

NEW

Horizons

Vol 6 No 5

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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.**

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by Jesus and by his apostles
in the clearest of terms - and
recorded for us in the Scrip-
tures. Over the centuries
that truth has been buried,
dug up, buried again. Our
desire is to restore the sim-
ple apostolic message. We
hope you will be excited
by what the Scriptures re-
veal about life, and the
horizons beyond**

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new Horizons

Issue No 35

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The "justification" for terrorism is that Israel is "occupying" land that belongs to the Arabs and to Islam. But the question is, who is occupying whose land?

Asher Intrater*

Will there ever be peace in the Middle East? Actually, *yes*. Peace in the Middle East is a central aspect of the kingdom of God. It is the dream of all the Hebrew prophets.

In the latter days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it . . . For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the law from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Here we have the biblical vision of peace on earth.

When does it take place? *"In the latter days."* The end times events are beginning to take place in our generation. And where will it take place? *"Zion."* Jerusalem will be the international capital of this world peace. Who will be part of it? *"All nations," "Many peoples."* The Messianic peace will include every nation of the world.

This vision of the kingdom of God - world peace with its spiritual center at Jerusalem - is repeated at great length by many of the prophets. The prophecy in Micah 4 repeats

Isaiah's vision, but adds, *"Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree"* (vs.4). This phrase is a biblical symbol for economic prosperity. The Messianic age includes not only world peace, but also economic prosperity.

"Beating swords into plowshares," means that weapons of war will be converted to agricultural tools, that is, for peaceful use. This conversion of weapons to peaceful use takes place immediately after a great apocalyptic war.

This war is started by the ungodly nations of the world and will be stopped by Yeshua Himself at His Second Coming.

I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken . . . Then the Lord will go forth and fight as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east (Zechariah 14:2-4)

This passage is one of the clearest Biblical pictures of the coming of the Messiah. The setting for both the war and the Second Coming is a united attack by the nations of the world against Israel, and Jerusalem its capital.

(*cf* Isaiah 35, 60-66; Jeremiah 33; Ezekiel 40-48; Joel 3:18 *ff*; Micah 4, Zechariah 14:16 *ff*).

Yeshua comes at the Second Coming to intervene and stop the attack against Jerusalem. (*His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives... v. 4*). He descends out of heaven with an angelic army to protect the people of Jerusalem and to destroy the nations that attacked them.

I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it was called faithful and true, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...The armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...(Revelation 19:11-1).

Revelation 19 and Zechariah 14 describe the same event, but from different viewpoints. At the end of the war, Satan and the demonic forces are bound and jailed, resulting in a 1,000-year peace on earth governed by Jesus Himself. The battle of Armageddon of Revelation 19 is followed by the millennial reign of peace in Revelation 20.

Yeshua considers the attack upon Jerusalem as an attack upon Himself. The nations of the world who attack Jerusalem may not realize that they are attacking the Messiah, but God sees it that way. This battle is the final test of submission to God's authority, the final chance to show faith in the absolute truth of the Word of God, as given in the Old and New Testaments, no matter what the world's governments, media or powers say. No matter what is politically correct.

At the Second Coming, not only will the nations who attack Jerusalem be destroyed, but also every person who refused to submit to the

Yeshua - used by the author - is the Hebraic form of Jesus

authority of Yeshua.

When the Lord Yeshua is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

The nations will be judged as to whether they attack Jerusalem. Individual persons will be judged as to whether they disobeyed the message of Yeshua. Every person must accept God's authority in His chosen Messiah. Every nation must respect God's authority in His chosen capital.

Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed saying, Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them...But as for me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain (Psalm 2:1-4,6).

And where exactly is Zion? It is not only in Jerusalem, it is Jerusalem! And it is from this city only that He will reign.

Blessed be the Lord from Zion, Who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the Lord (Psalm 135:21)!

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. "This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it (Psalm 134: 13-14).

For that reason, the Lord promises blessing to those who decide to be on His side - the side of the clear Word of God.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they prosper who love thee (Psalm 122:6).

However, there are clear warnings of curses upon those who hate the city of the God of Israel.

May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward. Let them be like grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up...Nor do [not let] those who pass by say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord (Psalm 129:5-6,8).

