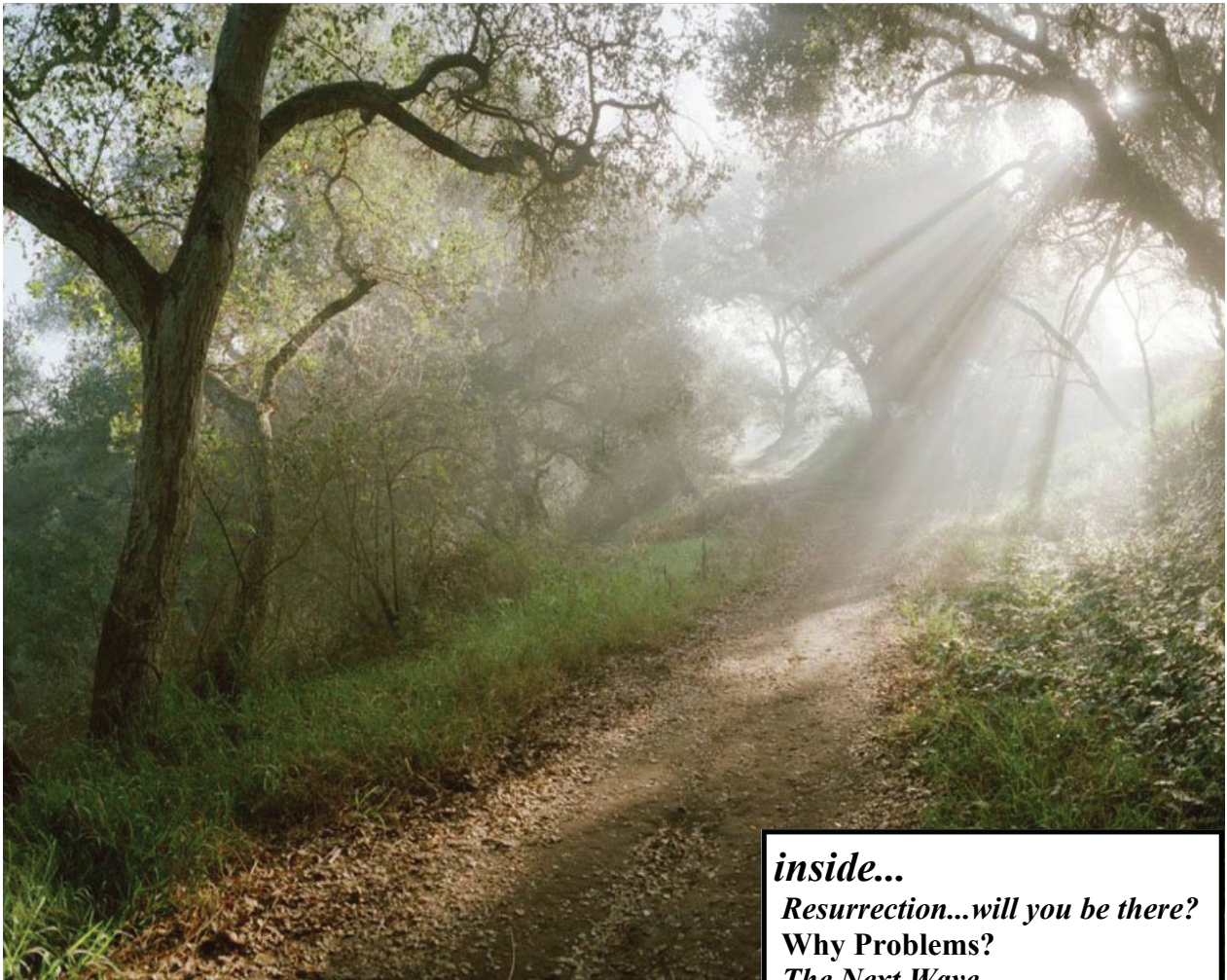


new **Horizons**

Vol 17 No 1

January/February 2013

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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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

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new Horizons

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The Christian hope is the resurrection from the dead. Who will take part in that 'first' resurrection? Will everyone—all two billion—who professes Christianity? Will you?

The apostle Paul tells us: '... if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable' (I Corinthians 15:16-19). No matter what life throws at us—and Christians are not immune to trouble—we are assured of a return from the grave to live for ever—and with no physical challenges to battle. But *who* will experience that momentous event?

Saints Awake

Let's look first at when that resurrection takes place. The Bible is clear that when we die we are—as says Paul in the above quotation—'...fallen asleep'. Our resurrection follows the wake-up call: '...the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed' (v.52). The apostle John relays the words of Jesus: '...This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years' (Revelation 20: 5-6).

