

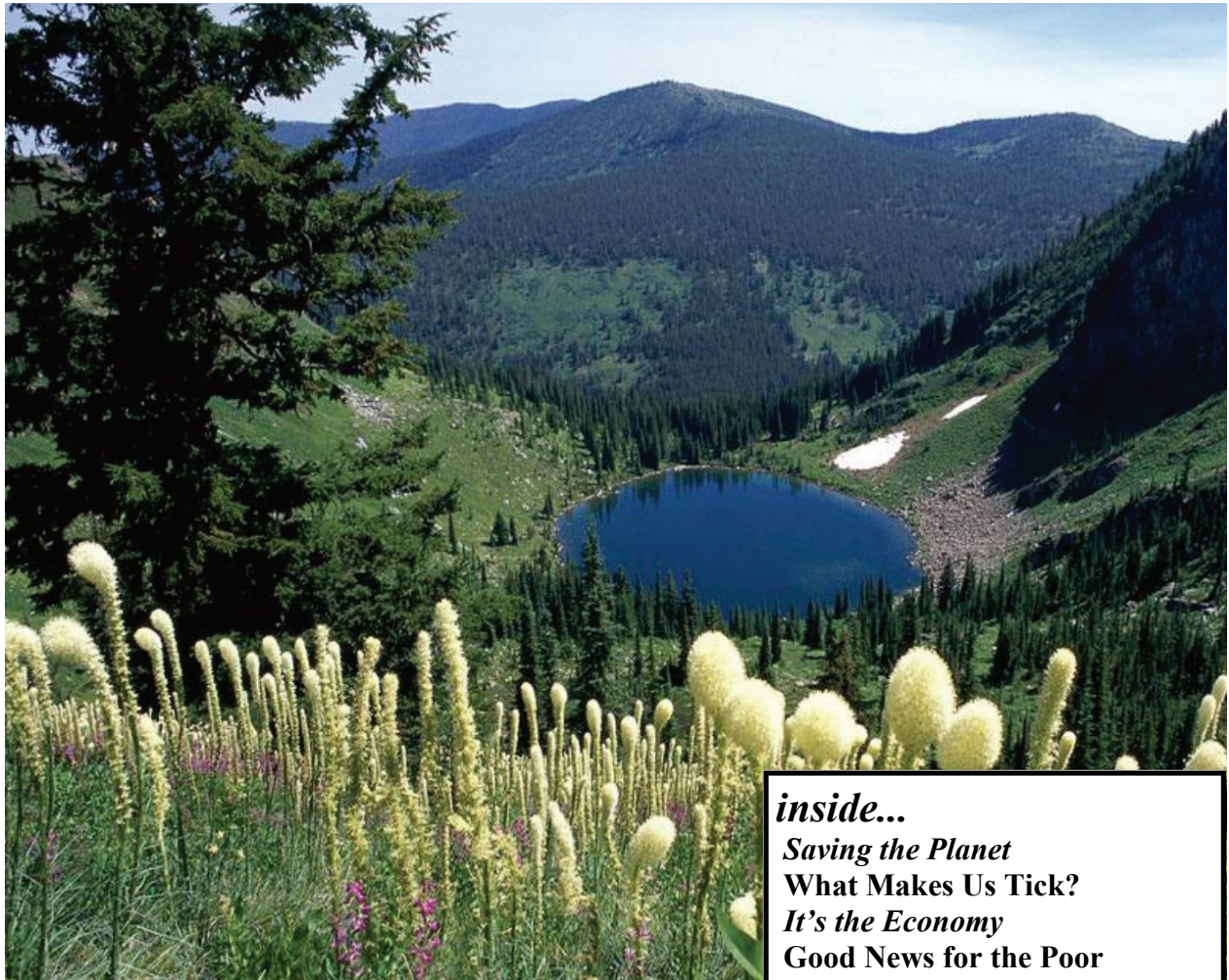
# new Horizons

Vol 17 No 2

March/April 2013

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow

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*inside...*

*Saving the Planet*

*What Makes Us Tick?*

*It's the Economy*

*Good News for the Poor*

*Did Moses Write the Torah?*

*Strange Unions*

*Should You Be Baptized?*

**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**

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## **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

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# new Horizons

Issue No 98

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## What will it take to return earth to its original state?

