

## The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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providing  
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## Who Was Jesus?

Over the centuries the true nature of Jesus has been misunderstood. Despite the artists' impressions we simply don't know what he looked like—the Bible is silent. Depictions on canvas often reflect the appearance of the 'man in the street' in mediaeval Italy.

Then there is his ancestry. Some Islamic scholars claim Jesus was of Palestinian origin, though there was no such racial grouping so-named until the early twentieth century AD. The non-Jewish contemporaries of Jesus in Canaan were the Samaritans—imported in the 8th century BC from the east. Today's Palestinians are simply part of the Arab group of nations.

### Genealogy

Surprisingly for many 'people of the Book', ie Christians, Jesus is not recognized for his true racial origins. And within Judaism those origins have long been rejected. Though many within that faith are coming to embrace his true origins.

The physical descent of Jesus is clear. Indeed his parentage is, recorded in the Scriptures, and—uniquely—generation by generation back down the ages to man's creation.

He was born of a woman, but like the first man, his father was the Creator: '*...when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law*' (Galatians 4:4). The 'woman'—Mary—traces her ancestry to Jacob's son, Judah.

In other words, Jesus was racially

of the House of Judah, Jewish, and as such reflected contemporary Jewish culture. His faith was that of the Jewish Scriptures. His idiom was Jewish—which can give rise to our misunderstanding of his sayings.

### Deception

Such mistaken characteristics of Jesus, however, are less significant than the deception in regard to the widespread distortion by Bible teachers and Bible students of what he taught. It is these that hide the real Jesus.

Not that we haven't been warned. For Jesus himself tells us: '*...many will come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and will deceive many*'  
*cont'd p.2*

### Palestinians

The 'nation of the Palestinians' is a modern construct stemming from the 1919 *Treaty of Paris*. This was established in the aftermath of World War I, and among other events, saw the break-up by the major powers, of the Islamic Ottoman Empire.

Until then, 'Syria' was the general name given to the area covering (modern) Israel, Lebanon, (modern) Syria, and Transjordan. The scattered nomadic population of this vast region was almost entirely 'Arab', the language was various Arabic dialects derived from Aramean, the language of Jesus. Racially 'Arab' (= nomad) denotes a variety of races speaking an Arabic dialect.

By the *Treaty of Paris*, Britain was mandated to oversee Palestine and Transjordan. In the 1920s the small Arabic population of Palestine became known as 'Palestinians'. They were not a separate race with a separate religion or a separate culture or separate traditions from other Arabs in the region.

## *It Will Happen...*

Many Bible believers express concerns as to how to interpret the end-time prophecies or doctrinal issues. If they get it wrong—will that condemn me to ‘the great tribulation’? Even, will I lose out on salvation?

What if, for example, they misplace the time of the resurrection? Will it coincide with the *Day of Trumpets* in the autumn? Or, will it take place on the early summer *Day of Pentecost*? Both scenarios have been proposed.

Then there’s the important issue of the nature of the Godhead—is God, as is generally believed within the Christian faith, a ‘trinity’, a ‘triune God’? Or have the Unitarians got it right—one God. Or, is God a Family?

Then there’s the interpretation of the prophecies. Who is ‘the Beast’ or the ‘False Prophet’ or the ‘man of sin’? Or, is the ‘King of the South’ an Islamic force, or a secular power? Or other? What if I’m not sure this truly is ‘the end time’, and it turns out it is? Will I be left behind? And what about Daniel’s much-discussed prophecies?

All genuine concerns! And *yes*—we should strive for a right understanding of the Scriptures.

Take that ‘trinity’ question. No Christian, however they may understand ‘God’, means any disrespect. It’s how they understand the text—or, more likely, they have never studied the issue but have thoughtlessly accepted the word from the pulpit rather than God’s revelation in the Scriptures. God remains, whatever we may think or believe, exactly what He is, always was and always will be. No matter what I may think or been taught.

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## **Who Was Jesus? ...cont’d**

(Matthew 24:5). And Paul explains: ‘...*the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should not dawn on them*’ (II Corinthians 4:4). And Jesus’ brother Jude adds: ‘...*contend for the faith delivered once and for all to the saints*’ (v.3).

Clear warning, here, that the body of teaching preserved by the apostles is a precious treasure to be guarded at all costs. Yet even a cursory examination of most ‘catechisms’ should, when compared with the Scriptures, deliver a shock!