The 'first' resurrection (there are others!) thus takes place after the

return of Jesus and at the beginning of his thousand-year reign over our planet. It is when the 'firstfruits' harvest is gathered into the Kingdom of God. Writes James, the brother of Jesus: '...Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures' (James 1:18). Paul, too: '... [Christians] have the firstfruits of the Spirit' (Romans 8:23).

Law of Life

The apostle Paul encountered a group of sceptical Greek intellectuals in Athens: '...when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear you again of this matter' (Acts 17:32). On another occasion, before Governor Felix (who was well-

because God gives everything the kind of body he wants it to have. People, animals, birds, and fish are each made of flesh, but none of them are alike' (I Corinthians 15:36-39 CEV).

He draws the analogy with human death and life: '...So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body' (vv. 42-44). A transformation occurs. A seed looks nothing like the mature plant dictated by its DNA, yet maintains all the mother plant's characteristics.

The Human Spirit

The seed is 'created' within the mother plant, and will reproduce it. Its reproductive energy (growth potential) is protected by and drawing sustenance from its surrounding shell and activated by the water in the soil. It follows strict biological laws of reproduction, each after its kind. Each seed enshrines the DNA of its parents.

Similarly, there is within each human being a 'spirit': '...there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding' (Job 32:8). The human spirit records the blueprint of all that we are, physically, intellectually—and, scarily, morally. It is sustained by the living body in which it resides, and is inactive without a body. To use a modern analogy: the human spirit is like the 'hard drive' in a computer. Apart from an energy source and operating instructions (the software

The Resurrection ...will you be there?

versed in the affairs of the Jews), Paul's discussion about resurrection evoked fear in the Governor (*ch* 24:25). And to this day there is scepticism and fear and disbelief surrounding the concept of a resurrection. from among the dead, despite the undoubted resurrection of Jesus himself. Yet resurrection is perfectly logical, and has the firm foundation of biological law.

Paul addresses such arguments—calling their proponents 'fools', lacking sense. He calls on natural processes to explain what he sees as the obvious. Take a look around, he says: '...A seed must die before it can sprout from the ground. Wheat seeds and all other seeds look different from the sprouts that come up. This is

programme) it is inert—to all intents and purposes dead, or certainly ‘asleep’. The apostle, of course, uses the analogy of ‘sleep’ for those who have died (eg I Corinthians 15:6, 18), as did Jesus of Lazarus (John 11:11).

Upon death of the individual the spirit is preserved until the resurrection: ‘...the dust [our dead body] returns to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it’ (Ecclesiastes 12:27). In the book of Hebrews we are told: ‘...It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (ch 9:27). Everyone is raised from the grave to face the Judge of all.

At the time of the first resurrection all God’s faithful since Adam who have died before then and whose spirit is preserved in God will receive a body appropriate to their status in Christ (I Corinthians 15: 41). The physical body of everyone in Christ alive at that time will be transformed into a spiritual body: ‘...There is a natural [Gk *psuchikos*] body, and there is a spiritual [Gk *pneumatikos*] body’ (v. 44). The spirit body of Jesus, note, had both flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). A real body. Writes John: ‘...it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him’ (I John 3:2).

Paul clarifies: ‘...who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself’ (Philippians 3:21).

Who Qualifies?

Who, then, will experience that glorious first resurrection?

Just because you ‘go to church on Sunday’ or on a census form you say ‘Religion: Christian’—does that qualify you to live for ever as a member of the God Family, or, as most

Christians think, qualify you for ‘heaven’ (Ephesians 2:19)? Or, do your ‘good works’ qualify you?

Consider the apostle Paul’s words in Romans 8:11: ‘...if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you’. Notice the ‘if’. For that’s what qualifies us—we must be ‘...in Christ’ and he in us. Paul again: ‘... you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his’ (v. 9).

It’s the experience that many Christians, mistakenly, call ‘born again’. It is conversion—turning from man’s ways to God’s ways. It follows repentance, *real* repentance and baptism: ‘...godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, a repentance not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world finally produces death’ (II Corinthians 7:10).

Death—not resurrection to eternal life. It is a response to the Father’s invitation. Once we have made that change and been baptized we can receive that in-dwelling Spirit. A very real act of God, uniting our spirit with His.

A Transformed Life

That action of the Almighty God initiates a process of change in our lives, a transformation as we become a ‘new person Christ’: ‘...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.’ (II Corinthians 5:17). Change in how and when we worship, change in our day-to-day behaviour as we learn to conform to the pattern of life exemplified by Jesus. A real *change of heart*.