Global warming. Water shortage. Famines. Corruption in business and government. Crime. Social dysfunction. Sickness and disease. All problems with which we are familiar on our incredibly shrinking planet. Problems that mankind has failed to solve despite the accumulated wisdom and knowledge over millennia.

We also have the promise of the Christian Scriptures that it will all be righted—but only under the direct authority of Jesus, returned to reign over all human governments. But how?

The Bible record as-

sure us that God has the power to intervene dramatically in human affairs. The record, however, points to those interventions as largely destructive—witness the Great Flood, the annihilation of Sodom, the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the land of Canaan, the killing of the first-born of Egypt. Nowhere do we find the Creator of all has supernaturally restored parched lands, abolished disease, or removed ‘the wicked’.

What God *has* done is create a perfect world and allowed man the freedom to choose to reject the laws and principles He has established to maintain earth’s original pristine qualities. Man had been given authority over earth’s eco-systems to ‘...dress and keep’ it, not pollute and rape its abundant resources. Social stability would result from following His guidance on family structure and the proper roles for male and female. Above all God revealed the way we

could remain in an intimate and loving relationship with Him. It’s a path rejected by the vast majority, who invented their own ‘religions’. It’s a way restored by the advent of the Son of God, Jesus, from Heaven.

Jesus the Christ, the longed-for Messiah, in his earthly ministry, provides a limited glimpse of the positive powers of God—to heal the physically and mentally ill, to feed the poor, even to restore the dead to life. Limited, yes, to one small part of earth’s surface—but a taster of the powers He will deploy when He returns as King of kings, and LORD over all false faiths.

## Saving the Planet

### Earth in Chaos

When the

Father determines the time is right, Jesus will return—but to a planet ravaged by destructive world-wide wars employing horrific weaponry, to famine, disease, and dominated by a global religious dictatorship with a crumbling global economic system. Billions will die, and a cowering remnant will seek refuge in wildernesses and in caves. So chaotic will that time be that: ‘...*there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken*’ (Luke 21:25-26).

That description—whether taken as literal or as symbolic—depicts the state of the world to which Jesus will return. How will order be restored?

Those who seek to maintain a personal relationship with the one true God—the God of the Christian Scriptures—will have experienced persecution and, in many cases, martyrdom. Their lot, however, is to be raised from their graves and to become an immortal royal priesthood, reigning with Messiah, on earth, for the next thousand years. They will oversee the restoration of earth and the rehabilitation of the struggling survivors.

### Restoration Begins

Certainly a mammoth task. Anyone who experienced the destruction that resulted from the second World War will have a small idea of the enormity of the task ahead following six thousand years of misuse. Months, years, decades, will be required to clear wrecked and burnt-out buildings, remove and restore twisted and collapsed bridges. The military machine in every nation will be dismantled and put to productive use. Polluted seas, rivers and lakes will need to be cleansed, enormous heaps of decaying animals and people buried.

The Bible prophets provide practical insight into those early years of restoration. Isaiah and Micah: ‘...*they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*’ (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3). Given the tons of weaponry presently burdening the planet clearly a monumental task.

Ezekiel, too: ‘... *they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and*

the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years' (ch 39: 9). Since Ezekiel's day weaponry has evolved somewhat!

The latter prophet continues: '... After Gog has been destroyed, I will bury him and his army in Israel, in Travelers' Valley, east of the Dead Sea. That graveyard will be so large that it will block the way of anyone who tries to walk through the valley, which will then be known as "The Valley of Gog's Army." The Israelites will spend seven months burying dead bodies and cleaning up their land. Everyone will help with the burial, and they will be honored for this on the day the brightness of my glory is seen' (vv. 11-13 CEV). And that just in one small part of the inhabited earth!

What of all those destroyed homes, buildings and infrastructure—roads, bridges etc: '...You will rebuild those houses left in ruins for years; you will be known as a builder and repairer of city walls and streets' (Isaiah 58:12 CEV). As of old, what happens in Israel's lands will become a model for all nations.

