

new **Horizons**

Vol 16 No 5

September/October 2012

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 e-mail Newsletter OUTREACH, the 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

It is distributed free on request, being a co-operative voluntary effort financed by the members and friends of the *Churches of God*. We also welcome the financial support of all who benefit from our publications and who wish to labour with us.

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

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The Day of Atonement represents in part the corporal (church) relationship with the Father

For ancient Israel—and indeed in modern Judaism—the most solemn annual observance is the great *Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur*. It’s a day when even secular Jews will fast and attend synagogue. It is one of seven annual gatherings instituted by God for His worship. Sadly, *Atonement* is ignored by Christians in general, thereby missing out on one of the most significant aspects of the divine plan.

A Special Day

Many Christians, however, con-

tinue to observe the day—held in autumn (the 10th day of the Hebrew seventh month). It is observed by able-bodied believers—appropriately, as we will see—with a day of fasting from all food and liquid. The fast begins in the evening through to the next evening (Leviticus 23:32). It is a special Sabbath day when all work ceases, and the brethren attend church services when available.

The *Day of Atonement* in its inception was a day of high colourful drama centred on the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple. It was the sole day in the year on which the Holy of Holies, God’s earthly throne-room, was entered. Every action, every sacrifice, even every item of clothing worn by the High Priest, (who alone officiated on

that day) has some representation in the life and mission of our present High Priest - the Messiah, Jesus. (See Hebrews 8-9)

The letter to Hebrews states: ‘... *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (ch 9:11-12).*

The High Priest, having first offered a sacrifice for his own sin,

The Great Day of Days

then entered with the blood of a sacrifice for the sins of the people, interceding with God on their behalf. This latter sacrifice was one of two identical goats, chosen by lot—one to be sacrificed and the other, to carry all the sin ‘into the wilderness’. In addition the sacrifices atoned for the sin that had accumulated on the Tabernacle through the confessions of the people since the previous Day of Atonement: ‘...*make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins: and so shall he do for the tent of meeting [the Tabernacle], that dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses*’ (Leviticus 16:16)

This ‘day of days’, for Israel, sig-

nified the complete removal of those sins that hindered complete restoration to the divine favour.

The Wilderness Goat

While the meaning for Christians is in general clear—that the High Priest represents Messiah—there are varied opinions on the significance of the *Azazel*, or wilderness goat. Simply, the two goats may be two sides of the same coin, both representing Messiah sacrificed and then bearing away our sin ‘...*as far as the east is removed from the west*’ (Psalm

103:12) The Baptist tells his hearers: ‘...*Behold the Lamb of God, which takes [carries] away the sin of the world*’ (John 1:29).

There is, however, dispute as to the significance of *Azazel* and its purpose. The text can read ‘...*to Azazel*’ implying a person or place. (See side-bar)

In the ritual of *Atonement* all Israel’s sins—sins that had accumulated throughout the year—were atoned for by the various sacrifices. The second goat wasn’t sacrificed but Israel’s sins—sins now forgiven—were transferred to it by the laying-on of hands of the High Priest. It was then led, alive, into the wilderness. Now with a ‘clean sheet’ the nation could proceed to another year of commitment to the LORD. The Tabernacle/Temple, too, had been cleansed.

Christian Practice

Given that all the ritual of the *Day of Atonement* was fulfilled in Jesus—does the Day have further significance for us? Is it not now irrelevant? Why do so many Christians continue to observe it with fasting and religious services? Is it any different from the *Passover* season which the apostle Paul indicates (I Corinthians 5:6-8) is a *Christian practice*?

Most Christians are not completely averse to observing an Old Testament festival, of course—they continue to observe the *Day of Pentecost*, for example. And a large Protestant organization (ICEJ) observes God's *Feast of Tabernacles* every year in Jerusalem. It is a truism that frequent

and regular observance of an event enhances our understanding of it (eg Christmas, for many). So with the festivals appointed by God for His people—one of which is this *Day of Atonement* (see previous page).