Each of us, Christian or non-Christian—if we desire to be part

World of Spirit

It is a fallacy to assume that the word ‘spirit’ (Heb. *ruach*, Gk. *pneuma*) always implies *indestructible*. God alone, who *is* Spirit, is such. Animals, for example, have a ‘spirit’ (*ruach*) - but they are not immortal (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

The disembodied spirits of Satan’s ‘angels’ will in the end be destroyed, as will any human who finally rejects the grace of God (Revelation 21:8).

Because those who are ‘in Christ’ have their human spirit in union with God’s Holy Spirit they, too, will be immortal (Romans 8:11).. The ‘angels of God’—His messengers—are spirit, with spirit bodies. They will remain as God’s servants for as long as they stay faithful.

Don’t think of a disembodied spirit in terms of form and shape. Multiple thousands can inhabit one receptive human (Mark 5:13)!

In sum, there are four ‘grades’ of spirit. God’s, angelic, human, and animal. Each has its own characteristics, abides by its own laws.

There’s widespread misunderstanding as to what happens when we die. For a brief explanation you are invited to request the articles

When Someone Dies After the Resurrection God’s Grand Design

free from any of our addresses, or on-line at www.cgom.org/articles

of that resurrection—must examine ourselves to discern whether or not we have truly and personally made that change.

Jeremiah records God’s words: ‘... I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me’. *you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you’* (ch 29:13-14). Ω

Why Do We Have Problems?

Problems—they are part and parcel of life for all of us. *Why?*

It would seem to be a ‘no-brainer’—the obvious course—that if we knew *why* we face problems then we could avoid them. It is reflected in the words recorded by King Solomon: ‘...*When you see trouble coming, don't be stupid and walk right into it-- be smart and hide*’ (Proverbs 22:3 and repeated 27:12 CEV).

How often, for example, could we kick ourselves over failure to take action. It's the ancient saying, ‘*a stitch in time saves nine*’. We see the problem developing but through neglect the ‘garment’ becomes a throwaway.

We don't, however, always see trouble coming. It lunges at us out of the blue: ... *I saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all*’ (Ecclesiastes 9:11). It could, for example, be an earthquake, a devastating flood.

Yet even there it is a result of, somewhere, somehow a fundamental principle—indeed a ‘law’—has been broken. It is said (‘chaos theory’) that a butterfly fluttering its wings in China could spark a hurricane in the Atlantic!

Consequences

Stray too close to a sea cliff—or build too near it—and sooner or

later over they go. The ‘law’ says that the sea causes coastal erosion. Or fall from a height and there are foreseeable consequences. Neglect a business and it will fold—the ‘laws’ of commercial sense have been ignored. Neglect your finances or be profligate—or lazy—and debt mounts. Smoke tobacco for half your life and your chances of pain-wracked cancer multiply. Or, wallow in sewage and drink polluted water—as do so many in our world—and there are inevitable consequences. Again, inviolable laws governing bodily health have not been followed whether of not you or they knew about the link.

Shift upwards to the *moral* plane and ‘laws’ also take their inexorable toll. You may be ignorant of the laws of sexual health, but that doesn't stop promiscuity and adultery bearing their deadly fruit. Nourish a grudge or be often angry or be lustful and they take a heavy toll on your health and welfare. For God has made clear that such practices run counter to the way He created us to function.

God of Law

We might ask, *Why does it have to be this way?* In some cultures it is down to ‘fate’. *Que sera sera. Whatever will be will be*. In a Christian culture we are more likely to say ‘*Why does God allow this?*’ (Even when we have rejected the concept of ‘God’!) But that's a good question, and the answer goes to the heart of all

human suffering.

Origins

No matter what cosmologists and philosophers may think they know about origins, spirit and matter came from somewhere. *Something* didn't evolve out of *nothing*. That Source is what is universally known as ‘God’: ‘...*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*’ (Hebrews 11:3). Better: ‘...*that which is seen has arisen from things which do not appear*’. (Is that hidden force the mysterious and elusive ‘dark matter’ cosmologists are now probing?)

Only the one true Creator God has the awesome power and wisdom to conceive and create out of the invisible the vastness of the universe (in the sense of all existing matter) and its multi-layered complexity of physical and chemical and spiritual laws. ‘...*[God] preserves them all*’ (Nehemiah 9:6). And ‘...*By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together*’ (Hebrews 1:3 CEV).

Earth hangs on nothing—because God appointed the laws which suspend it there (Job 26:7). All life exists in accord with the laws of biology: plant and animal life reproduce themselves according to law. We fall down and not up, a balloon rises and doesn't fall, wood burns—law again. God, then, is a God of Law—physical, chemical, biological. And spiritual. Transgression of each of these spheres has its consequences. Or, as says *cont'd p.8*

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

The Next Wave

Steven J. Kieler

What is the next 'wave' to hit the church? We have seen administrative struggles forever, but winds of doctrine are, well, like the wind, they come and go, sometimes strong sometimes slow. Could we see another flurry of false doctrine?