### Social Structure

In 1945, after the war, the Allied forces had to impose order on the dispirited nations of Europe. Social structures had broken down, and it took years to establish civil order. How much greater the task when the problems are global.

Isaiah reveals God's blue-print: '...many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will

teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people' (ch 2:3-4).

The Bible book of Revelation contains a series of prophecies in the form of a scroll sealed with seven seals. As each seal is removed a sequence of horrendous events affecting mankind and our earth is unveiled. Request the booklet **Keys to the Book of Revelation** for an exposition of these events

Not everyone will be delighted with the new regime! There will be the need for 'rebuke'. Law will be applied—fairly, justly and with mercy—implying law-breaking, for human nature will not have been eliminated!

The Law (Heb *torah*) is the same Law observed voluntarily by Abraham (and his righteous predecessors) who: '...obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws' (Genesis 26:5). The same Laws which guided Adam in the beginning, and which all true believers today obey.

### Israel Restored

First on the agenda, though, the nations descended from Jacob will be restored to their rightful territories: '...I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all' (Ezekiel 37:19-22).

Israel has, since the days of King Solomon's son, been two groups of nations: the *House of Judah* and the *House of Israel*. The latter was composed of ten separate tribes which became nations in their own right. The nations of both Houses have been dispersed around the globe.

In fact, returned from a yet future exile. They will become, in Palestine, one nation under the leadership of King David

(Jeremiah 30:9)—and become a mentor for all nations.

The key to this, however, is—a *change of heart*. The people of Israel

will return from their exile *repentant*. The remnant will acknowledge the Saviour whom they have rejected. The message of the Kingdom will be proclaimed—the same Gospel that leads to salvation—and the one true faith become established.

The LORD spoke through Jeremiah: '...this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people' (ch 31:33). Each individual will be confronted with the sacrifice of Messiah.

### One Faith, One Language

That Law, that faith, will be extended in due course to all nations. The prophet Zechariah depicts the process to bring the nations to the observance of the one true faith and to the true worship:

'...it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goes not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, neither shall it be upon them; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles' (ch 14:17-19).

So—one faith. but also the removal of that obstruction to understanding between people and nations (and a hindrance to evangelism), diversity of language: '... then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent' (Zephaniah 3:9). The true 'gift of tongues' applied worldwide!

### Town Planning

Smoking ruins. Mountains of rubble. Destroyed infrastructure—roads, sewerage. The survivors *cont'd p.8*

**What makes mankind differ from the rest of creation? Here we explore that elusive driving force, the ‘spirit in man’**

The apostle Paul sums up the human condition as : ‘...may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire (I Thessalonians 5:23). That is, the human spirit (Gk. *pneuma*), the life force (Gk. *psuche*) and our physical body (Gk. *soma*). with its organized groups of cells—heart, bone *etc.*

Little understood is the role of the human spirit. The Scriptures instruct that ‘...there is a spirit (Heb *ruach*) in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding’ (Job 32:8). Isaiah writes of God: ‘...He that gives breath unto the people upon [earth], and spirit to them that walk therein’ (ch 42: 5). It is associated with the ‘breath of God’ and may enter man with his first breath (Genesis 2:7). Records Job: ‘...the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life’ (ch 33:4)

Humans differ from the lower animate creation only in that our ‘spirit’ ‘...shall return to God who gave it’ (Ecclesiastes 12:7), while the animal spirit dissipates at death (ch 3:21; yet, as both are invisible we can’t discern that—it is revealed).

The spirit of any created earthly being is active only in the presence of an animate body, probably acting through the nervous system. In the lower creation it provides their instinctive behaviour, varying in degree as God has appointed each kind. In human-kind the spirit imparts aesthetic sense, a higher intelligence, conscience, enhanced reasoning ability—and a God-consciousness.