What is purveyed as the ‘teachings of Jesus’ is too often exposed as the notions of ‘blind’ teachers that have become embedded as tradition and bear little resemblance (except in terminology) to the teaching of the Master.

And prophecy? The interpretations are endless! Given enough time most human speculations—that’s what they are—fall by the wayside. I don’t need to know *when* Jesus will return; I must just stay in a state of preparedness. I needn’t know who may be the ‘two witnesses’; God will manifest them for all to see in His good time. I need not be concerned about world chaos—just be personally ready for when the end comes.

There is, however, one clear instruction direct from the lips of Jesus: ‘...*Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them ... and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world*’ (Matthew 28:19-20). Those of us privileged to be part of His divine Family are to share the good news of salvation, the Kingdom news, personally and through support of the work of our church affiliation.

And, in tandem with this directive, we are each to shape our life to that of the image of Jesus Christ, his character, as revealed through the Scriptures and informed by God’s Spirit in us.

### **It Will Happen!**

Nothing we believe or do will change God’s nature. We can’t change when Jesus will return. We can’t change God’s choice of the two witnesses. We can’t change the outcome of the prophecies. And, except in my small corner of influence by my example, I can’t help the world’s chaos.

God is compassionate, knows our frailties. He understands our limitations and doesn’t lay anything on us beyond those limitations. We do our best to understand His revelation—but failures of understanding do not affect our living relationship with Him and with our Saviour, Jesus His Messiah. Ω

A key example is the use of the word *Sabbath*. For over four thousand years this denoted the last, the seventh, day of the week, having been so designated by the LORD Himself, at creation: ‘...*God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work which God created to make*’ (Genesis 2:3). It was the day designated for fallen man to meet with and to worship his Creator. It was a time for fellowship and instruction—a ‘holy convocation’. But within a century or so the fledgling church—surrounded as it was by pagan idolatry—had begun insidiously to observe Sunday, falsely renaming it ‘*Sabbath*’. Just one of many such changes.

We encourage you to explore, from your Bible, the *real* Jesus! Ω

*You are invited to request a copy of our short booklet entitled*  
**Why Observe Sunday?**

## *Two People...*

Six billion plus people...*how on earth did they get here?* And how could such mega-growth—and don't forget the billions who have preceded the current generation—result from one *single* individual, however long ago?

No, we are all aware that human procreation needs two physically diverse people—a male and a female. Clearly, any other relationship will be sterile—a dead end to the race. And not only unproductive, but an abnormality. (Remember, we're asked to believe the fairy tale that two 'creatures'—now called *homo sapiens*—evolved, within a single generation, sufficiently different from one another to be able to procreate.)

Yet for the Bible believer the very purpose of our creation is the procreation of progeny, for our Creator wanted to share His glory and power with many: '*...God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it*' (Genesis 1:28): For '*...it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory*' (Hebrews 2:10). To this end He created 'clay models' who could attain to His image, become part of His Spirit Family.

Given the total dependence of the new-born human infant God set them within families—in a relationship we call *marriage*, intending it to be a stable life-long institution. It is a union of a man and a woman with their offspring: '*...Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh*' (Genesis 2:23-24). It is also wise guidance ignored by foolish governments in the name of false equality.

Yet despite such clear teaching in the Scriptures even Christian denominations in the United States (eg Presbyterian, Methodist) and Gt Britain (United Reform) are officially normalizing the so-called 'marriage' of two males or of two females. A union that frustrates a major purpose for the creation of humanity.

### **Age-old Practice**

Such sexual arrangements, of course, are not a modern phenomenon but were rife in past times. The apostle Paul addresses this in the first chapter of his letter to the Roman Christians, and relates it to man's earliest pre-Flood ages. Such aberrant behaviour results, he explains, from the

### **Letter from England**

'A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth' wrote King Solomon. Better because after a lifetime we are likely to have made our mark. And perhaps better if we are living in unspeakable pain.

Recently there was a class reunion of our alumni—after forty years. A couple of hundred gathered from, literally, around the world. One feature—a shocking feature—was a long list of all those who had died in the intervening years.

Then this week we heard of the sudden death in Texas of a beloved and relatively young church sister, Thalia Hufton—who had been alive and well at that reunion here in England in May. Forty years of dedicated and faithful service to Jesus Christ and our Father, and a beloved wife, mother and friend.

Writes the Psalmist: '*...So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*' (90:12). And elsewhere: '*...precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints*' (116:15).

