at some of those texts.

John records God's message from Jesus: '

...The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand' Revelation 1:1-3

Some reasons for the apparent delay have been proposed. Peter, for one, addressed it: '... for the Lord, one day is the same as a thousand years, and a thousand years is the same as

one day' (II Peter 3:8 CEV). The spirit realm is timeless. He continues: '*...The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you -ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (v.9). As in the days before the great flood of Noah (Genesis 6:3), God is patient, allowing time for man to come to his senses, Or in His delayed judgment - for four generations - on the Amorites (Genesis 15:16).*

Which Generation?

Then there's the statement of Jesus that '*...this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (Matthew 24:34-35). Question: which generation? In this outline of future events Jesus ends with the resurrection of the saints (v.31). His hearers would, within a generation (70AD), experience a taste of these horrors. But not the resurrection!*

This resurrection of 'the firstfruits' is the culmination of the proclamation of the Gospel. It accompanies the return of Jesus as King of kings and LORD of lords—universal sovereign in the secular and the spiritual realm. And it heralds the coming of 'the Day of the LORD'.

No Bible student argues that mankind has already experienced these. The resurrection has not yet happened. Jesus is not reigning on earth. The powers of evil have not been restrained. Nor has mankind experienced the 'seven last plagues' (Revelation 16) which occur at his coming and in his presence. (ch 14:10).

The conclusion must be that events of 70AD were but a foretaste of a future fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy—and yet to be fulfilled. There is, however, more to it **cont'd p.8**

Globalism - is it a threat, or a promise of a better world?

Ever so slowly, but with seeming inevitability, our world creeps toward 'global solutions for global problems'. For some this is a move towards a world without conflict, a world of equality and a world of utopian perfection. Others fear globalism will lead to totalitarianism, the subjection of mankind to an elite cabal of dictatorial tyrants.

There can be little doubt that the pooling of resources can work material benefit for our world. As 'many run to and fro' - easy travel, access to information at the touch of a button (sometimes!), imports of the rich variety of goods produced from earth's bounty - all combine to add 'spice' and variety to our lives. But there's a downside.

Not All Rosy

Technology blurs boundaries between sovereign nations. Missiles can at the touch of a button be despatched thousands of miles with pinpoint accuracy. Nuclear explosions - remember Chernobyl - provoke mayhem and long-term suffering across continents. Industrial and domestic pollutants from around the globe affect all of us in our own back yards. Outbreaks of deadly disease are scattered worldwide by our fast-moving transport networks. And let's not forget the worldwide internet - a tool that scatters ideologies, and tutors and facilitates terrorists.

Not unrelated to technology is the upsurge in *terrorism*. Suicide murderers emerge from nowhere (but usually from Islam) to cause mayhem, to scatter innocent body parts around hotels, tower blocks, trains and cafes.

Then there 's the *economy*. Vast trading blocs exert economic pressure on weak nations. World trade organizations impose tariffs affecting the daily life of all of us worldwide.

One World...is it inevitable?

Big Business dominates, absorbing smaller enterprises.

On the *political front* the United Nations Organization (it is not a government) stealthily extends its influence towards one-world government. A move is afoot to impose a UN levy on every barrel of oil, thus for the first time introducing a *world tax* on all who are dependent on the oil economy - pretty well all of us. Power blocs - such as the European Union - seek to amass political, economic and military authority over hundreds of millions.

A Matter of Faith

Let's not forget, too, the attempts to introduce *religious unity*.

Near enough two-thirds of mankind - Protestants and Catholics - are about ready to join forces under the auspices of the Roman Church. Efforts are exerted to fudge the boundaries between Christianity and Islam. A billion of Hindu belief worship 'gods many'. While *multi-culturalism* is promoted as the saviour - but a false saviour - of racial harmony.

Even the supposedly Christian festival of Christmas - celebrating, in fact, the 'birth' of the sun god - is becoming universally observed.

The Reason Why

All such factors conspire to give an invisible push towards one world

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free 32-lesson Study
Course. It's a key to what
is for many a
'Book of Mystery'

unsigned articles are by the Editor

with a single global government. Given the problems that face us on a global scale it offers the most likely solution. It takes on an air of inevitability.

Of late, terrorism occupies the energies of our Western democratic governments. Control is presented as the only reasonable solution, a necessity.

In the UK, for example, Government is urgent to introduce universal identity cards. The British Prime Minister sought - forcefully but unsuccessfully - to legalize a ninety day detention without trial. The ancestral right of *habeas corpus* is, in Britain and in the United States (Guantanamo), trodden underfoot - presented as an anti-terrorist necessity. Britain has more CCTV surveillance than any other nation.