**Spirit-sleep**

With mankind the spirit, at death, is somehow transported ‘...to God who gave it’, and retained (inert, unconscious) until clothed with a body. Indeed the disengagement process

from the natural (Gk. *psuchikos*) body may account for reports of the physiological effects of near-death experiences. If the patient is resuscitated the spirit may indeed have ‘recorded’ environmental events which are recalled. (It has been called ‘quantum consciousness’.)

The apostle Paul emphasizes that when we die we are ‘asleep’ (eg I Corinthians 15:18). ‘Spirit-sleep’, that is, rather than ‘soul-sleep’, for the soul is ultimately destroyed - : ‘...fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Gk. *gehenna*, a literal fire—Matthew 10:28). Notes the prophet Ezekiel: ‘...the soul [Heb *nephesh*] that sins will die’ (ch 18: 4, 20).

[‘...kill the soul’: ‘soul’, here, refers to life generally, as in: ‘...whoever loses his life [ie, soul, Gk *psuche*] for my sake shall find it’ (eg Matthew 16:25)—life that will be continued in the resurrection body]

That spirit, probably entering with our first breath, enlivens body and soul: ‘...the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul’ (Genesis 2:7, Job 33:4).

Having returned to God, every human spirit is preserved (God knows how!) until their resurrection—for believers, at the return of Jesus and for all others, for later judgment.

**Resurrection Life**

This sheds light on the resurrection from the dead. It might be asked, for

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

## What Makes Us Tick?

example: *how can someone dead and buried thousands of years ago be resurrected? haven’t they ‘...returned to dust’?* During our life-span the human spirit, similar to the programmed hard drive of a computer, in a sense ‘records’ all there is to know about us—our DNA (body form, colouring *etc.*), our successes and our failures, our moral code, our choices, our memories (even those forgotten ones! cf Luke 12:3). Job again: ‘...The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly’ (Proverbs 20:27).

That spirit entity returns to the One who imparted life, and is preserved in His care. When the appropriate moment arrives it is clothed with a body. For *believers* that will be a ‘spirit-body’ (Gk *pneumatikos*): ‘...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’ (I Corinthians 15: 42-44).

A *real* body, that is—but subject to different operating laws than the natural body. It has, like the resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:39), ‘...flesh and bones’ and shares the spiritual powers of their ‘elder brother’ (I John 3:2).

That spirit-body will not die, but will with Christ serve the Father throughout the thousand years of his earthly reign and for eternity. The reason the *Christian’s* spirit becomes, ‘...puts on’ immortality lies in the fact it has been, in life—through a changed heart, baptism and conversion—been united with God’s Spirit. A true ‘new birth’ as a spirit cont’d p.8

# Did Moses Write the *Torah*?

## Were the first five books of the Old Testament composed by Moses?

Described as ‘the most extraordinary book in the world’, and claiming to be the inspired Word of the one and only Creator God, the Bible has—unsurprisingly—been under fierce attack from critics. And, too often, from so-called friends even within the Christian faith. One prong of this ‘war’ is the attempt to undermine its authority by attacking the veracity of ‘the book of Moses’—implying it was not written by him.

It has been called the Wellhausen Hypothesis, the Documentary Hypothesis, the JEDP theory. Still popular, this is a proposed explanation for what appeared to be flaws in the concept that Moses wrote the *Torah*, the first five books of the Judaeo-Christian Bible. It became a bludgeon by some to undermine the inspiration, by God, of the Scriptures. But as with so many false arguments there is underlying truth.

The idea is based on several perceived differences: various names are used for God, different literary styles, place-names and vocabulary. geography, anachronisms *etc.* In secular literary criticism these are all valid in determining authenticity. The Bible is no exception. For Moses, indeed, did not ‘write’ the entire Pentateuch, but was—for some of it—the ‘editor’.

This is clearly portrayed in the text. And, like any editor, he maintained the integrity of the original authors—with the added dimension that he was inspired to include what God wanted for all mankind to know and understand. For the most part, the book of Genesis includes a series of docu-

ments or preserved traditions handed down through the centuries (until Moses) from the original authors.