Those who endure to the end will be saved.

rejection of the existence and authority of the one and only sovereign Creator (v.21) and it may therefore have been a factor in the awesome judgment of the great Flood of Noah's day: '*...God looked upon the earth. And, behold, it was corrupted! For all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence [Heb = physical and ethical wrong] through them. And, behold, I will destroy them with the earth*' (Genesis 6:12-13). The Flood record also notes the practice, just post-Flood, inflicted by Canaan upon, Noah. (*ch* 9:22-23). The results, vv.25-27, are age-lasting. As, too, the God-inflicted destruction of Sodom (*ch* 19).

Such social conditions we can expect to be widespread in the days before the coming cataclysm as predicted by Jesus: '*...as the days of Noah were, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark. And they did not know until the flood came and took them all away. So also will be the coming of the Son of Man*' (Mathew 24:37ff).

God will not permit His plans to '*...bring many to glory*' to be frustrated. Ω

## Small Is Beautiful

Most churches, it would seem, are caught in a complex web of bureaucratic entanglement. Endless committees. Sheets of bye-laws. Conferences. Budgets. Accountants, salary structures, . . . And the bigger the church the more complexity. Why?

The answer lies in the definition of ‘church’ defined as a ‘denomination’. If ‘church’ is an organized group of tens or hundreds or thousands of associated assemblies all answerable to a central bureaucracy—and then that complexity may be a requirement. You don’t need to look far to find examples.

And given that any activity—religious services, evangelism, stipends *etc*—needs a degree of finance it’s clear that bigger means more: more money, more personnel, more admin. And less to support the essential work of the church.

### Local Admin

Assume, on the other hand, that a ‘church’ is a unit—a single local assembly serving a defined area and co-operating willingly with other local area assemblies. (You will find this is the New Testament pattern of church governance.) It is small. It is not burdened with paper-work or pages of bye-laws or committees or salary scales or pensions. It is adaptable to local culture and needs, and language.

As portrayed by the churches of Revelation chapters two and three, each assembly is individually monitored by the Head of the church, Jesus—the leadership being directly accountable to Him for the health and welfare of his congregation. Any necessary administration the responsibility of a diaconate.

Such a structure is not a barrier to ‘acting big’. If all such local churches of like-mind were to co-operate more impact can be made - locally and even globally. *Inter*-dependent, in other words.

In reality, *denominations* are self-protective, carefully guarding their own turf and excluding such co-operation, the leadership remote from the brethren. It is time for the leadership and brethren to re-think priorities. Ω

Request the short MiniStudy:

### Church—or Cult?

You may also download at [www.cgom.org](http://www.cgom.org)

## The Knowledge That Counts

What do you need to know to become a Christian? Is doctrine important? And must you understand the prophecies?

Every Christian is a professional—called to become a member of a ‘royal priesthood’. You might say it is a very special ‘club’ - and, as with any club, must surely conform to certain specified standards appropriate to its purpose.

‘Membership’ is by invitation of the Father who draws them to Jesus Christ—and he does have standards: ‘*...Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven*’ (Matthew 7:21). So it is prudent to first find out what He expects of you (Luke 14:28).

The apostle Peter lays the foundation: ‘*...Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ to remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*’ (Acts 2:38), adding ‘*...there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved*’ (4:12). That is exclusive—acceptance of Jesus as Saviour, and commitment to him and to the Father. Anything else?

Not prophecy; for multitudes have died in the faith not understanding them—or getting it wrong! And not every nuance of ‘doctrine’, for our limited understanding can develop.

Once you sincerely respond to that invitation, that calling, from the Father you are, now, a child of the Father—no matter how long or short a time you have taken to respond (I John 3:2). You must now learn to ‘*...do the will of my Father in heaven*’. DO His will—not just believe it! For as priests-in-training we are to ‘*...put on Christ*’. That is, we for the remainder of our life, are to consciously ‘*...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God*’ (Romans 12:2).

That will calls on us to individually:

- Become Christ-like in thought and action
- Put God and His Kingdom first
- Grow in grace and true knowledge through the study of the Scriptures
- Live our life by every word of God
- Stay faithful

...and all the while remembering that ‘*...with God for us who can be against us?*’ Ω

### Autumn Festivals

Trumpets	September 25
Atonement	October 4
Tabernacles	October 9 -15
Eighth Day	October 16