The Bible seems to indicate just such a scenario in 2 Peter 2:1(KJV) *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."*

One defense is to know your enemy, so let's see what we can find in Satan's playbook.

Someone once said that the argument is never about what the argument is about and I believe it to be true quite often. Let's look beyond all the "winds of doctrine" *per se* and examine the motive, the driving force, behind these recurring storms.

Here are some observations that we will look into:

1. *The same scriptures are used to prove opposite opinions and different doctrinal views.*
2. *The "new" ideas are self-justified by:*
 - a. Eureka! I have found "new truth".
 - b. A desire for freedom from "outmoded" rules or rulers.
 - c. The belief: "The Holy Spirit revealed it to me".
3. *Many ideas come from, what I call, back-room theology.*

Let me address those points.

#1—Opposing Views

Someone may say: "My interpretation of scripture is right." But the Scriptures are NOT of private inter-

pretation. (2Peter1:20) They may then argue that someone else sees it too, so it's not private. The problem is that "private" may include 'our' or 'us' as well as 'me' or 'my'. That is to say, a person may find a friend or more who can easily be persuaded to agree with his cockamammy ideas. It's too easy to be persuaded by the argument itself without checking facts, using logic and seeking wisdom. Shakespeare said: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." A multitude of wise counselors is required.

#2—New Truth

Let's keep this as brief as possible. There are few 'new' ideas. Everyone wants to do "what is right in his own eyes". It goes against human nature to admit that there are people smarter than ourselves, or that we are under 'authority' or 'rule'. You can discern, with a little thought, the real truth of whether the Holy Spirit is leading or not. Examine the motive, the method and the message. And don't forget to look at the fruits. Does it produce strife and division or peace, unity and love. Think also, why do we need "new truth" when we can't even utilize the truth we have?

#3—Back-room Theology

What I see here are usually thoughts by armchair theologians that may have a nice 'ring' to them or even an element of truth. It moves, not through a committee or multitude of counsellors, but often comes from one who is isolated from fellowship; he may be an obscure malcontent with an axe to grind or trying to make a name for himself. Sorry but that's my observation. The danger of the loner is that iron must sharpen iron and he has no one to challenge him, to ask pointed questions. There is great wisdom and safety in using many "proof-readers".

Coupled with this is the current trend to get your theology from popular books, movies, or T.V. programs.

The proliferation of ideas is facilitated by our various broad and instant communications. These may contain some good information, great ideals and be inspiring. Unfortunately they are commonly a medium for all sorts of ideas and differing doctrines written by people who have never even read the Scriptures—much less studied them.. It is as though doctrine were decided by persuasion and public debate or entertainment.

There is a dearth of understanding, wisdom and Spirit-led communication and that produces the fruits of diverse doctrines and divisions. The good fruits are not as crisp, fresh and bountiful as they need be.

The Bible has a basic set of doctrines and procedures. Now, they are all up for grabs. Is it possible to be 'closer' to truth? No, we have either truth OR error. Having only an element of truth, which many false doctrines have, is Satan's ploy. It's syncretism, a mixture of truth and error.

We never were, or can be, perfect of course; but where has our openness taken us? It has led us, mostly to confusion, argument, and disunity. We are reduced to every man doing "that which is right in his own eyes." And that's tunnel vision at best.

There are places in our knowledge where we are in doubt and confused at times. Paul instructs in Hebrews 13:17 (KJV) to: *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."*

Obey has a unique and wonderful definition: Strong's #3982. *peitho*, *pi'-tho*; a *prim. Verb*, by anal. to *pacify* or *conciliate* (by other fair means); *reflex. or pass. to assent* (to evidence or authority), *to rely* (by inward certainty):--*agree, assure,*

The World of Angels

Some claim to have seen them, even been helped by them when in trouble. What are they? Do they really exist?

Aeons ago God created our Universe. Having devised laws in harmony with a particular physical environment, the ever-living God created matter and set in motion the formation of our planet as we now see it. We enter the scene when Earth has developed into a sphere hanging in space (Job 26:7), and perfectly positioned to maintain an environment suitable to sustain life as we know it.

Earth is in darkness and covered with a liquid—water or liquid gases. Then followed the electro-magnetic spectrum (energy, light *etc*) (Genesis 1:1-5). Now God issues the commands for the separation of land and water, and the creation of vegetable, animal—and, the pinnacle of creation, human life.

Created Beings

But before this God had created another race of beings—'angels' (Gk. *angeloi*)—to carry out His purpose.