A key principle was that Moses retained the names, locations, style, language *etc.* of the original authors—even though they were not (because of the passage of time) understood in Moses’ era. One example is the names used for God. In Genesis chapter one through to chapter two, verse three the name is *Elohim*. From that point, introduced by the words: ‘...these are the generations [Heb *toledoth—descent, history*] of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens’ (v.4), God’s name is YHVH Elohim. It is used up to the end of chapter three, when it becomes, simply YHVH, and reverting to Elohim in chapter six.

Another example is with geographic names. Moses, holding to the integrity of the original text, gives the name as known to the author. An example is in Genesis 10:19—in Noah’s collected genealogy. He refers to ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’—towns which no longer existed in Moses’ day. Moses refers to the area as ‘...the salt sea’ (Deuteronomy 3:17), the cities of the Plain no longer being in existence.

In short, following the revealed first section (to *ch*: 2:3) there is a series of contemporary documents—probably by Adam, by Seth, by Shem, by Noah, by Heber. These patriarchs each recorded in their own words their own history—but pared down by Moses to what God inspired to be

preserved. (*see ch* 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1 for the ‘title page’ of each document.)

The initial section (chapter one, mainly), of course, had to be revealed knowledge, for there was no human witness! . It may have been imparted to Adam in his talks with his Creator, and recorded by him—*eg ch* 3:8). Being revealed knowledge, however, it could have been given to any prophet from Adam to Moses.

### After Moses

After the death of Moses God continued to use His servants to provide a narrative of the outworking of His plan. Starting in Genesis 2:4 is the record of the plan of salvation—how He was enlarging His spiritual Family. They wrote in their own words, being ‘... men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit’ (II Peter 1:21).

Pride of place in the Scriptures—Genesis chapter one—is God’s unveiling of why and how He created the Universe, with the focus on Earth and mankind.

At the *end* of the Scriptures—the book of Revelation—is God’s unveiling of how and why He will bring about the consummation of His plan for mankind.

Additional prophets, historians and editors continued under divine inspiration to record the history God deemed to be appropriate down the ages. An editor records the *death* of Moses and its aftermath (Deuteronomy 34:1-8).

There were private letters, and extracts from carefully compiled official chronicles of both the House of Judah and the House of Israel. Records, also, from Babylon and Persia. Ezra is a likely compiler, placed as he is chronologically late—mid fifth century BC—in the historic stream.

There have been prophets from the beginning whose function was not only to shed light on the future but also to record contemporary events—Jeremiah, Ezekiel *etc.* Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is recorded as saying: ‘...He [*the cont’d p.8*]

## Jesus preached to ‘the poor’. Who were they?

Within modern Christianity there is an emphasis—almost an obsession—with ‘the poor’. Jesus, it is claimed, had a special mission to the poor, and so should we. And, of course, any Christian worth his salt will relieve true poverty when it is encountered, and it is within their means.

In addressing poverty it will be helpful to place in context ‘the poor’ living in first century Palestine. It is surprising that they are infrequently addressed—only forty times (including double references) in the whole New Testament.

It has been estimated that there was a two-fold economic division in the Palestine ruled over by Rome. About ten percent of the population were the ‘rich’, living mainly in the larger towns. The rest mainly ‘got by’, what we might call living hand to mouth, a subsistence lifestyle—though far from starvation. (All of income went on the basics of life.) And like all societies there were the ‘beggars’, dependent on hand-outs, become so through various health conditions *etc.*

Under the Law provision was made for the economically poor. Widows, for example, were cared for by the extended family and by neighbours. The Levites (the established religion/State), too, were charged with providing for the truly needy. And the annual festivals were a time for sharing. For those who made the effort there was the opportunity to glean the fields post-harvest.

## Good News for ‘the Poor’

### The Mission

Jesus, fresh from his public baptism, in the synagogue at Nazareth proclaimed his mission: ‘...*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised* (Luke 4:18). Who were the ‘poor’ (Gk.*ptochoi*)?

### The ‘Poor’ Defined

Jesus journeyed throughout Judaea and Galilee—to towns and villages, and rural areas, to the synagogues. The oppression of the general population stirred a compassionate response in him.