The international attack against Jerusalem is seen as disobedience to the gospel and as rebellion against Yeshua. Yeshua was born to be King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2, John 18:33-37). He was crucified to be King of the Jews (John 19:19, Matthew 27:37). He will return as a conquering King to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

the Bible covenants deed the land of 'Palestine' to Israel The worldwide attack on Israel is an attack on the Jews who live there. Since Yeshua is King of the Jews, that attack is also an attack on Yeshua Himself.

In recent years we have seen a growing coalition in the United Nations that is united to denounce Israel. That coalition and the international conflict concerning Jerusalem will one day lead to the horrible apocalyptic war of the end times. The coalition against Israel is led by a strange mixture of liberal, secular humanism from the European nations on the one hand, and by militant religious fanaticism from the Islamic nations on the other.

The coalition of nations denouncing Israel is in conflict with the purposes of Yeshua and the kingdom of God. Christians around the world must become aware of the biblical importance of the restoration of the nation of Israel, lest they find themselves fighting against Yeshua at His second coming and thus enduring His wrath.

If Yeshua at His second coming is to fight against those nations that will attack Jerusalem, then those

who believe in Him must stand together with Him in defence of His city and its inhabitants. Much of what is said about Israel in the international media and in the UN is inaccurate and biased. The world is being swayed by Islamic propaganda. At the spiritual root of this propaganda is the claim of Islam that Jerusalem and "Palestine" belong to them as their holy places.

That claim of Islam is a direct denial of the Biblical covenants of God concerning the land of Israel. Seven times in the book of Genesis does God reiterate His covenant to give the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants (the Jewish people).

(1) *And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7).*

(2) *And the Lord said to Abram... "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever (Genesis 13:14-15).*

(3) *On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).*

(4) *And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Genesis 17:18).*

(5) *So Isaac went to...the Philistines [ie Gaza Strip], And the Lord appeared to him and said... "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham (Genesis 26:1-3).*

(6) *And behold, the Lord stood above it and said [to Jacob], "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants (Genesis 28:13).*

(7) *God also said to him... "And the land which I gave to [cont'd p.9*

When our habitual life patterns change - whether imposed or self-imposed - it can take years to adjust. For those of us in the Churches of God Outreach Ministries, those changes began some six years ago. Since then we have 'evolved' - and matured. It may be helpful - and encouraging - for us to review our current position in the Church of God world. What makes us different? What challenges face us?

It seems natural that when differences arise within a church the 'obvious' course is to 'start a new church'. Hence we have a religious supermarket of competing and conflicting churches within 'Christianity'. In the restricted world of the churches of God a number of mega-churches have resulted. That's not the approach we determined for the *Outreach Ministries*.

Careful study of the Scriptures led us to a different perspective. It became clear that the New Testament church was not a monolithic organization, 'ruled from the top down'. The true church of God is made up of all, wherever they are, in whom dwells the Spirit of God. The visible church, *ie* those who bodily associate together, also embraces unbelievers, 'learners' - and its complement of heretics!

Early Church Blue-print

In the mid-first century, brethren met together to worship, fellowship, exercise spiritual gifts, encourage one another, instruct and be instructed, and to plan and execute evangelism. These purposes were enhanced because they met face-to-face in smaller groups - in 'home churches'. Each was autonomous but in harmonious fellowship with other such assemblies. (This harmony seems not to have outlived the first century! *A warning to us!* Only in post-apostolic times was a hierarchical structure introduced, modelled on the secular Roman state.) And each home fellowship, to a greater or lesser degree, was in voluntary submission to mature external guidance - initially by the inspired apostles, later by men schooled by the apostles.

This is the pattern adopted by the *Outreach Ministries*. Each gathering of brethren of whatever size (and indeed each individual Christian) is answerable directly to the Head - to Jesus Christ. Answerable to him for our ethical be-

haviour. Answerable for what we believe. Answerable for how we deal with 'the great commission'. On these we are daily 'weighed in the balance' - an awesome responsibility. But it can be lonely out there! The 'Letters to the Seven Churches' are an example of failure to communicate. Each cluster of fellowships in a city developed its peculiar doctrinal aberration, while being subject to decay through general worldliness. Jesus told them to tighten up - or lose their status as part of the Body.