It is important to note that *Atonement* is a national event for Israel. *Passover*, however, is personal and

family, and for Christians is our annual re-commitment to the blood covenant with Jesus and the Father made at our baptism. *Passover*, preceded the evening before by the solemn remembrance of the suffering and death of our Saviour, represents our willingness to live a holy life, symbolized by the eating of unleavened bread—symbolic of corruption and sin—for seven days.

In Jewish demonology *Azazel*, also called *Sammael*, is an evil spirit that haunts the wilderness areas. In the non-canonical *book of Enoch* it refers to the leader of fallen angels who deceive mankind, recognized by some rabbis as Satan.

Unconverted mankind is in Scripture cast as being under the authority of Satan: '...We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one' (1 John 5:19). Satan—the Adversary (Zechariah 3:1), Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12), the Deceiver (Revelation 12:9), the Accuser (Job 1:9-11)—has mankind in subjection. He is the Devil who has power [*kratos*: dominion] over death (Hebrews 2:14). He is '...the god of this world [who] has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them' (II Corinthians 4:4).

Repent!

Note that *national* element. Christianity, the fulfillment of the old faith, has no place for animal sacrifice, nor special 'holy garments', nor is it tied to a location as the Jerusalem Temple. But it, the church of God, is God's Temple: '...All of you surely know that you are God's temple and that his Spirit lives in you. Together you are God's holy temple, and God will destroy anyone who destroys his temple' (I Corinthians 3:16-17 CEV).

The Church of God—God's Temple, the Body of Christ—is a unit, though clearly not outwardly! It is made up of all in whom dwells the divine Spirit. We share a love of the truth (II Thessalonians 2:10)—yet squabble over minor inter-

pretations. We share the same God—but disgrace His holy Name by our petty divisions. We sing '...all one body we'—but ostracize individuals and dissenting groups.

And, just as Israel annually cleansed the Temple by their *Atonement* ritual, so the Church of God must approach this *Day of Days* in that same spirit of confession and reconciliation. It is a momentous opportunity to heal wounds. A chance to forgive past hurts. A chance to forge common links. Opportunity to co-

operate, to leave behind petty finger-pointing and protectionism, to truly come to love one another.

All such is sin and defiles our God and His holy Name. Let us, on this *Day of Atonement 2012*, confess our personal and corporate sin, as did God's prophet Daniel: '...We [Judah] have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and from your judgments...O Lord, according to all your righteousness, I beseech you, let your anger and your fury be turned away...O my God, incline your ear, and hear; open your eyes, and behold our desolations: for we do not present our supplications before you for our righteousnesses, but for your great mercies; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for your own **cont'd p.8**

Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And you shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that does any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and you shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall you celebrate your sabbath

Leviticus 23:27-32

Fret Not

Steven Kieler

While reading Psalm 37, I came across the phrase “fret not” in verses 1,7 and 8. Since the Bible directives are vitally important (examples are *go, keep, do, forgive, repent, etc*) I thought about this “fret not”. Let's see how important it really is.

Let's think about all the things we can fret about. We can let our blood boil over taxes, get in a lather about crime, blow our stack when the government does something stupid. The list goes on.

Truly these things are frustrating and need to be fixed. So why does the Psalm say “fret not”? *Brown, Driver, Briggs*: definition defines *fret*: to be hot, furious, burn, become angry, be kindled. That sounds pretty intense.

The first usage is in Psalm 37:1 “*Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.*”

This principle was important enough that the wise King Solomon quoted it in Proverbs 24:19. We are surrounded by evildoers of every stripe, from petty thieves to murderers and rapists. But even so we are told to “fret not”. The reason given is in Psalm 37:2 “*For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*”

And then we are told how to deal with our feelings. “*Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.*” (vs,3).