'The Englishman's home is his castle' summarized our right to privacy. Now the UK Government proposes to demand we 'pull up the drawbridge' to admit inspectors into our homes to assess our tax liability. Even freedom of expression is threatened—the widely-despised 'political correctness'.

Power and authority, increasingly, is removed from personal responsibility into Politbureau-style State control.

The Economy

Although unabated and still a major concern, terrorism has now been joined by global economic disaster as a challenge to the 'powers that be'.

Unsurprisingly, the instinct of politicians is to reach into their armoury to extract the weapon of *control*. And faced with the almost certain upsurge in violent response to the loss of livelihood, to the collapsing financial systems, to food shortages (even

famine) and to inequity—they do not have much choice! Our human nature dictates that when threatened we protect our own interests first. Civil disorder—if a serious and prolonged depression grips the planet—is inevitable, and control is the only option.

If civil disorder should become global—then politicians will see ‘global solutions’ as unavoidable. That term (‘global solutions’) is even now frequently on the lips of Britain’s Prime Minister!

Pitfalls

We need, however, to embark on such ‘solutions’ with eyes wide open and with caution.

ID cards would, states the London *Times* newspaper, ‘create one of the most far-reaching systems of government surveillance in the world’. And, says *The Guardian*, ‘it will become impossible to make the smallest transaction without revealing your identity. The innocent, however, have much to hide; it is called a private life’.

Consider the words of the great British statesman, William Pitt: “Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants. It is the creed of slaves”. It has been suggested that all revolutions end in reinforcement of the State. (Rather, in the hands of those who control the State.)

Whether from good intentions, or from blind ignorance or from evil intent such measures move us step-by-step towards a totalitarian State. The drive for efficient government tends towards dictatorship. Notes one author: “*Lenin, Stalin, Mao...knew that when all power is vested in the State, and when those controlling the State can claim to act in the name of historical inevitability, then you have*

the recipe for totalitarianism” .

The erosion of national sovereignty and the lust for power that dwells in unscrupulous leaders tends towards multi-national governments and ultimately to world government. How long before the ‘United Nations’ - now an assembly of sovereign states - becomes a ‘World Government’, the vaunted ‘New World Order’?

The Predicted Outcome

It is alleged - by ‘conspiracy theorists’ - that there are dark and unseen forces patiently driving the momentum towards world government. The Bilderberger group, the CFR, the promoters of a ‘United States of Europe’, the New World Order, the Illuminati - such secretive bodies are, supposedly, manipulating national leaders and world events to that end.

Conspiracy or not, the outcome of such human plans are in the unseen hands of one who will ensure all ‘goes to plan’. That outcome has been predicted millennia ago. And it is not pretty!

Limited Edition

God works to a timetable. He has allotted mankind a ‘week of millennia’ - seven thousand years—to test our mettle.

In other words, our time of abysmal misrule is limited, and will end in His good time—and before we totally destroy His *kosmos*.

In the hands of man, government has failed abysmally. Mankind, throughout six thousand years of recorded civilisation, has striven for a Utopian dream. But apart from a few intermittent decades of relative peace the dream has been a nightmare. It simply isn’t within the ability of the human mind to sustain peace and prosperity - even within a single nation never mind a host of nations or the entire world of disunited nations.

That ‘unseen hand’ - the all-powerful Creator God - has given us a ‘week’ of millennia - six thousand years - to prove our willingness - and our ability - to rule by His perfect revealed Law. We have failed. Looking down the centuries He foresaw the inevitable end product of human govern-

ment. Rather than rule His way - of harmonious co-operation - successive governments have perversely and bloodily competed, raped Earth’s resources, greedily amassed personal wealth and trodden down and massacred the little people.

One World

Man’s week is about over. But there’s one more ‘hour’: the final roll of the dice is universal control of the world. That’s where human leadership is heading. Democracy has failed to bring it to fruition, and wily politicians work subtly behind closed doors to introduce their nefarious dream of control.

The apostle John in vision witnessed a final attempt at world domination. Swiftly on the world scene will arise an awe-inspiring atheistic military power that will gain authority over every race, every nation, every creed. It will be revered by all mankind as their saviour. All who cling to a pure faith in the Creator, in Jesus Christ, will be subdued.

Itself anti-God, this entity will, however, be supported by a miracle-working universal religious power, resistance to its diktats being rewarded with death.

But the entire Satan-inspired system will exercise its power for a brief three and a half years. The ‘Babylonian’ destructive dictatorship will be crushed - by the return of the Lord, Jesus the Messiah.

New World Order

Human ineptitude will bring our planet to the brink of extinction. Divine intervention alone can save us. Only the application to government of divine wisdom can usher in the Utopia for which man cries out. Jesus will implement such a government - right here, on Planet Earth.

At his coming, those in whom dwells the Spirit of God *cont’d p.8*

Is it the choice for a life-time—or does marriage have implications for our society?