The pattern adopted by *CGOM* is for these individual fellowships to voluntarily work together through a non-coercive but supportive association. It's the principle that 'the whole is greater than its parts'. By combining our resources - spiritual gifts, human talent and financial - we can in combination accomplish more than can any single fellowship.

An example is our ad in *USA Today* following the September 11 atrocity, and the related special issue of *Fountain of Life*. Another is the distribution of our outreach magazine *New Horizons* and our other literature. Another is making available combined fellowships and festival sites. Such projects are costly, and are made possible only by supportive joint-funding by the brethren.

To this end, any project requiring substantial financial support is costed and submitted to the associated fellowships and supporting individuals. Those who wish to get behind the project decide locally how they can support it. This may be financially or in other ways appropriate to it (*eg* distribution of leaflets). In this way, local fellowships and even individual brethren can have worldwide impact!

Because each fellowship associated with *CGOM* is independent in its organization, there is no need for an expensive bureaucratic 'overlord' imposing a host of regulations, salary scales, directives *etc*. Extensive funding for 'headquarters' buildings and staff are unnecessary. Resources are thus channelled effectively and economically and without wastage. Matters of church discipline or doctrinal

CGOM in Perspective

dispute are a local concern - though the availability of wise counsel from mature leadership elsewhere is always on tap through the association. The *Outreach Ministries* does not intervene in the internal affairs of individuals or local fellowships. It is solely a service organization the purpose of which is to be supportive of all the brethren.

Oversight

As with any joint effort, a measure of oversight is essential. In *CGOM* this is achieved through several volunteer Committees (all members have secular jobs or are retired) appointed through our annual Conference. They are responsible for *Financial oversight, Outreach, Member Services, Marketing and Research*. Appointments are unpaid, with remuneration for part-time accounting and for Conference-approved expenses (*eg* visits in support of local assemblies or scattered individuals.) Accounts are published annually in our *Newsletter*. Delegates to Conference are representatives appointed by each local fellowship (usually elders or stewards). The Conference is open to any brethren who wish to attend and contribute ideas.

Following each Conference, Committee Chairs keep in regular touch through tele-conferences, e-mail, phone *etc*. This ensures Conference decisions are implemented and any problems sorted.

Common Beliefs

The basic criteria for association with *CGOM* are simple. So we can pull together, it's important that we all 'sing from the same hymn-sheet', and we thus have a *Statement of Beliefs* which we believe reflects foundational Bible teachings. Few brethren or churches of God will find objections to it! It is a body of beliefs that have been hammered out over many decades. All brethren (individuals or fellowships) who can live with this *Statement* are warmly welcomed within *CGOM*.

There are no 'inspired apostles' today - but we do have the Scriptures. Culture, language, geography, the filter of translation and the passage of time have, of

the New Testament church was not a monolithic organization

each fellowship in association with CGOM is independently organized

Our objective is to mobilize the resources of all God's people to take the saving message of salvation through Jesus Christ to all the world as effectively and efficiently as we are able, and to support all the brethren in their spiritual journey. To these ends, here's what you can do

The Next Steps

- It would be helpful if you would **contact us** to let us know of your commitment to **CGOM**
 - as an individual or family
 - as a fellowship: discuss it and if agreed, contact us
- **Tell us how we can help you**
 - let us know your needs for literature, visits, speakers, resource material *etc*
 - we can provide guidance on how to run your fellowship
 - our panel of researchers are ready to consider your Bible questions
 - request our 'news for the churches' the quarterly **CGOM Newsletter**
- **Attend the annual Conference**, or send a delegate from your fellowship
- **Let us know how you can help CGOM, eg:**
 - support **CGOM** and its needs daily in your prayer time
 - be a '**CGOM** point of contact': promote *New Horizons/ Fountain of Life* by taking copies of each issue for your contacts, by local advertising *etc*
 - support **CGOM** with any degree of financial help
 - when a project is announced, consider how you can support it, using your spiritual gifts
 - submit well-considered plans of outreach ideas
 - share your faith. Begin an informal home study with your acquaintances
 - send us reports for the **Newsletter** of your fellowship's activities. It encourages others!

course, obscured the clarity of some aspects of Bible teaching. But Christian tolerance, love for God and for our Saviour and for our brethren - and our passionate commitment to outreach - enable the various fellowships to work together on agreed projects despite minor disagreements.

You Are Invited!