The second thing to “fret not” up in conspiracy movements about is the ‘prosperous’. “*Rest in every day. Indeed I have found the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not yourself because of*

him who prospers in his way,.....”(v.7). There may be a bit of envy involved, wishing that you were in his position of wealth and apparent comfort, but the second half of the verse gives some insight. “*because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.*” (Psalm 37:7)

Not all men use their wealth and power to create evil but this man surely did. Sadly, we can identify many now, and in history, who have done just that.

Again, we must “fret not”. We must “*Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*” (8-9) There is grave danger in getting upset over the evil rich man. That anger, in itself, can make the person an evildoer causing him to be “cut off”. We must be patient and “wait upon the Lord” to exact His justice (Romans 12:19-21).

It is easy to go overboard in wrestling with evil. People get caught

true; so what's the problem?

There is a record in the book of Acts (*ch 5:36,37*) that speaks to conspiracies. Judas (not Iscariot) was involved in an enrollment (tax) rebellion and Theudas was involved in some sort of rebellion (conspiracy). More can be found on this in Josephus *bk.20 ch 5*. Their reasons for rebellion were probably legitimate, at least in their own minds. Their efforts were useless; both were slain and their followers were scattered and brought to nothing.

What is important is how you react to the evildoer, to conspiracy, or to the evil in relation to God's commands and desires. Let's not get ourselves in a dither about things which, in most cases we have no control over, and find comfort and peace as we end with these words of the Psalmist: “*For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace*” (*Psalms 37:10-11*). **Ω**

with the annual autumn festivals coming soon, you may find the following short articles helpful

The Feast of Tabernacles:

God's plan for the ages of man

Eternity: the closing of man's day

what happens after the Millennium?

A Message of Hope: the world of tomorrow

God's wonderful plan for mankind

The Feast of the Nativity

the real birthday of Jesus

IS THERE A 'TRUE CHURCH'?

Does one true church exist? If so, where is it? what is it? who belongs?

The Christian church has persisted down through two millennia. It's a fact of life. That 'church' has diverse forms from the majestic to the bizarre. Is any one of them 'the one true church'? Or, does it matter, as there are supposedly 'many ways to God'?

All churches unite in claiming that Jesus is the founder of Christianity and that the Bible is its text-book. But that is about the height of agreement! Who Jesus was, what was his mission, what did he teach—are in dispute. And there are as many differences as to the Bible's teachings. So—buried in all that theological debris is there 'one true church'?

Origins

We begin from what is an unassailable fact—Jesus lived. He was the Creator God's representative, sent from the heavenly realm to further His age-old divine plan for mankind. And he said '*...I will build [construct] my church*'. (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus, the longed-for Messiah, impacted the world some two thousand years ago. His mighty works were known throughout the land raising hopes of the overthrow of the Roman domination of Judaea and the establishment of an independent Kingdom under his kingship. It wasn't to be, for that wasn't his purpose. Rather he

came to gather those whom the Father would select as His future sons and daughters—the key personnel for His future rulership of mankind. *These* are 'the church'.

Rejected Words

Look around our world—there are some two billion 'Christians', nearly one in three of mankind. There are the 'saintly', of course, and there are the rogues and thugs. There are the moral and the immoral. There are those who take up arms against fellow Christians. There are Christians who ignore God's Sabbaths and substitute non-Biblical days for worship. There are Christians who see no harm with adultery or with neglect of the elderly or with 'keeping up with the Joneses'—tenets of the 'Ten Commandments' of which Jesus said: '*...Heaven and earth may disappear. But I promise you that not even a period or comma will ever disappear from the Law. Everything written in it must happen*' (Matthew 5:18 CEV). All fundamental tenets of the Christian faith.

Again: '*... Every tree that produces bad fruit will be chopped down and burned. You can tell who the false prophets are by their deeds. Not everyone who calls me their Lord will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only the ones who obey my Father in heaven will get in*' (Matthew 7:19-21 CEV). And yet, while rejecting such words of the Founder, they claim to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Again the question: *where is the*

Je-
sus

true church?