Of the patriarch Job God asks: *'...How did I lay the foundation for the earth? Were you there? Doubtless you know who decided its length and width. What supports the foundation? Who placed the cornerstone, while morning stars sang, and angels rejoiced?'* (Job 38:5-7). The creation of angels, that is, preceded the material creation.

Angelic Nature

The angels were created, as was Adam, 'perfect' but with freedom to choose to do right or to do wrong. They are 'spirits' (Gk *pneuma*, Hebrews 1:7) but also have a body, evidenced by several factors.

Angels frequently appear in the material world, and in Scripture are usually simply called 'men'. They could eat ordinary food, could touch and be touched, get dirty, behave like any human being. Angels might even turn up as 'strangers' on your doorstep (Hebrews 13:2).

They have a body—yes. But it complies with a different set of laws from the animal or the human body: *'...All flesh is not the same: there is human flesh, and flesh of cattle, of birds, and of fishes. There are bodies which are celestial [ie, in heaven: God, angels] and there are bodies which are earthly, but the glory of the celestial ones is one thing, and that of the earthly ones is another'* (I Corinthians 15:39-40).

There's no reason to assume that angels did not—as, similarly, did the post-resurrection Jesus—have a form of substance, *'...flesh and bones'*, in a very real way (Luke 24:39, John 20:27). It is a 'spirit-body' (Gk *pneumatikos*) but not inherently immortal divine Spirit, as is God (I Timothy 6:16). As created beings they are not immortal but keep their 'spirit-body' only as long as they remain faithful to God.

Beyond Human

In the book of *Hebrews* in the New Testament we are told that the angels, described throughout the Scriptures in various ways, are in some manner created superior to man (*ch* 2:7).

As God's messengers, they are tasked to execute His will, and as such are equipped with powers beyond the human. Thus we find them (Genesis 19) involved in the destruction, at God's behest, of 'the cities of the plain', Sodom and Gomorrah. Or in God's correction of Israel (II Samuel 24:16). They counteracted forces of evil (*cp* Daniel 9), and will have active involvement in end-time events (*eg* Revelation 19:15).

Angels have continual access to the Father in the heavenly realm (Matthew 18:10), and can move through air and navigate through space (to heaven and back, for example). They can pass through locked doors, can become invisible—as in that incident with the imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). They perfectly process 'angel food'—'*manna*'. (Psalm 78:25)

Action Men

Angelic beings have a vital role in God's interventions in the affairs of men. While He doesn't enforce His sovereign will yet God influences events by arranging circumstances to achieve His purpose—often using the angels whom He has created. They are a means by which God communicates His message to man.

We find an example in Daniel 9. Daniel, aware that the promised return of the Jews from exile in Babylon was near (*ch* 9:2), prayed for God's help. (The request was in accord with God's will.) A powerful angel was immediately despatched to answer, giving to Daniel the outline of God's plan for the return, and time-line leading to the coming of Messiah, Jesus the Christ, some 490 years later—the 'seventy week prophecy'.

The Dark Side

Another angelic encounter with Daniel (*chs* 10-12) unveils the dark side of the angelic world. In answer to Daniel's prayer, and in detail, a

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powerful angel lifts the veil that enshrouds events on earth.

The angel explains his delay in responding to Daniel's prayer: '*... the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me*' (ch 10: 13). [Michael is an archangel, high in the angelic hierarchy—Jude v.9].

The incident reveals that earthly kingdoms are in thrall to adverse spiritual powers. Indeed, the whole of mankind is deceived by their chief, Satan, who is also called '*...the god of this world [who] has blinded the minds of those who believe not*' (II Corinthians 4:4).

John further describes this being as '*...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world*' (Revelation 12:9). The prophet Isaiah foresaw, however, that God will in His time, '*...destroy in this mountain [ie Jerusalem] the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations*' (Isaiah 25:7).

Battle Stations

The apostle Paul explains: '*...We [Christians] are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world*' (Ephesians 6:12 CEV). He {the Devil} is described by Peter as our 'adversary': '*...Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world*' (I Peter 5:8-9).

As our adversary, the devil's mindset is to destroy our faith, to sow doubt, to cause believers to stumble.

Satanic Origins

These beings were in their beginning

created as angels of God, their prince being among those closest to the Father, described as '*...the anointed cherub...You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you*' (Ezekiel 28:14). Note that—they were not automatons but created beings endowed with free will, capable of *sin*. And they—including Lucifer (Satan)—did just that, big time.

Cosmic War

Satan, however had legitimate claims to sovereignty over mankind and earth itself. Jesus recognized his claim, not challenging his adversary: '*...the devil takes him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And says to him, All these things will I give you*' (Matthew 4:8-9). Satan's by rights, in other words. The '*...god of this world*', says Paul.