On the principle that 'a three-fold cord is not quickly broken', **CGOM** openly invites individual brethren and any local assembly to consider association with us. As more brethren work together - without bureaucratic entanglements - much more can be accomplished in the Saviour's service. The

If any of our readers wish to have further information you are invited to contact us at any of our addresses □

Request the article **Leadership in the Church of God**. It takes a look at how a New Testament local assembly was organized

The Inheritance... cont'd

to those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). And remember that Christ our co-heir also offered to help when he said, *"If you ask anything in my name, I will do it,"* (John 14:14)

If you are prepared to make the sort of commitment that is needed to meet the conditions for an inheritance that surpasses anything else you can possibly have in this life, then God is willing to give you a portion of that inheritance now to help you meet those conditions. Along with that inheritance comes membership into the very family of God. What an incredible opportunity.

Your inheritance awaits you. □

THE AUTUMN FESTIVALS

Diligent Bible students will recognize that God has given us an insight into the divine plan through His seven annual holy days. They occur throughout the year. The autumn festivals are **The Day of Trumpets** (this year - September 7*), **the Day of Atonement** (September 16*) and **the Festival of Tabernacles** - an eight-day feast (September 21*-28*).

For further details you are invited to request the booklet **God's Holy Days**. **If you would like to attend services contact any of our offices**

WHO ARE WE?

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 quarterly **Newsletter**, **Fountain of Life**, a bi-monthly outreach magazine **New Horizons**, the **Bible Basics** home study course). The **Outreach Ministries** also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren.

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

Many believe a ferocious Old Testament God has been replaced by a 'gentle Jesus'. Has He?

The image of God supposedly projected by the text of the Old Testament is one of hard-hearted disregard for human rights. By contrast, Jesus is said to have replaced his Father with loving concern for all mankind. Simple logic, however, dictates that 'God' can not change His basic nature! Indeed the Scriptures clearly state; "I am the LORD. I change not" (Malachi 3:6). And Jesus - who claimed to perfectly reflect the Father - is described as 'the same yesterday, today and forever' (Hebrews 13:8). With God there is 'no variableness or shadow of turning' (James 1:17).

Disregard for human rights is certainly a divine trait! 'Ethnic cleansing' began with God. Look at how He encouraged the Israelite nation to drive out the Canaanites from the land He had set aside for Israel. Look at how he commanded the extermination of the Amorites. And were the human rights of the Israelites not violated when God forced them to wander forty years in the wilderness - simply because they got scared?

Capital Offence

What about those *divine* laws which commanded the death penalty for first degree murder? Or for adultery? Or rape? Even for violent and rebellious youth (Exodus 21:15)? God also commanded the death penalty for those who worshipped any other God but Him and who worshipped in a way He had not commanded (*eg* Deuteronomy 5:17ff). Nor was He comfortable with witches (Exodus 22:18) or homosexuals (Leviticus 20:13) or kidnappers (Exodus 21:16): they were to be put to death.

So - has God changed His mind about all these practices? Has God's

representative, Jesus, now shown his Father to have been in gross error? And have our legislators moved on, become more caring? Are we now more compassionate than the Creator? More 'Christian'?

Let's look at 'gentle Jesus' for a moment. Caring and sharing, certainly. Loving. Generous. Peaceable. That's how the whole world

Has God Changed?

should be! Yet he said he wasn't about to negate the divine Law. That Law embraced all those activities - and the death penalty - mentioned above. So he wasn't against capital punishment. .

Nor was Jesus in any way squeamish about the destiny of 'the wicked' in our midst. They will, Jesus says, be consumed in a future conflagration. Hell (*Gk gehenna*) he calls it. And when God finally draws a line under His patience, His plan is to exterminate all who refuse to obey Him. All who in the final minutes of man's day remain unrepentant, all who have mistreated Christians (Matthew 25:31-46) 'will go away to everlasting punishment' (v.46). He hasn't changed - not the Father, not Jesus.

Bitter Fruit

Mankind is now reaping the bitter fruit of self-righteous tampering with the divine Law. 'Human rights' trample all over sanity. It's an obsession with 'rights' - not right. The fruit? Murderers are locked up at great public expense and then released often to kill again. Never mind the agony of victim families. Vile rapists pornographers get a judicial slap on the wrist - a couple of years and then out to again exercise their perverted lusts. Never mind the ever-present physical and emotional pain of the victims. Terrorists walk the streets to plot and plot again.