A Spiritual Body

Clearly, there has to be a uniting factor that identifies that 'true' church. The apostle Paul pinpoints that factor: '*...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*' (Romans 8: 9). The mind-set of Christ. The attitude of Christ. The behaviour of Christ. As he himself said: '*...You shall know them by their fruits*' (Matthew 7:16). And that fruit? '*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*' (Galatians 5:22-25).

The perfect Christian, of course, has yet to come—all of us err, all from time to time fail. (And it follows, therefore, that the 'true church' itself isn't perfect!)

Writes the apostle Paul: '*...I don't do what I know is right. I do the things I hate*'...But while that Spirit is active in us—the indwelling presence of the Father and of Jesus—we are His sons and daughters and part of that one true church.

A Change of Direction

The apostle Peter outlines the way to receive that Spirit: '*...Turn back to God! [KJV: repent] Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit*' (Acts 2:38 CEV). He later adds: '*...Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [ie Je-*

sus] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (ch 4:12). And'...we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him' (ch 5:32).

'Obey' equates with those words of Jesus (Matthew 5:18f) in regard to the vital importance of the divine Law. It was at the heart of the apostolic teaching from the beginning. Near the end of his ministry the apostle Paul, for example, claims: '*...I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers [ie historic Judaism]*' (Acts 28:17), and before the Governor Festus: '*...Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all'* (ch 25:8). Indeed John defines sin as '*...the transgression of the Law'* (I John 3:4).

Idolatry

God, then, will give His Spirit, the essence of His Being, to those who are willing to make this change of direction, to those who turn from all those false faiths that flood our world. As Paul wrote approvingly to the brethren in Thessalonica: '*...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God'*.

Following the death of King Solomon, the ancient House of Israel separated from the House of Judah. Their newly-appointed king, Jeroboam, sank into idolatrous practices, in part by changing the days God had appointed for worship. Ever after he was branded as the one who 'caused Israel to sin'. From there it was

all downhill to national humiliation and loss of sovereignty at the hands of neighbouring nations.

The true church, then, is found among those who '*...keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'* (Revelation 12:17). Men and women who, in face of rejection by friends and family, despite a total change of their life-style to reflect God's revealed will, sometimes loss of employment and hard times—yet determined to turn from false teachings and to base their life solely on the revealed Word of God.

The '*YouNameIt Church'* may or may not be a fair representation of the Bible pattern for the church Jesus is building. If you belong to it you can check its credentials by carefully comparing its teachings with the Christian Scriptures, noting especially the words of Jesus. That will take diligent, prayerful research carried out with a mind open to what God is telling you. As Jesus repeatedly told his hearers: '*...he that has ears to hear let him hear'*.

To receive God's Spirit and thus become part of the one true church must surely rank high in anyone's list of priorities. Said Jesus: '*...If you reject even the least important command in the Law and teach others to do the same, you will be the least important person in the kingdom of heaven. But if you obey and teach others its commands, you will have an important place in the kingdom'* (Matthew 5:19 CEV). Ω

Holy Spirit ...cont'd from p.6

The Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses by making intercession for us. And we become sons and daughters of God by having God's Spirit in us.

Finally, God's Spirit is so important that if anyone blasphemes against it, God will not forgive that person; therefore, that person cannot receive eternal life.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit—the mind and essence of the Godhead is that ingredient vital to inheriting life everlasting.

In conclusion, how important is the Holy Spirit? Eternal life depends on its active presence in our lives. Ω

BIBLE HELP

The church is '*...the pillar and ground of the truth'* (I Timothy 3:15). It supports divinely-revealed truth, and truth is its foundation. Through its teachings you may discern the authentic word of God.

Should you have difficulty with any texts—or anything in *New Horizons* or any of our publications—we are here to be of assistance or to discuss with you our understanding of a matter.

Write to us at any of our addresses—or contact us by e-mail (preferably!).

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

How Important is the Holy Spirit?