The Manipulator

Bible prophets record the influence Satan and his angels have over human leaders. They probe behind the human leaders to focus on the being who controlled them. Their discussion about these leaders merges into the spirits who move them.

Isaiah provides insight as to Satan's manipulation of the King of Babylon, and shines a light on Satan's origin. Under the name of *Lucifer* (KJV)—a reference to the Morning Star—he 'pulled the strings' of the King.

Writes Isaiah: '*...How are you fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, that did cast lots over the nations! And you said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, above the stars of God will I exalt my throne, and I will sit upon the mount of meeting, in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.'*

Two centuries later, Ezekiel remarks: the same influence exercised by Satan over the King of Tyre:

CREATION SCENARIO

An alternative scenario for how God created proposes that each 'day' is symbolic. In each twenty-four hour period God issued the command for specific activities to *begin*.

Having created the inanimate material world, He created the templates for life, and over unspecified time periods the inbuilt genetic code (DNA) produced the present diversity of vegetable and animal species, each '*...after its kind*' in sequence: *vegetation* (eg Genesis 1:12) and later in the 'week' *marine* (v.20) and then *animal* life (vv.21-22). With *mankind*, the next phase of creation, life made the quantum leap of becoming moral—created in '*the image of God*'.

A proportion of the angels were assigned to oversee these developments. However, many of them (one-third—Revelation 12:4) sinned and '*...kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation. [God] has reserved [them] in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*' (Jude 6). They are free to roam (cf Job 1:7), but are restrained in their activity.

Angels were on Earth before '*...the first man, Adam*'. Should the suggestion that they have 'flesh and bones' and that the above scenario of creation be correct, it explains the 'mystery' of the 'pre-Adamic' bones found buried around Earth. When the angels sinned they would have become disembodied spirits, their flesh subject to natural aging and decay.

'...take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD; You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden the garden of God. You are the anointed cherub that covers...you were upon the holy mountain of God...you were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you...you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God...your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness' (ch 28)

We also noted, above, the influence of the spirit world on the Persian leader.

Consequence of Sin

Lucifer—Satan—was consumed with jealousy to the extent of conspiring to be equal with his Creator. So magnificent and so resplendent had God created him (he was one of the Cherubim) that he became driven to his fall by pride, persuading one-third of the angels in heaven to follow him in sin.

Modern scepticism rejects the idea that there are such ‘disembodied spirits’ (Gk *daimonion*). Yet given the horrendous actions of many world leaders today and in recent centuries, how can we imagine that Satan has not relinquished his influence!

As with humanity—Adam—sin had disastrous consequences. The spirit bodies of the angels became, as did that of Adam, subject to decay, their now disembodied spirits released to roam, ever seeking a body through which to express themselves (Luke 11:24).

Contemporary Relevance

In our modern world we are comfortable with the concept of invisible forces—gravity, atomic particles, electricity, dark matter *etc.* Also unseen—usually—is the world of spirit.

But that unseen world is more real than what we discern with the five senses. It is the foundation of everything: ‘...Through faith we understand that the worlds came into being, and still exist, at the command of God, so that what is seen does not owe its existence to that which is visible’ (Hebrews 11:3).

Nehemiah, too, so understood: ‘...you, even you, are LORD alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host [including angels], the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and you preserve

The Spirit Body

The resurrected body of Jesus—and the Christian—sheds light on the nature of the bodies of the angels of God. There’s no reason to assume their *bodies* are different (*cp* Matthew 22:30)

The difference from angels lies in the fact that the human ‘...*spirit in man*’ (Job 32:8) of the resurrected Christian is united with the Holy Spirit and is now immortal, while the angelic spirit is mortal. (They can sin—Ezekiel 28:15, Romans 6:23.) Christians will become immortal because God’s Spirit indwells them (Romans 8:9).

Angelic spirit ‘...[God] reserves in everlasting bonds, in darkness, in preparation for the judgement of the great day’ (Jude v. 6). The human spirit, by contrast, is at rest, ‘asleep’, with God until the resurrection.

The resurrection of Christians, at the return of Messiah, entails a momentous change in the physical body, recounts the apostle Paul—from a ‘natural’ (Gk *psuchikos*) body to a ‘spirit’ (Gk *pneumatikos*) body (I Corinthians 15: 44).

them all’ (ch 9:6). The active intervention of the Creator is essential to the preservation of our universe!

The apostle Paul ascribes this incredible power to Jesus the Messiah: ‘...by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist’ (Colossians 1:16-17).

Answered Prayer

To bring angels closer to home—they have a vital role in our prayer life.: ‘...another angel came and stood close to the altar, carrying a censer of gold; and abundance of

The body of Jesus disappeared from the tomb—transformed from the physical to the spirit state. Jesus, after his resurrection, made clear that his body was no ephemeral, disembodied spirit but consisted, unlike a disembodied spirit, of ‘...*flesh and bones*’ (Luke 24:39). He could be touched, felt.