Perverted sex is paraded by government and populace alike as a triumph of free thought. All are handled with kid gloves to appease the tender - but distorted - conscience of the twisted libertarians who dominate Western thought.

Heart of the Matter

'Sin' no longer enters the vocabulary of government or the justice system. All too often it is taboo even in the world of faith! Yet sin is at the core of all man's ills. It won't be safely dealt with by woolly liberalism! Such cosy liberalism contrary to the revealed will of God for an orderly society has brought mankind to the brink of self-destruction.

Every profession is shot through with a streak of death-dealing perversity and lack of integrity. It's a result of failure by authority to curb sin - defined in part in the New Testament as 'transgression of law'. Humanity apart from God will behave only when the big stick of law is there to restrain. Clearly, human substitutes for divine law have failed us utterly. Civilisation is merely a thin veneer, soon torn apart by perverse human nature under pressure.

A Different Way

Jesus, of course, presented us with a different way. Through the indwelling holy Spirit those who commit to him are guided to follow his example. That is, *to submit to the divine Law* - a Law 'written in our heart'.

We are to worship God in the only way He has prescribed through His weekly and annual holy days - for all else is idolatry. Christians are constrained to live honestly, peacefully and without violence. We are to lovingly express our sexuality only within heterosexual marriage. We are to avoid all contact with the occult. And to treat all mankind with generosity and concern.

[Christians do not administer the tenets of the divine Law. This is a matter God has delegated to the civil authorities. (eg Romans 13) It is they whom God holds responsible for maintaining law and order - and they must in the future answer for how they did it.]

But the 'Jesus way' isn't new! It's exactly what the Creator ordered for mankind from the beginning. 'Love your neighbour' was an instruction the LORD gave to Israel through Moses (Leviticus 19:18). God, in the Old Testament is described as 'a God full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth' (Psalm 86:15). Can you find a better description of Jesus?

The LORD of the Old Testament

Now I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse. And he who sat on him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire and on his head were many crowns. He had a name written that no-one knew but himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen white and clean, followed him on white horses. Now out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should strike the nations. And he himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. Revelation 19: 11-16

and of the New is patient with us, withholding just punishment and allowing space for us to change.

However, as wise King Solomon noted: "He who is often rebuked and

hardens his neck will suddenly be destroyed - and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1). As in the 'days of Noah' God's almost endless patience has a limit (Genesis 6)!

The tumultuous end-times will herald an end to God's merciful toleration of human depravity. The unrepentant among mankind will be literally destroyed by the returning King of kings, Jesus Christ, as he separates the righteous from the wicked, the obedient from the disobedient, the sheep from the goats.

In both Old and New Testament - under law and under grace - God shares the same love for mankind - and the same hatred of all that defiles mankind.

God has not - will not - change. □

The Great Apostasy

Jesus and the apostles predicted a falling away from 'the truth'. Contrary to the expectations of many modern Bible teachers, they foresaw an end-time faithful church that is small, despised, ostracized.

Time and again the New Testament writers urged Christians to stay faithful, to be active in Christ's service, to keep themselves 'unspotted from the world'. They urged us to 'contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints'. No compromise with the teachings of Scripture. No bending of the truth.

That ideal did not last long. Within half a century of the life and death of Jesus the church was riddled with dissent, torn by heretical teachings and sinking into a whirlpool of immorality. The 'falling away' had begun.

The end-of-century letters Jesus sent to the disintegrating Asian Christians are a mirror of what happened in the following couple of centuries. The consequences of the emperor Constantine's political conversion to Christianity lulled the church of God into a spiritual sleep. It marked the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy: "I will vomit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

Strangled by the vain philosophies of gnosticism, stoicism, platonism *etc* the church sank into gross error. Apart from rare individuals, the Spirit departed from what was known as 'Christianity'. Succeeding centuries compounded the errors, only partially erased by such men as Luther and Calvin. Covered by a veneer of Biblical terminology, the pagan concepts of the soul's immortality, heaven and hell, infant baptism, non-Biblical worship on Sunday, Christmas,

Easter, saint's days *etc* obliterated the true apostolic faith. The flame of faith flickered - but (as Jesus promised, Matthew 16:18) was never extinguished, over the centuries flaring briefly on occasion.