Bill Faith

It was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was first freely given. First, it came upon the 120 disciples gathered together in one place. Then later that morning after Peter had spoken to the crowd that gathered, explaining to them what had happened, about three thousand people were baptized and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41).

It is interesting that on the day the Holy Spirit was first freely given that the three thousand received a down payment for eternal life; but on the day that Moses received the Law written in stone on Mt. Sinai an equal number of people, about three thousand, were killed (Exodus 32:28).

What makes it even more interesting is that tradition has it that the Law was given to Moses on the day of Pentecost. In a way, it is a reminder that the letter of the Law kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Have you ever wondered how important the Holy Spirit is? To answer that question in one sentence: it is vital. The Apostle Paul wrote, "...If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9). So how important is the Holy Spirit? As we can see from this scripture, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ! Since there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, other than Jesus

Christ (Acts 4:10-12), then whether or not we have the Spirit of Christ determines whether or not we can receive eternal life.

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:15-17). By having the Spirit of God in us we officially become begotten children of God, giving us the right to call Him Father. And because we are begotten by the Holy Spirit, we are now heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

So we see that the Spirit of God even helps our weaknesses so that we can overcome our sins. It even provides for us in ways that we are not aware of, such as making intercession for us *'...with groan-*

ings that we cannot hear'.

To help answer the question as to how important the Holy Spirit is, let's read the words of Christ in Mark 3:28-29. *"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemies against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation."* Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is such a serious offense that it will not be forgiven! And if it will not be forgiven, whoever commits it cannot receive salvation.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy he warned that in the last days men would have a form of godliness, but that they would deny its power (2 Timothy 3:1,5). The word, "Power" means *force* (literally or figuratively); specifically it means miraculous power (usually by implying a miracle itself). Undoubtedly, Paul was referring to the power of the Holy Spirit when he wrote that people would be denying it. Paul then added in verse 5, *"And from such people turn away!"*

To summarize how important the Holy Spirit is, we find that it is very important. Without it, we cannot be Christ's; and to not be Christ's means that we cannot receive salvation, because the only way that we can receive salvation is through Jesus Christ our Savior

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome our sins, yet in these last days we will find that people will be denying its power.

cont'd p.5

STUDY THE WORD
Be sure to enroll for our free 32-lesson Study Course. It's a key to what is for many a 'Book of Mystery'

unsigned articles are by the Editor

Prophetic dates come and they go. What about December 21 2012?

A day of doom. No point taking to the hills, for earth's billions will not see tomorrow's sun. Alignment of planets, a colliding planet (Nibiru), a shifting polar axis, reversal of earth's magnetic field, a 'beam' from the centre of the Milky Way, catastrophic earthquakes and tsunamis. All coming to focus on December 21 this year.

You may as well forget your silver and your gold and your investments. Nor will what you have stashed under the mattress be of any further value. Make peace with all you have offended—and with God. It is the end.

That's the scenario that is being painted, based on an interpretation of an ancient Mayan prophecy.

Books, films, theatre—there's no shortage of information about December 21, 2012. Millions believe it marks the 'end of civilisation as we know it'. It's even asserting that there is a conspiracy by the world's scientific and political authorities to hide the facts. But is it true? Is this 'the end' for all of us?

The End

Not that the Mayans predicted such for this now infamous date. For them it simply marks the end of one time

period—as, for example, did the rolling over of the twentieth century into the twenty-first. But it makes for good telly! [*See sidebar*]

Written into the folk memory of all peoples, all nations, is the concept of an 'end' to civilisation. It may be a subconscious memory of the worldwide destruction of mankind by the Great Flood in the days of Noah, over four thousand years ago—a folk

memory. [Examples are documented in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed] But terrible disasters do happen—and not infrequently. And predictions of such an end abound—one estimate was of 'thousands' of failed predictions of world's end.