The spirit-body is a different order of being, no longer bound by the laws that govern the natural body. It is ‘...*celestial*’ (Gk *epouranios*, I Corinthians 15:40). Records the apostle John: ‘...*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*’ (Revelation 21:4).

The celestial body is not subject to decay (I Corinthians 15:42). It can still be touched, can appear as if it were a natural body (John 20:11-16). It can digest normal food (Luke 24:41-43), pass through solid walls, disappear at will (Luke 24:31), levitate (Acts 1:9), travel immense distances, communicate with others. And has direct access to the Father (*cf* Matthew 18:10).

incense was given to him that he might place it with the prayers of all God’s people upon the golden altar which was in front of the throne. And the smoke of the incense rose into the presence of God from the angel’s hand, and mingled with the prayers of His people’ (Revelation 8:3-4).

Given the role the angel played in response to the prayers of Daniel, it is clear that they not only convey the prayer requests to the Father—but are commissioned by Him to answer them.

So—invisible, yes, but for good or evil they affect the lives of everyone of us, both personally and on the wider field of international relations.

Visible or invisible—One may be standing beside you, right now! **Ω**

Laxity—or growth?

It's not unknown for a believer to be labelled as 'Laodicean'. That is, they—as portrayed by the Christians in the town of Laodicea (Revelation 3)—are considered to have become slack in their submission to the truth of the Gospel.

Undoubtedly this is, not infrequently, the case. Indeed Jesus warned that in times of great pressure, '*...Many false prophets will rise up and lead multitudes astray; and because of the prevalent disregard of God's law the love of the great majority will grow cold*' (Matthew 24:11-12 Weymouth).

Can't we see the evidence all around us! The apostle John clearly defines for us what Jesus means by 'love': '*...this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*' (I John 5:3). Yet how many professing the name of Christ despise these same laws! No surprise, then, that they drift from the true faith. [But remember, Jesus still didn't abandon the Laodicean church (Revelation 3:19-21).]

Unchanging God

One fundamental characteristic of God is '*...I change not*' (Malachi 3:6). And it is said of Jesus '*... the same yesterday, and today, and for ever*' (Hebrews 13:8). We can depend on Him in every circumstance to remain faithful to His Word.

And, of course, there's much in the life of the believer that must not change. We are to remain faithful to God's calling until life's end. When we come to a right understanding in regard to a Bible teaching we hang on to it, we observe it.

But because a mature believer makes changes in his behaviour—is he or she thus *Laodicean*? Consider the counsel of the apostle Peter: '*...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*' (II Peter 3:18). That implies *change*. At

our baptism we receive God's Spirit—a real event—and we become in Christ 'a new creature'. From that moment our life begins a time of transformation, our goal to develop the character of Jesus: '*... be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*' (Romans 12:2). No longer do we live by our own rules. *Change!*

As we thus 'grow in grace' we come to better understand, get better knowledge of, the nature of Jesus. We are not bound by '613 rules' but by the great moral law that undergirds our universe, '*...under the Law to Christ*', and living by '*...the perfect law of liberty*' (James 1:25). It is for each Christian to figure how, in the light of the Gospel, that personally applies. Paul, in Colossians 3, (note v.10) describes that 'knowledge of Christ' to which we should aspire.

And take *doctrine*. Simply because a teaching is part of your church's 'catechism'—no matter how ingrained, how ancient—doesn't mean it truly reflects the Scriptures. Much

of the true doctrine has been buried and superseded by humanly-devised concepts, no matter how sincere the teacher. It is *truth* that frees us.

It is vital, therefore that we each be alert to possible inaccuracies, and that we sift traditional teachings in the light of the Scriptures. We are encouraged to '*...grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ*'. Ω

Problems ...cont'd from p.3

the apostle Paul: '*...Whatever you sow you reap*'. Law!

We won't escape '*the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*'. But as we comply with these fundamental laws of life we will surely avoid much distress and suffering. It is not God's fault—it's *ours*! Ω

The Next Wave...cont'd from p.4
believe, have confidence, be (wax) content, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield'.

Yes, in cases of doubt or dispute we are to yield to the powers (rule) that be or, I might add, the sound doctrine you were taught (ref. Titus 1:9). False teachers seldom leave the church, even though that would be the ethical thing to do. Instead they infect the brethren and try to proselytize. Perhaps it's easier for them to gain a following from the 'poor dumb sheep' than to start from scratch elsewhere. I guess that doesn't say much for the preparedness of the people of God either.