Within a generation more of us will have never married than those who have—the ‘never-weds’. A couple of years ago the number of marriages in England and Wales was the lowest since 1895. The partnership of couples merely co-habiting (4.5 million) lasts on average five years, and the average marriage lasts just over eleven years. Life-long marriage, it seems, is fast falling out of fashion.

But is marriage—the union of a man and a woman for life—important? The sad increase of ‘broken homes’ tells the tale. Britain’s present Government has chosen to downgrade marriage to mere life-style choice. One prominent author says marriage—from a practical view—is ‘a mug’s game’: the State pays more benefits to single parents than to the married, and has removed legal privileges once confined to the married.

There is more to the practicalities, however, than just financial, important though that may be. A Government paper on family policy in 2008 acknowledged that married couples are happier than other parents, have more stable family life and their children are better behaved and do better in school than the children of co-habiting couples.

.Shockingly, one in six married couples divorce in under five years. Divorce is a modern scourge, reflecting a deep malaise in the national well-being.

But divorce is painful—despite the fictional portrayal of friendly partings. It shatters relationships in a wide circle of family and friends. It confuses the children, especially with serial re-marriage. It is costly, serving to line legal pockets and is a huge drain on the tax-payer. Too often, however, it is unnecessary.

Marriage 101

Perhaps a fundamental question is *why marry?*

Biologically you can have children without ‘tying the knot’—even twelve-year-olds do it. You can have companionship without marriage. Can’t cook or clean? Then hire a house-keeper. Don’t like to work out? Then make a bid for welfare hand-outs.

Or, roll them together and just co-habit. You may reap some benefits of marriage but without making a commitment. One partner can ‘bring home the bacon’—or both pursue a career—and in return get the services from your partner once provided by mummy or daddy. And you can simply walk away when the going gets tough. As inevitably it does in a long-term relationship. But it’s not marriage—and it’s immature, infantile.

No—marriage is much more. It clearly has merit as an institution, for it is practised almost universally by our species. And it’s not just a Christian institution. In India it is deemed essential for everyone. It is traditionally considered a must in China. Despite the degrading Western attitudes to it, the majority of the world’s Christians still revere marriage.

Whatever your view of ‘Bible inerrancy’, the record is that Jesus believed the account of the origins of marriage as recorded for all mankind in the Hebrew Scriptures. Note his words: (Matthew 19:4):

...he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. So that they are no more two, but one flesh’.

And he adds: ‘...What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder’ (Matthew 19:4-6). It is the earliest of all institutions—and

MARRIAGE..... *is it important?*

clearly intended by our Creator to be ‘till death do us part’.

According to revelation, the marriage of a man and a woman heralds the process of the two merging as ‘one person’ (Ephesians 5:31). That demands total commitment—*give and give* on both sides. That is fundamental.

Foundation Principle

As the Psalmist observed: ‘...*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*’ (Psalm 11:3). Or, in context: ‘... *You tell me, "Those evil people have put their arrows on their bows, and they are standing in the shadows, aiming at good people. What can an honest person do when everything crumbles?"*’ (vv. 2-3 CEV).

That sounds like the fierce on-going attacks on this ancient institution by our so-called left-wing intelligentsia!

Initiated by the Creator marriage provides the foundation for a healthy society. Permit the ‘marriage bond’ to weaken and fail and individuals, family and nation will disintegrate.

Marriage, then, isn’t merely of personal benefit. It has implications for the whole of society. Undermine this underpinning foundation and the edifice of society will collapse.

Further Reading:

Spend a Lifetime—together
Children...the best job
The Edge of Divorce
University of the Home
Mystery of Human Sexuality

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One World ...cont'd

will rise from the grave to reign with him over 'earth's huddled masses'. The sad remnant of men and women who survive the coming chaos will be nourished back to sanity by the loving ministrations of the divine Family.

They and their children will, under divine rule, learn the true principles that promote a productive and happy life. Successive generations will learn God's ways - and be prepared to live eternally.

Man's repeated failures and aborted successes result from our in-born nature. Notice that all those who rule alongside Jesus in that thousand-year Kingdom have the Spirit of God dwelling in them in this life.

Notes Jesus: '*...Out of your heart come evil thoughts, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, vulgar deeds, stealing, telling lies, and insulting others*' (Matthew 15:19 CEV). It is so personally. It is so for mankind in general—including our leaders!

Only when 'the heart' is transformed by the indwelling Spirit of God will there be lasting peace and prosperity. Said the LORD: '*I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they have to teach one another to obey me. I, the LORD, promise that all of them will obey me, ordinary people and rulers alike. I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done*' (Jeremiah 31:34 CEV).