He observed a hunger to be free from the burdens of Roman oppression and heavy taxation, free from spiritual neglect by the religious establishment who, noted Jesus, ‘...*bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*’ Matthew 23: 4). In general the crowds who flocked to hear Jesus were seeking relief. But they also suffered moral decline.

*These* were ‘the poor’ to whom he proclaimed that relief. They may have been ‘short of a bob or two’, but—as in our twenty-first century world—theirs was *spiritual* poverty. Jesus may, on occasion, have ‘fed the poor’ (those who gathered to hear him)—but it wasn’t through soup kitchens but by a miraculous demonstration of his spiritual powers.

It was evidence of his Messiahship. To a doubting John the Baptist Jesus sends the message: ‘...*tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*’ (Luke 7:22-23). Peter was clear: ‘...*You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know*’ (Acts 2:22).

### The Gospel Message

His message was ‘*gospel*’—the good news of the Kingdom of God. Under such oppression moral decline had gripped the people. The rich ignored the needy. There was rampant selfish greed. Extortion by the tax-gatherers. Violence by the military and by bandits. Fractured families. Religious hypocrisy.

No surprise that John and Jesus

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*unsigned articles are by the Editor*

called for change, for repentance: *'...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel'* (cf Luke 3:1-14, Mark 1:14-15). To become part of the Kingdom requires root and branch change of heart, the purging of the sin that blights us.

That was 'the gospel' Jesus preached to them. In essence: *'...seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'* (Matthew 6:33). And as his life unfolded they learned that only through his sacrificial death and resurrection could the message be fulfilled—if they applied it personally.

Peter, in his Pentecost message: *'...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even*

*as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward [perverse] generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized'* (Acts 2:38-41).

**The World Today & Tomorrow**  
Our world is equally in need of having 'the gospel preached to the poor'. We are no less 'poor' in our spirit. No less needy of a change of heart, no matter our level of material prosperity. No less in need of repentance and of forming a bond with the Father through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling of the holy Spirit to transform us into His likeness.

In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy about his ministry (*ch* 61:1). For 'poor' Isaiah says *meek*. And it is indeed 'the meek', the spiritually humble, who will inherit the earth, reigning with Jesus for a thousand years—and accompanying him into eternity to implement the divine plan. **Ω**

God looks at things and what His solution would be? Do we really try to look at things His way? After all, we've had six thousand years to figure things out our way and our record of success is pretty dismal.

The challenge is to look at all of our personal and worldly problems and sins and ask ourselves how would God resolve these things. A check list like the following might be helpful.

How many Bible texts can you find that offer Godly solutions to these and other problems and evils? It's been said; "The argument [issue] is not what the argument [issue] is really about" so be sure you examine the problem thoroughly to find the root cause. Don't worry about things over which you have no control; just pray.

#### Solutions

God might say, "Your looking for answers in all the wrong places; it's the Kingdom, stupid." Maybe He wouldn't use the word stupid, (but then again maybe He would).

He did say: *"...My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight...."* (John 18:36) And what do we do? We 'fight' to elect worldly people or worldly panaceas to resolve our largely self-inflicted problems, or we elect officials who will 'fight' for us to correct the problem that they may well have been instrumental in creating in the first place.

Let's redirect our outlook to our calling and purpose. It is to learn to be administrators in the Kingdom of God utilizing His righteous laws and His measure of justice and mercy.

Isaiah refers to those administrators in days yet to come as teachers. *"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: you shall weep no more: He will be very gracious cont'd p.8*

## "It's the Economy, Stupid."

**Steven Kieler**

This mantra was adopted by James Carville during Bill Clinton's era as a reminder that economics should be the central focus for their election campaign. So, what's changed?

People and organizations often have trouble focusing on their mission. Distractions can divert attention to other issues that may or may not be relevant or important. Procrastination, laziness, pride, and self-centeredness, can be other impediments to correct and appropriate remedies.