This end-time has witnessed such a revival, with a restoration of many Biblical teachings. Sadly - as in the third century - 'easy times' have led to a further falling away, with the churches of God snarled by bureaucracy, structural faults and divisive leadership squabbling. Many brethren have succumbed to the prevailing lawless society and 'the love of many will grow cold' (Matthew 24:12).

'Revival'

Paganized - and Spiritless - Christianity, however, goes from strength to strength, even seeking ways to unite the denominations through the ecumenical movement. It's a step towards the predicted one world religion - a religion which will, as in the Middle Ages, persecute true believers even to the death. Allied with secular government and demonic powers, a 'lawless one' will 'make war with [those] who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' (Revelation 12:17).

Many nations will suffer 'great tribulation': war, famine, disease, deportation. Following 'heavenly signs' (*ch* 6:12-17) God's awesome judgments will begin to fall on the world (the 'Seven Trumpets') leading to mega-death of unrepentant mankind.

Some time during all this, the true Gospel will be powerfully and supernaturally proclaimed. *No-one* will have excuse, for it will be a time when all mankind will have open access to repentance and true

conversion (Joel 2:30-32, Matthew 24:14, Revelation 14:6-7). The outcome will be the conversion of many from the nations of Israel and 'a great multitude that no-one could number of all nations [*ie* Gentiles]...." (Revelation 7).

So - 'revival' certainly. But during a mercifully brief time of terrifying world chaos, destruction of Israel and persecution of the people of God. Those millions who accept the freely available *true* Gospel will - as 'sheep' - enter the fold of the imminent Kingdom of God ruled over by Jesus Christ and his saints. All who will resist him will be judged by the returning King of kings. The outcome will not be pretty:

The predicted 'falling away' from the truth of the Gospel began in the first century and was complete within three hundred years, leaving but a tiny scattered remnant of the faithful. Since then, the spurious visible 'Christianity' has ebbed and flowed - but always advancing to its predicted climax.

So, too, the true church of God in the twenty-first century. The 'Western' church especially is decaying through laxity and worldliness, while elsewhere in the world it is hindered through state persecution and oppression.

All of us need to be alert, aware of the powerful spiritual forces that oppose us and resisting the strong pulls of worldliness and the pressing anxieties of life. Jesus warned time and again - in the midst of the first century falling away but equally applicable to century twenty-one - that we must 'overcome to the end'.

It's a potent warning to all who 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes'. □

Are you expecting to inherit? Will a family fortune come to you?

John Morton

For most of us the answer is probably – “No!” Our families are not wealthy and we have no long lost relatives with fortunes to leave.

But, would you believe me if I said that there is an inheritance waiting for you? One that surpasses anything you can imagine. You could receive a portion of your inheritance now, something in advance that will guarantee your acceptance into the family from whom you will inherit. So whose family will you become part of? And who died that you might receive this inheritance?

Who died?

Jesus Christ was the one who died! He died so that we can be reconciled with God the Father from whom we will receive our inheritance. God said: “*I will be a Father to you, And you shall be my sons and daughters,*” (II Corinthians 6:18). According to the Bible, “*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*” (Romans 8:14) - “*The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,*” (vv..16-17).

What an incredible revelation! We are to be children of God and heirs to all the blessings of the spiritual realm (Ephesians 1:3). **Inherit What?**

As an heir of God we will be part of a royal family and receive many things - a new name and a position to go with it (Revelation 2:17, 5:10). We will be known amongst the most high (Revelation 3:5, I Peter 2:9), crowned and established on a throne with power over nations on earth (Matthew 5:5, Revelation 2:10, 26 and 3:21), and be a pillar in God’s Kingdom forever (Matthew 25:34, Revelation 3:12, 2:7). A place has already been prepared, we will sit in heavenly places with Christ (John 14:2-3, Ephesians 2:5-7). Can you imagine that?

Often inheritances have conditions attached and the question is, what

do we have to do to receive our incredible inheritance? Although God sets conditions, He also provides the means to achieve them.

Belief

Belief is one of the conditions. Those who believe God will be rewarded with eternal life (John 3:15, I John 5:13). And if our belief is from the heart, we shall be saved (Romans 10:9). Those who do believe Christ are given power to become the sons and daughters of God (John 1:12). When God says we are to be family and inherit all the things we have just read about, then we should believe it! Belief is faith.

