

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

PO Box 2525
LINCOLN
LN5 7PF
England

Telephone: 01526 861217
e-mail: coguk@aol.com
web-site: www.cgom.org
Editor: James McBride

Regd Charity No 283358

March -April
2007

visit our website:
www.cgom.org

providing
leadership
information and
Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

representing


Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

'...the present Distress'

The early church experienced distress, evident from the New Testament writings. Paul, for example, said to the Corinthian brethren: '...we are now going through hard times [KJV present distress]' (I **Corinthians 7:26**). Today many who hold to the name 'Christian' still experience persecution at the hands of other faiths - notably Islam.

In the West, overt acts against Christians are rare. But there is widespread 'distress' from other quarters. Or, should be - if we truly are followers of Jesus Christ.

Comfort Zone

Life in the western world is, in comparison with past centuries, easy. Earth's bounty has showered on us untold blessing. We live in relative comfort. We don't suffer hunger. We benefit from extensive welfare services. And Christians here '*...have not yet resisted to blood striving against sin*'.

It's so easy in such circumstances to just 'go with the flow', to just drift along. So easy to stay safely in our comfort zone. So easy to delegate our Christian responsibilities to 'paid helpers'. And herein is danger.

Where, then, is the 'present distress'?

Lawless World

Older folk - Christian or not - tend to reminisce about the 'good old days'. It was all much better fifty years ago, it is said. Indeed that's what every aging generation will say. But don't despise it. For the apostle Paul tells us '*this know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come*'.

Life, in Paul's day, was indeed hard. But he tells us that it would become '*perilous*'. Perilous for Christians, for the prophets foretell that before Jesus returns conditions would mirror the days leading to the universal flood. Then : '*...Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*' (Genesis 6:5). And: '*as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man*' (Matthew 24:37).

Days of Noah

The problem then? Wickedness, corruption was endemic. But it was just accepted by everyone. It was 'normal'. So they just got on with life '*...eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*'.

Isn't that a fair reflection of modern life? (It's worse. For marriage read co-habitation!) So where does that leave Christians? Just look at the Christians you know. Are they zealous? Does their life-style reflect the teachings of the Bible? Does how they live provoke fierce opposition? Classed as 'old-fashioned'?

In such a world it's a battle to keep our integrity. Said Paul: '*Evil companionships corrupt good morals*'. The apostle John exhorts us: '*Come forth, my people, out of her, that you have no fellowship with her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*' (Revelation 18:4-5).

Jesus recognized our challenge: '*And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold*' (Matthew 24:12). We must, then, be constantly vigilant, for: '*...he that endures to the end, cont'd p.2*

CGOM Letter

I recently heard of a man who had separated from his wife - after two and a half weeks of marriage. The reason? *'I can't deal with commitment'*.

You could apply that statement widely, and not just in marriage in which lack of commitment is a feature in most divorces. Fathers abandon their children - lack of commitment. A business shuts down - commitment failure, often. Political parties and charities lose supporters. It's a sign of the times. Not surprising, then, that religion has its fair share of non-committers.

In the emotional heat generated in an evangelical meeting - the warm-up man, catchy music, huge crowds, expectation of 'healings' etc - many 'give their life to Jesus'. That's great. But ten years later - five, one, even one month - how many remain committed? How many, for example, remain committed Christians from that personal profession of faith made in the early Billy Graham crusades?

Then there are the 'butterfly Christians'. They flit from church to church but never put down roots. Again, lack of commitment. Looking for the perfect church in which to settle? If you do find such a rarity - don't join, for you will spoil it! In fact, such a church doesn't exist but each is a gathering of sinful men and women who are committed to Jesus Christ and his teachings. Each Christian, however, is to contribute to the church their natural talents and the spiritual gifts, endowed by Jesus at his or her baptism, for the service of the brethren. And to themselves grow their faith through such contact. (Read Hebrews 10:23-39.)

Yes - commitment is a key principle of the teachings of Jesus. Indeed, salvation is assured only to those who are *'called and chosen and faithful'* (Revelation 17:14). His words. We need staying power: *'I will*

the same shall be saved' (v.13).

Resist!

A flood of corruption and lawlessness is sweeping the world. To *'endure'* it's vital that we erect barriers against it, that Christians resist.

Ezekiel prophesied as the House of Judah was, for its 'abominations' before God, on the verge of being conquered by a foreign power. JHVH sent angelic forces to slaughter the civil and religious idolaters. But first He commanded them to set apart with a mark the 'resisters': *'And Jehovah said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof'* (ch 9:4). They grieved over

give power over the nations to everyone who wins the victory and keeps on obeying me until the end' (Revelation 2:26). That's both a promise - and a warning to stick with it. The way of Christ is rugged, tough. The apostle Paul - who suffered for the faith more than most - summed it up to the Corinthian brethren: *'If we only have hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most miserable'* (I Corinthians 15:19). Yet towards the end of his life he could say: *'I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith'* (II Timothy 4:7). Commitment.