As we observe and rail against the errors and evils in our lives and in the world around us, our knee-jerk reaction is to pontificate with our conservative or liberal based solution to problems like:

- reducing crime
- education reform
- electing the right man
- taxes
- terrorism
- economic stability

The remedies to which we are drawn are "worldly" solutions; but do we ever take the time to see how



## What is God's purpose for marriage?

Under the guise of 'equality' many governments undermine the age-old institution of marriage—by re-defining the concept. No longer the union of a man and a woman but any union between two adult humans. In the United Kingdom this has managed to rile those on both sides of the argument and of all faiths!

Human relationships, it is often claimed, are a kaleidoscope where any mix goes. Any man with any woman or man with man, or woman with woman, or man with child. Even, perish the thought, with animals. (Germany is proposing a law against this growing menace there!)

Doubtless 'sex' is at the heart of the human condition, a built-in urge—almost 'instinct'—to propagate the individual or the race, but perverted at the level of the individual. And, sadly, corrupting global culture.

### Divine Appointment

Although the sexual relationship is now confused, it was not always so—if you regress in time for long enough. For in the beginning it was clearly defined by the Creator—as the union of one man and one woman for life, a blueprint for all mankind, always.

Indeed the pattern has been taken up by all nations, with a few rare maverick exceptions. It was, of course, what we call 'marriage' - the union between a man and a woman, publicly recognized as a social contract, though now variously culturally defined.

Any deviation from the foundation pattern has adverse consequences. We are familiar with the destructive effects of promiscuity (Gk *porneia*) in terms of sexual disease, the disruption inflicted on family life by adultery and divorce, the social impact of homosexuality and pornography. On top is the huge social and financial burden on the State of broken and dysfunctional families—legal costs, welfare *etc.*

### One Flesh

The 'complete person', with a few exceptions, is the effect of a lifetime commitment to the union of a man and a woman. It produces stability through a family environment, based on the principle of mutual support through every trial of life. The breakdown of family life with its social consequences bears witness to this principle. And throughout the Scriptures the sexual relationship is protected, sacrosanct.

The foundation principle is '*...a man [shall] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave [attach himself] unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*' (Genesis 2:24). It applies universally. An equal partnership with separate physical and emotional roles.

### Grand Design

The creation of man is no accident, not a 'divine experiment', but is the initial step in God's grand design, His planned family. Writes Malachi: '*...did not he make one?...And wherefore one?*

## Strange Unions

*That he might seek a godly seed'. God created one pair, united as 'one flesh' in marriage, with the ultimate purpose of raising up, through millennia, His Family. Writes the apostle Paul: '...You*

It is often assumed that marriage is a religious act. However, although instituted by God it is essentially a secular institution—a family concern that in the West was hi-jacked by 'the church'. But the Creator also provided the ground rules for marriage

*[Christians] are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God (Ephesians 2:19 CEV)—a 'race' of spirit beings in His own image.*

Clearly, the God-defined purpose of such a closed union is frustrated by any deviation

from that blueprint. (The Scriptures define those deviations, as in Leviticus 20 and elsewhere in the Bible.)

With few exceptions (Matthew 19:12) the sole form of sexual union instituted by God is between one man and one woman united in marriage—and for life.

It's a union that reflects the divine purpose. But it's a process undermined by hearts hardened by our rejection of God: '*...Our desires fight against God, because they do not and cannot obey God's laws* (Romans 8:7).

Paul again: '*... For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*' (Ephesians 5:30-32) Ω

**Book of Moses ...cont'd**

*God of Israel] has spoken from all time by the lips of His holy Prophets' (Luke 1:70). Jude tells us that '...Enoch, who belonged to the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied' (v.14).*

God has not left Himself without inspired witness!

**Planet Earth ...cont'd**

will face awesome challenges of town planning: *'...they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations' (Isaiah 61:4).*

Under the wise, firm but benign rule of the King of kings, the LORD of lords and the resurrected saints, a vast global reconstruction programme will occupy the early decades of His reign.

Earth's rich treasure store of resources will be used but in a way not motivated by exploitation and greed. Tons of left-over destructive hardware will be re-cycled for productive use in agriculture: *'...they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid' (Micah 4:4).*

In today's world many continually look over their shoulder as they work, in fear of marauders and invading terrorist groups. In that world to come—tranquility.