What exactly is the Maya calendar about to do? On Dec. 21, 2012, it will display the equivalent of a string of zeros, like the odometer turning over on your car, with the close of something like a millennium. In Maya calendrics, however, it's not the end of a thousand years. It's the end of *Baktun 13*. The Maya calendar was based on multiple cycles of time, and the *baktun* was one of them. A *baktun* is 144,000 days: little more than 394 years NASA

Bible Truth

Let's focus, however, on the Bible, the Christian Scriptures. What is meant by 'the *...end of the world*' (Matthew 24:3)? More accurately '*...the consummation of the ages*'. The disciples asked Jesus about this.

But for these disciples 'the end' signified the introduction of a new order—the overthrow of oppressive Roman dominion, the establishment of a Jewish Kingdom with Jesus as King, just as predicted by the prophets. *It was not a 'December 21' scenario!*

New World Order

Many 'prophecy buffs' are getting quite excited by the thought of 'the end'. That end, Biblically, while being catastrophic for the majority of mankind—yet heralds a new era.

It is an era of peace among nations.

DECEMBER 21

An era of even-handed justice. An era—a thousand years—of prosperity, of abundant resources properly used, of health and well-being.

All resulting from an almost universal change in the human heart, coupled with the benign rule of Messiah and the saints.

What's the Time?

Many Christians infer from various texts of Scripture that God has assigned mankind six thousand years to 'do his own thing', following which He will intervene through the return of Jesus to set us right.

The start point—and the end—of that period is disputed. Some believe the end point is imminent, though the Hebrew calendar denotes this year as 5772 (years from creation). Based on creation as 4004BC (a date accepted by many) the six thousand years now should have expired.

What must be emphasized, however, is that God always acts on time—*His* time. Yet there are many siren voices focusing on a variety of dates for 'the end'. At this time there is no 'sure word of the Lord' as to when Jesus will return, though that time may come—in *His* time

No matter when—this year or in 228 years or some far distant era—it is for each of us to be daily serving God, our lives a 'living sacrifice', and preparing to reign with Jesus when that world-ruling Kingdom arrives. Ω

Autumn Festivals 2012

Trumpets	September 17
Atonement	September 26
Tabernacles	October 1-7
Closing Day	October 8

*For further reading...
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TIME TO 'DO GOD'

There's a God-shaped hole at every 'summit'. When will world leaders have the humility to deal with it?

We are in a mess. Not many would quarrel with that assessment of the world's economy. World 'leaders' in summit after sumptuous summit in exotic locations discuss the current challenges and endlessly produce lengthy anodyne reports that fail to address them.

Economists (and Prime Ministers) draw up multi-point plans to tackle the dilemma of public and private debt. All very useful—but spectacularly missing the real problem.

The core of our on-going financial catastrophe is the attitude—shared by individuals and by governments—'eat, drink and enjoy yourself; The multi-trillion dollar US debt, the profligacy of the previous UK Government, the feckless refusal in Greece to pay their due taxes, the reckless borrowing in Ireland and Spain—all exemplify this adage.

In the beginning...

The missing dimension in economic theory is ...*God*. Do you ever hear our politicians mention the 'G word'? 'We don't do God' - and even though we are forever bombarded with 'God bless America' yet God's solutions are not just sidelined there but reversed.

Until the divine principles are embraced nations will continue to stumble from crisis to crisis. Western democratic societies have been beneficiaries of long-promised divine blessing. All we have and are derives from our in-born ability to properly exploit the planet's resources. It never was 'ours'. Hear God's warning: It applies universally—far beyond the bounds of ancient Israel, for it is

God who '... has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord Acts 17:26-27

Principles

The Psalmist asks: '...*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*' (Psalm 11:3). In our day the foundations of good and wise government have, worldwide, crumbled. And the man-in-the – street asks this same question. As does our confused and inept leadership

The 'world' is too committed to

If you willingly obey me, the best crops in the land will be yours. But if you turn against me, your enemies will kill you. I, the LORD, have spoken. Once your judges were honest and your people lived right; now you are a city full of murderers. Your silver is fake, and your wine is watered down. Your leaders have rejected me to become friends of crooks; your rulers are looking for gifts and bribes. Widows and orphans never get a fair trial

Isaiah 1:19-23 CEV

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'doing its own thing' to make the change necessary for survival. That change will come—but in God's good time. But at this time the Father is calling out a people for Himself and preparing them for rulership in tomorrow's world.