Now who wants a faith like that! When we stick with it we are assured of a powerful role in the Family of God. We are assured of an unending life throughout eternity, free from all those hindrances that now beset us. And we won't, in the meantime, be helpless, for: *'...his divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust'* (II Peter: 1:3-4).

Our readers are urged, as we enter a new year, to examine themselves. Have you made that commitment to Jesus Christ? Are you firmly rooted in a body of believers?

If you hesitate to commit yourself to Jesus Christ you are invited to request our articles *Should You Be Baptized?* and *What Do You Mean - 'Repent'?*

We are here to help

Churches of God Outreach Ministries

the idolatrous state of affairs surrounding them.

Noah, Lot, Israel at the exodus from Egypt - all *'sighed and cried'*, were *'vexed'* by the all-encompassing sin (cf II Peter 2:3-9). And - especially as the annual remembrance of the greatest sacrifice of all, the suffering and death of our Saviour, approaches - it's a time for us to be awed at what he has accomplished for us.

We too - Christians today - must have that same characteristic, that same horror at our sinful society, that same resistance to evil. Let's not allow our 'love to grow cold. Ω

Lord's Supper: Sunday evening, April 1

Indian Savvy

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all.

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed." [Internet](#)

2012 - is it 'the end'?

We have been here time and time again. Through the Christian centuries the 'end of the world' has often been predicted with amazing precision. So far in error. Sooner or later - and likely by chance - someone will hit the bulls-eye.

The definition of 'end' is, however, fuzzy. Do you mean the entire planet going up in smoke? Is it the end of civilisation? Armageddon? Or is it a reference to the return of Messiah or the Islamic Mahdi? Both appearances are claimed to be imminent. And, according to some, long overdue.

A new date - very precise - has now been proposed. Not, this time from the Christian Bible and not from the Islamic writings but from the Mayan Indians of Central America. Long recognized as skilled astronomers their calendar is praised by their modern counterparts.

According to the Mayans a 'new era of human history' will begin in a very few years - precisely, 2012 and on December 21. Reportedly, the same year - but a day later - figures in ancient Chinese records as the date the world will 'stop dead'.

Contemporary science makes its contribution with the assessment that a once in 26,000 year event will occur on that day: the 'eclipse' of our Milky Way with unknown effects on Earth.

Who knows? Jesus, while on Earth, said that only the Father knew the 'day and the hour' of his return (Matthew 24:36). That doesn't stop ardent Bible students forecasting the exact date - even the time.

Jesus predicted specific events would happen before 'the end'. It is for each Christian to stay faithful - no matter how long we may wait, no matter what challenges we may face, no matter what 'events' may appear to indicate. [Ω](#)

2007 Festival Dates

Lord's SupperApril 1 (evg)
Unleavened Bread.....April 3 - 9
Pentecost.....May 27
TrumpetsSeptember 13
AtonementSeptember 22
Tabernacles...Sept 27 - Oct 3
Eighth DayOctober 4

Easter.... cont'd from p.4

A Pure Heart

The *Days of Unleavened Bread*, also observed by the early church, was a period of seven days starting with the Passover during which no 'leavened bread' - ie yeasted, raised, fermented bread - was eaten. In Christian use it is symbolic of a pure life, energized by the risen Christ through his Spirit. Leaven is corruption, physically. Spiritually it signifies hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), and false teaching (Matthew 16:12). This festival thus encapsulates the concept of *resurrection*, a *pure heart* and *pure truth*. The Scriptures therefore give no specific day - eg 'Easter Sunday' - to commemorate this momentous event. Rather it is an entire week of celebration during which Christians live without this symbolic corruption in our bodies or our homes. By our eating daily of *unleavened* - 'sweet' - bread we are reminded that throughout life we 'feed on *that bread which came down from heaven*' (John 6:51).

The Bible festivals (the 'appointed feasts of the LORD' - Leviticus 23:2 - not of Moses) are free from the leaven - hypocritical and false - that permeates most of Christianity by the observance of days which are plainly from idolatrous sources.

This year, why not commit yourself to the observance of those days God has set aside for His people! [Ω](#)

**This on the calendar widely used throughout the then known world. On the current, Julian, calendar it falls sometime in March/April. A calendar linking the old calendar and the new is available from any of our addresses.*

An outline guide to observing the Memorial service is available on our website

Troubled Israel

Increasingly the modern Israel nations conform to the prophetic picture of end-time 'Israel'. The highest offices of State are touched by corrupt practices, whether in Britain, the United States, France or the tiny nation of Israel.

Comments a Jewish-Christian organization in Tel Aviv: "We, who are believers and understand the prophets' warnings of Israel's future as long as she trusts in the arm of the flesh, can only mourn for the moral turpitude that permeates nearly all spheres of government and places of power. Her leaders have dismayed her and failed her. Israel has not found a saviour to protect her from Hamas, from Hizbullah, from Islamic Jihad, from Iran, nor from herself.