When Jesus reigns, all mankind will be freed from the restraining influence of the spiritual forces that now blind us to the way of peace. That divine Spirit will indwell mankind freely. There will be one King, one faith, one world government - one perfect world. Ω

Request the articles:
God's Grand Design
A Message of Hope

Final Generation ...cont'd

than that. In a nutshell, the immediate return of Jesus was *conditional*.

Notice again Peter's response to this question: '*...The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*' (v.9).

Jesus' mission began at the culmination of centuries of divine patience: '*...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe in the gospel*' (Mark 1:14-15). He came '*...in the fulness of time*' (Galatians 4:4), and His message was one of *repentance*.

God's plan had focused in the nation of Israel (Matthew 15:24). They were the model to which all would aspire. Ut despite warning upon warning they despised the true way and killed His messengers. At the appropriate pre-set time the Father sent the Son. They rejected him, killed him.

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Repentance didn't happen. After forty years of further divine patience and apostolic preaching the axe fell on unrepentant Israel. The Temple, the centre of divine worship, was destroyed and the people were slaughtered or scattered. The old way passed and the true faith became personal. The public worship of the LORD would no longer be confined to Jerusalem and a material Temple - but centred in individual human hearts indwelt by the Spirit of God:

the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you know not: we worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such does the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

(See John 4:21-24).

Just You Wait

Those prophetic time passages are, in other words, conditional. Indeed this is clear from the inclusion of the Greek particle *an*. It is not directly translatable into English by a word but is implied. An example is in this very passage in Acts - ch 3:20. '*...it denotes that the action of the verb is dependent on some circumstance or condition*' (Arndt & Gingrich: *Greek-English Lexicon*).

The time was indeed then '*at hand*'. As was '*the end of all things*'. The '*coming of the LORD*' did indeed '*draw near*'. It was indeed '*the last time*'.

But only if Israel had repented.

In God's good and perfect timing, however, He *will* intervene to save Israel and all mankind - both from physical annihilation, and spiritually.

He who solemnly declares all this says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly' (Revelation 22:20)

A- Ω

MiniStudy

When You Are Ill

'A cheerful heart is a good medicine; But a broken spirit dries up the bones' (Proverbs 17:22)

'...who [Jesus] his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed' (I Peter 2:24)

It's our lot as humans to become ill. Most of us begin to crumble sooner or later, and committed Christians are by no means exempt. What do we do? For the comparatively few in our world who have access to skilled medical assistance the rational choice is to get help. Some choose the 'natural' route. But whatever we do, for most the help stops with 'what the doctor says'. The Bible, however, adds a further dimension. We must guard our health—especially in this time of a global health crisis.

- It shouldn't surprise us that there is so much illness in our world. Poverty, water shortages, poor hygiene and sanitation, impoverished diet, overcrowding, epidemics, lack of medical facilities - all contribute to illness. Add in self-inflicted factors - alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking, corrupt practices *etc* and the dire problem is compounded. The world's population 'explosion' doesn't help - now around approaching seven billion and growing. Nor do wars
- None of these factors are insoluble. Sort them out and there will be less illness—though poverty is more of a challenge. Said Jesus *'...you have the poor with you always, and whenever you will you may do them good'* (Mark 14:7). Many factors (including indolence) conspire to make folk 'poor'. We are, however, each responsible for our health within the parameters of our present circumstances, and all of us should strive to maintain health—especially believers
- The 'church' is God's Temple. He dwells in it - and in each of His children. It's proper that we each strive to 'cleanse' ourselves - to be not just spiritually but also physically clean so we can each fulfil our role as a 'living stone'. Christians, then, should not harm through use of noxious substances. Otherwise, the principle of *moderation* applies - what we eat, alcohol, exercise, and we should keep ourselves informed on best practice (without the fads!)
- The human body is a miraculous creation - literally. Except in extremes it is designed to self-heal within the limits of our genetic inheritance. But we each face the challenge of having been born human, with our sinful disposition, and the abuse—knowingly or in ignorance—of our body by wrong food intake, drugs, alcohol, tobacco *etc*. James, in the context of sickness, tells us to *'...confess our sins'; ie, to confront them (James 5:13-15)*. And to forsake them
- Some few Christians misapply Scripture texts and avoid *all* forms of medical intervention. Modern medicine is art supported by technology and skill - there is no religious element as perhaps was the case anciently. Some (though subscribing to that view) will, sensibly, permit repair surgery to the skeleton. Some few will turn to 'alternative therapies' but will avoid medication from the established medical profession - perhaps an illogical approach if you claim to 'trust God totally' for direct intervention and healing
- There is, however, additional weaponry for the believer in the battle against illness: *'...Is any one ill? Let him send for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, after anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up to health; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven'* (James 5: 14-15). The 'day of miracles' has not passed, and God continues, on request, to intervene for our healing when it is for our good Ω

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