That won't 'just happen' but will result from diligent application of acquired skills, and earth with its lifeless deserts and its wildernesses will gradually come to *'...blossom as the rose' (Isaiah 35:1).*

Man's current path leads to Earth's destruction. Under the benign rule of the Messiah and His saints it will be fully restored. Ω

**It's the Economy ...cont'd**

*unto you at the voice of your cry; when he shall hear it, He will answer thee. {20} And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see your teachers: {21} And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:19-21).*

Perhaps the voice in their ears will be yours. Are you preparing to answer them, not with worldly wisdom, but according to God's word? Ω

**Solutions...**

*God, in His Word, also has solutions for:*

- Education
- Religious division
- Personal conflicts
- Poverty and the economy
- Family and sexuality
- Politics
- Criminal behaviour

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**Spirit ...cont'd**

being (John 3:1-8). Yet retaining the spiritual character built during our life-time.

**The Rest of the Dead**

What of the remainder of mankind—since Adam? In Hebrews we are told: *'...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (ch 9:27).* Writes John: *'... the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished' (Revelation 20:5).*

They too, will be resurrected, but in a re-structured physical body, the blue-print for which is preserved by God in their spirit. Yes—everyone, at death, 'returns to God'! But as an inert, unconscious spirit that will be revived, clothed with a body.

After the 1000-yr reign of Jesus and the saints, a period of judgment begins on earth for the rest of mankind. Their preserved spirits will be clothed with a physical body and they will experience the opportunity to qualify to be written into 'the book of Life': *'...I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:12).*

Quite an incentive for us, during our life-time, to nourish that precious spirit within! Ω

**Bible Festivals 2013**

Lord's Supper	March 24*
Unleavened Bread	Mar 21-Apr 1
Pentecost	May 19
Trumpets	September 5
Atonement	September 14
Tabernacles	Sept 19-25
Eighth Day	Sept 26

*\*Sunday evening at sunset  
Bible days begin at sunset*

**MiniStudy****Should You Be Baptized?**

***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)***

Among Christians the rite of baptism is almost universal. Yet it is carried out in a variety of ways and with varied accompanying ritual. Is there a ‘right’ way? Is it even necessary?

- Consider the following statement by Jesus just before his return to the Father in heaven: ‘...*Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them...Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*’ (Matthew 28:19-20). It was his clear intention that each new disciple should be baptized
- The apostle Paul was instructed: ‘...*be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*’ (Acts 22:16). The act of baptism is symbolic of the inner cleansing from sin that comes through embracing the death and resurrection of Jesus
- Yet despite being sinless (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus himself was baptized in Jordan to set an example for us: ‘...*Allow it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness*’ (Matthew 3:15)
- There is repeated emphasis on baptism as *immersion*. ‘...*John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there*’ (John 3:23). The record of the eunuch’s baptism states: *they went down both into the water, and he baptized him*’ (Acts 8:38). Jesus, too ‘...*came up out of the water*’ (Mark 1:10). The word *baptism* is the Greek (*baptizo*) for *immerse*, or *dip*—as in dying cloth
- Baptism is no empty symbolism: ‘...*Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*’ (Romans 6:3-5). Baptism, then, represents our *burial*—our ‘death and resurrection’ to a new life in Christ. Our baptism impresses on each of us the awesomeness of our commitment
- The apostle Peter gives us a key requirement before baptism: ‘... *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*’ (Acts 2:38). With the result that ‘...*they that gladly received his word were baptized*’ (v.41). ‘Repentance—a turning back to God, a choice that results in a changed life: ‘...*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)
- In the light of this need for conscious change it is clear that the baptism of an infant, however carried out, will be what Paul would call *vain, useless!* The transformation we experience—from ‘death’ to ‘life’—demands conscious, often hard, acts of will (*read Romans 12*)
- While on very rare occasions the Father may have given His Spirit before baptism—yet the message of Scripture is that it is a necessary step towards our salvation. Recall the words of Jesus, quoted above, in Matthew 28:19-20. *Consider your position!* Ω

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What Do You Mean—’Repent’?  
Should you Be Baptized?***

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