It is tragic but it is a reality: Only as our nation falls deeper and deeper into the abyss, will a desperate mankind seek the true and living God". [Maaz Israel](#)

President Katsav, a Sephardic Jew, has been indicted for sexual misconduct. The former Justice Minister was found guilty of 'an indecent act'. Prime Minister Olmert is being investigated over financial matters. The police are under fire for corruption as are the Tax authorities. Sadly, it is reflected across Government worldwide. [Ω](#)

The Easter Story

Easter! New hats and frocks. The Easter parade. Rolling coloured eggs. A Sunday sun-rise service. Great fun for the kids. A focus on life renewed: the resurrection of Jesus, triumphant over the grave.

The season, though, began less joyously. Friday - 'Good Friday' - is a day of sadness. By tradition that's when Jesus suffered an ignominious death on a Roman stake. In some Christian societies it's a day for self-flagellation. Some individuals submit themselves to a mock crucifixion. The steps of Jesus along the Via Delorosa in Jerusalem are traced in pageantry.

Death and Resurrection

But such remembrance is far removed from reality. The spring festival known as Easter - as most Bible students know - did not originate with the death and resurrection of Jesus, pre-dating him by hundreds of years. The 'death and resurrection' of a Saviour is a concept well-known in the Old Testament.

Some scholars see it implied in the Genesis description, in Eden's garden, of a 'promised seed', a suffering Messiah: "*He will crush your [ie Satan's] head and you will crush his [the Redeemer's] heel*" (ch 3:15). Job, one of the earliest of the Bible writers, also understood it: "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has thus been destroyed then out of my flesh I shall see God*" (Job 19:25).

The Psalmist sings: "*Therefore my heart was glad and my glory [soul, life] rejoiced; my body too will dwell securely. For you will not leave my soul in [the grave] nor allow your holy one to see corruption*" (Psalm 16:8-10).

Jesus, too, saw this teaching - in the life of the prophet Jonah, drawing from there the analogy of his own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:40). Examples of this could be multiplied!

It isn't surprising, then, to find that early in man's history the concept had crept into the religion of those who had rejected God's revelation - men who '*altered God's truth into falsehood, and revered and served the creature rather than the Creator*' (Romans 1:25).

That a Saviour would die and be resurrected is a concept known widely in the ancient world - even apart from the Bible revelation. It gave rise to the various mythical cycles in which the 'god' dies and is miraculously restored to life.

Any substantial Encyclopaedia, of course, will detail how these various rites were absorbed into the Christian church from around the fourth century. They include the forty days of Lenten abstinence, the sun-rise service on Easter morning (*ie* facing east), the rolling of coloured eggs. Ezekiel 8:16 is instructive.

These practices replaced the 'death and resurrection' festivals instituted by God and observed by Jesus, the apostles and the first Christians.

Worship - God's Way

Having initiated human life, the Creator gave us guidance on

how to live and how to worship Him. One aspect was a series of annual reminders of His plan - seven recurring annual festivals each of which highlights an aspect of that plan, and each pointing to Jesus Christ. The Spring festival consists of the sacrifice of the *Passover*, followed by the seven *Days of Unleavened Bread*, the whole being loosely termed 'Passover'.

In harmony with God's perfect timing (*eg* Galatians 4:4), Jesus died late in the afternoon of Nisan 14*. At this time, between 3pm and 4pm, the Passover lamb was ceremonially sacrificed in the Temple. Paul refers to Jesus as '*Christ our Passover*' (I Corinthians 5:7). Many Christians today observe it as the 'Night to be remembered', investing it with Christian significance. It begins a week of rejoicing known in the Scriptures as *Unleavened Bread*. To the Corinthian brethren - largely Gentile - Paul in that same passage acknowledges that the brethren were observing these days (vv.6-8). Passover is to be observed 'throughout your generations' - and will continue to be observed after Messiah returns.

Jesus, however, introduced a further observance which is to continue *until* he returns.

Lord's Supper

It is a solemn memorial of his night of betrayal, anguished suffering and subsequent crucifixion on a Roman stake. Called by Paul the *Lord's Supper*, it is held *annually* 'on the night in which he was betrayed' - the beginning of Nisan 14*.

At the evening meal on that Passover eve he introduced the simple everyday symbols of bread and wine as representative of his broken body and shed blood: "*For I have received from the Lord what I have also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, 'Take, eat. This is my body broken on your behalf. This do in remembrance of me'. Similarly he took the cup after they had supped saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you shall proclaim the Lord's death till he comes*" (I Corinthians 11:23-26). Note that the Passover is '*for ever*', while the memorial is '*until he comes*'.

A Lesson in Humility

Further, Jesus enjoined the practice of 'foot washing', having himself set the example to the disciples at that last meal before he suffered: "*...if I, your Lord and Teacher, wash your feet you surely ought to wash one another's feet; for I have set you an example so that you might do just as I did to you.... If you grasp these truths, blessed are you if you practice them*" (John 13:12-17). *cont'd p.3*

FINANCES (COGUK) - Jan/Feb 2007 INCOME.... £911 OUTGOINGS... £965