Lets follow the old paths. There is no time to waste on new 'stuff' when we can't even apply the old truths right. '*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*' (Paul in II Thessalonians 2:15). Ω

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MiniStudy**The Feast of the Passover**

***'... purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened.
For also Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. So let us keep the feast...' (I Corinthians 5:7-8)***

Firmly entrenched in the Christian calendar is the 'Easter season'. Annually in the Spring is celebrated perhaps the highlight of the ecclesial year, even - for the believer - eclipsing Christmas. 'Easter' includes both the final suffering of Jesus ('Good Friday') and a celebration of his resurrection on 'Easter Sunday'. Its observance is not without controversy. For most of Christendom Easter replaced the Biblical *Feast of the Passover*.

- Perhaps a surprise for most modern Christians, the festival of Easter was not observed by the first Christians. It was introduced in the second-century of our era by the church in Rome - at least in part to distance itself from the Jewish Passover observance on which the festival's timing is now based. The word 'Easter' appears but once in the King James Bible and is a translator's interpretation of the Greek *pascha* - Passover: '*...intending to bring [Peter] up to the people after the Passover [KJV- Easter]'*' (Acts 12:4). 'Easter' is a late introduction and the name derives from the Assyrian mother goddess *Ishtar* - also worshipped anciently as *Diana*, *Cybele*, *Isis etc*
- The *Feast of the Passover* - in the New Testament also called the *Days of Unleavened Bread* (Acts 12:3, 20:6, John 13:1) - is perhaps the oldest continuously-observed religious festival. In embryonic form (eg Exodus 5:1) it predates the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, when they were delivered from slavery by divine power. Each family (or a group of families) set aside a lamb on a specific date, placing the blood of its sacrifice around the door of their dwellings: '*... And I will see the blood, and I will pass over you'*' (Exodus 12:13). By this means they escaped God's awesome judgment on the Egyptians, who had murdered all Israel's new-born boys.. It is this which is commemorated annually in Judaism as *Passover*
- *Passover* is a seven-day festival: '*...you shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten'*' (Ezekiel 45:21)—the first day and last day of which are holy days.. Israel was instructed to observe it '*...throughout your generations'*'. It will, unlike the Christian Lord's Supper, be observed even after the LORD returns (I Corinthians 11:26). A representative lamb was sacrificed in the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice (3pm-4pm) on Nisan 14
- In the beginning, under Moses, families brought their own offering of a lamb, a portion of which was eaten as darkness fell on Nisan 15. '*And they shall eat the flesh in this night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs'*' (Exodus 12:8). It was observed at the beginning of the Hebrew year, in early Spring: '*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening* you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month, at evening'*' (v.18). *Note: As there are but seven days of unleavened bread, and as the festival ends on the 21st, this clearly refers to the end of Nisan 14, approaching sunset. This is confirmed by noting the timing of the *Day of Atonement*: '*...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). Note: time designations were, as today, fluid - evening merges with night
- At the Exodus the instructions for Passover were practical: *unleavened* (ie unyeasted) *bread* because they didn't have time to allow the dough to rise (it was made daily). *Bitter herbs* (*Heb* bitters) may have been a nutritional ingredient. In succeeding observances the blood, flesh, unleavened bread and bitters took on *symbolic* meaning
- The seven-day *Feast of the Passover* was - along with the remaining festivals (see Leviticus 23) universally observed by the first Christians, both Jew and Gentile. The symbols are perfectly adapted to the Christian faith. The *lamb*, clearly, is Jesus (John 1:29, I Corinthians 5:7). *Leaven* represents false teaching (Matthew 16:6-12), hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), and as Paul adds: '*So let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and of evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth'*' (I Corinthians 5:8). Note: (v.7), the Corinthian brethren (largely Gentile) were at that time 'unleavened' (Gk *azumos*) - ie, they were observing the festival both physically and symbolically. Yeasted products were - are - removed from the home for the seven-day period of the festival. (The practice is similar to the six week Lenten period on the Christian calendar - but at God's designated time and int manner He prescribes)
- The implication for Christian observance is that by eating, during the seven days of the festival, only bread that is *unleavened* (alongside other foods) we are, in symbol, 'putting on' the character of Jesus: '*But you have not so learned Christ; If so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*' (Ephesians 4:20-32). With 'Christ in us' we are truly celebrating his resurrection. In contrast to the memorial of Christ's death, the festival is a joyous occasion

- * **On the Hebrew calendar, days begin at sunset (cf 'Christmas Eve')**

2013 Festivals
Lord's Supper March 25*
Unleavened Bread March 26-Apr 1

Pentecost May 19
Day of Trumpets September 5
Day of Atonement September 14

Tabernacles September 19-25
Eighth Day September 26
 * observed sunset previous evening

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