So—what can *we* do, as followers of Jesus the Messiah?

In short, do what Jesus did. The detail may be disputed, but the broad outline is clear. He has laid the sure foundation for his people to follow. In contrast to 'the world' God must be our constant companion (Psalm 10:4). We constantly evaluate our thoughts and our actions in the light of His revealed Word. It is a signpost to the true values in contrast to the 'me, me' culture that has brought our nations to their knees—economically, socially, sexually.

The apostle Paul sums up the Christian position: '...*if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*

Ω

Day of Days ...cont'd

sake, O my God' (ch 9:5-19). God heard, and it was the prelude to their restoration to the Land.

In these uncertain days the Churches of God should be 'a city set on a hill', a light shining in a darkened world dominated by a Satanic mindset, demonic practices, demonic teachings and led astray by seducing spirits—I Timothy 4:1). The church of God is—should be, must become—an example for the world of true reconciliation and harmonious relationships

Why is there stagnation? Perhaps the lessons of this *Day of Days* may awaken the churches to God's purpose for us.

Ω

MiniStudy**Atonement: a missing dimension**

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one' (I John 5:19 RV)

Unregenerate mankind is, in Scripture, cast as being under the authority of Satan. The apostle John, for example, enlightens us in his letters (*see above text*). Since mankind, in Adam, voluntarily submitted to this evil fallen cherub the Father has given our species over to a limited exercise of Satan's spiritual power.

- Satan was in his origins one of the mighty cherubim who guarded the throne of God. He is depicted as 'the King of Tyre': '*...You were the anointed cherub that covers: and I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you' (Ezekiel 28:2, 14)*
- He was ejected from his powerful role, and is used by God to further His plans. *Genesis 3* describes how he deceived Eve and induced Adam to choose his way in contrast to God's way
- This habit of Satanic deception has embroiled the whole of mankind. In vivid imagery the apostle John relays the view of Jesus '*...the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him' (Revelation 12:9)*
- Paul adds that Satan, as this world's 'god' in its many forms, has successfully hidden the divine truth '*...if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them' (II Corinthians 4:3-4 RV)*. By his deception the true faith has been universally suppressed, with even Christianity embracing false concepts: '*...the Spirit says expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils' (I Timothy 4:1)*
- Elsewhere in Scripture, Satan is revealed as the Adversary of the people of God: '*...he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary' (Zechariah 3:1)*. He is the Accuser (Job 1:9-11, Revelation 12:10).
- The ritual of the *Day of Atonement* (Leviticus 16) may be understood as to portray the role of Satan, designated as *Azazel*, in regard to the transgressions of the saints. Having been forgiven root and branch they are laid at the door of Satan to demonstrate that he no longer has power or dominion over us. Jesus was made human '*...that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Hebrews 2:14)*. Because Christians have covenanted, asserted by our baptism, to commit to God's will the devil has no power over us—though it doesn't stop him trying: '*...Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour' (I Peter 5:8, James 4:7)*
- John adds to the analogy. Satan will in the end-time muster mankind in a last attempt to overthrow the true faith (Revelation 13:3-9). Messiah, however, will return to depose him from his earthly throne and to usher in the millennial reign: '*... I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand [cf Leviticus 16:21]. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished' (Revelation 20:1-3)*
- As Israel's sins were carried on the live goat and led into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22), so Satan will be removed for a thousand years from all his malign influence over the affairs of mankind into the 'bottomless pit' (Gk. *abyss*)—a place of restraint. Those sins have separated all mankind from the Father (Isaiah 59:2). Now through the awesome sacrifice of Jesus and the Father all mankind will be reconciled to them Ω

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