Repentance

Repentance is another condition. We have all been subjected to the evil influence of Satan, and God does not want the inheritance to be used for evil purposes.

Ridding our lives of evil can only be done through a process of conversion beginning with repentance (Luke 13:3). Repentance not only

means feeling sorry for the way we have lived, more importantly it means making changes in our lives (Acts 3:19,

Romans 12:2). Not only changes to the way we act, but also in what motivates our actions and in the way we think. The sort of changes God want to see can only be achieved by spiritual means. That is why He is so willing to give us the Holy Spirit as an advance on our inheritance - it is the means by which we can make those changes.

Baptism

Those who believe what God says and begin the process of conversion are baptised in order to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a ceremonial commitment to God and His way of life. The Holy Spirit is the seal of approval that guarantees acceptance into God’s family

The Inheritance

and to receive the full inheritance (Ephesians 1:12-14).

Your acceptance into His family is assured because the Spirit comprises a small portion of the very essence and mind of God. Combined with the spirit of man it will reveal the things of God that we could not otherwise understand (I Corinthians 2:11). The outcome of God’s Spirit combined with the spirit in us will become manifested in the way we think and act. We will no longer be strangers, but true sons and daughters of God (Ephesians 2:19).

Overcoming

Although our sins are forgiven at baptism, it doesn’t mean we will never sin again. Being human we will make mistakes. However, having made a commitment to God we continue to repent of evil as it occurs in our lives until it is eventually conquered. If we confess our sins to God, He will forgive us (I John 1:9).

Christ has overcome and if we believe what God has said, we can overcome the sins of this world through the help and power of His Spirit that is in us (John 16:33, 14:16, I John 5:5). God says, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall by my son,” or daughter (Revelation 21:7).

Endurance

Having started the process of repentance, it is important that we continue in our commitment to overcoming no matter how long it takes. Although the going might get tough and the trials may seem overwhelming, God has promised that we will not have to face anything we cannot handle (I Corinthians 10:13).

Keep in mind that “*all things work together for good to those who love God,*” [cont’d p. 4

Is God's Law obsolete? How does it relate to your life - and to your salvation?

Bill Faith

In II Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul instructs the brethren in Thessalonica concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus and the gathering of the saints to Him. He tells them, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first" (II Thessalonians 2:3). A falling away from what? Obviously, Paul is talking about a falling away from the truth.

Jesus, along with His chosen apostles and the prophets who came before them, gave us the truth. However, before Christ returns and gathers together his elect there will be a falling away from the truth that they taught.

The Apostle Paul goes on to further explain that, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (II Thessalonians 2:7). In this verse, Paul refers to the falling away from truth as 'the mystery of lawlessness'. How could lawlessness be a mystery? It would seem that either someone is living lawfully or they are not! Yet, Paul calls it *the mystery of lawlessness* and further says that it was already at work in his day.

Could it be possible that Christianity today is not what the early apostles and Jesus taught? It has been two thousand years since the birth of Christ; and the Apostle Paul wrote that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in his time. Perhaps we should consider some Christian teachings of our times and compare them with what the Bible states.

Law v. Grace?

Have you ever heard that believing in Jesus Christ is all that is necessary for salvation? That disobedience is wrong but that it has no ef-

fect on our salvation because we are saved by faith? Or have we heard that if we are under grace we need not be overly concerned about the law because after all, 'we are not saved by our works'? What does the Bible say concerning this?

It is true that Jesus said that, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have ever lasting life*" (John 3:16). But what does it mean to truly believe in Him? If we sincerely believe in Him, would we not do whatever He asks us to do? Did not Jesus say, "If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John. 8:51)? What did Jesus say to do? In Matthew 19:16-17 someone came to Jesus, asking Him, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" His answer: "*If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.*"

In support of what Jesus said, James writes: "*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*" (James 2:17). He went on to say vv. 19 and 20: "If you believe that there is one God you do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that *faith without works is dead?*"

The apostle Paul also wrote that, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1). He continues (v.4): "*...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*" Again, Paul stresses the fact that our sins are hid with Christ as long as we walk according to the spirit. That is, as long as we obey God.

It is true that we are saved by faith apart from the works of the law, but does this mean that works is not to be concerned with? Absolutely not! Notice also, that Jude mentioned

that ungodly men had entered into the church, "*Who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness*" (Jude 4). Licentiousness can mean, "Unrestrained by law; lawless." In other words, these ungodly men taught that if we are under grace we need not have to keep the law. Yet, this contradicts what we just read in Romans 8:1,4.

Have you ever heard anyone teach that once you are saved you can never lose salvation? If a person believes that he can never lose salvation once he accepts Christ as his Savior, then there is no incentive for that individual to strive to keep the law. In fact, they teach that you do not need to keep the law. They teach that Jesus kept it for you. But what does the Bible say about this?

It states that, "*If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*" (Hebrews 10:26). This is why Paul was inspired to write, "*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*" (I Corinthians 9:29). Paul understood that to be a Christian meant to be a follower of Christ, not just a listener of Him. "*For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified*" (Romans 2:13). It was Paul who also wrote that, "*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10).

In conclusion, some Christians have accepted the teaching of grace without the need of repentance. They have concluded that because we are saved by grace and not by keeping the law, then there is no real need to be concerned about observing the law. But the truth is that once we believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, we are to establish the law into *[cont'd p.9*
Mystery... cont'd
our life. That is why Paul asked the question, "Do we then make void

JERUSALEM... cont'd

Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you." So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel [ie West Bank] (Genesis 34:11, 12, 15).

This promise was confirmed by Jacob on his deathbed: *Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me...and He said to me, "Behold, I will make [cont'd p.9 you fruitful and numerous...and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession (Genesis 48:4).*

Abraham's covenant, according to the Bible, is through Isaac, not Ishmael:

And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him (Genesis 17:18-19).

We are not anti-Arab. They are a

the law through faith?" And then answered his own question by saying, "Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31).

The mystery of lawlessness is a phrase that applies to Christians who think that they can believe in God without having the need to keep the law, because they believe that Jesus kept it for them. Hence, "The mystery of lawlessness." It is a *mystery* because they believe that you should live a righteous life, yet you need not keep the law of God.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves, Is Jesus our Savior only, or is He our Lord also? Shouldn't we obey him? □

blessed people and also children of Abraham. God has made them a great people and given them many lands to live in. We are against the claims of Islam that deny the covenant promises of the Bible that the land of Israel - that one small part of the many lands of the Middle East - belongs to the sons of Abraham through Isaac, that is, the Jewish people. We are for the Arab people, but we are against the terrorism and propaganda that seeks to turn the nations against Israel.

The bottom line "justification" for terrorism is that Israel is "occupying" land that belongs to the Arabs and to Islam. But the question is, *who is occupying whose land?* Israel cannot be "occupying" the land of Israel if it is the land that God swore to give them as a possession. According to the Bible, Israel is not "occupying" the land, but "living" in the land that God gave them. Whose land is it? Islam says it is their holy land. The Bible says it is land sworn to the sons of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. What do you say?

Those covenant promises form the spiritual basis for the claims of Yeshua to be the Messiah. The claims of Islam against the covenants of Israel are therefore an attack upon Yeshua as well. Although most Christians do not realize it, the claims of Islam and of the UN

against Israel threaten the authority of the Bible and the covenantal foundation of their faith in Yeshua.

International propaganda against Israel is a spiritual deception, affecting whole nations. The Bible says that it is Satan who is the deceiver of the nations (Revelation 20:3). One of the primary deceptions of Satan is to gather the nations to battle against Jerusalem (*ch* 20:8-9). This spiritual deception of Satan, lying at the root of Islamic claims on the Holy Land, Palestinian propaganda, international media bias and anti-Israel coalitions in the UN, will eventually lead to a great war in which the nations of the world will attack Jerusalem.

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle...(See Zechariah 14).

Permanent peace will occur only when the root of deception and rebellion is driven out. The true solution is a spiritual one, and it is found only in the person and the authority of Yeshua the Messiah.

Now as He (Yeshua) drew near, He saw the city (Jerusalem) and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes (Luke 19:41-42).

The only one who can bring peace to the Middle East is Yeshua, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). It has to be the real Yeshua of the Bible. It is not the US or the UN. It is not Judaism or Christianity. It is Yeshua (Jesus) Himself, who is both the Son of God and the King of the Jews.

If only the world could know...*He* is the one who makes for peace. □

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