

Outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

representing



PREPARE TO MEET THY DOOM?

Anyone writing about ‘the signs of the times’ must draw on a centuries-long history of failed prophetic interpretation. In fact, the only certainty—though disputed by some—is that *Jesus will come again, and at a time preserved in the heavenly counsel.*

That doesn’t mean we can live as if it will not happen ‘in my lifetime’. It could. It may. And Jesus’ stern warning is ‘...*be ready*’. It will be those who are faithful and diligent that are ‘ready’. And readiness isn’t measured by your understanding of prophecy.

Down the centuries any number of prophesied end-time scenarios have afflicted our planet sending believers scurrying to the hills or to their knees. They have been exploited by preachers of all faiths—some sincere, some for their personal benefit.

Earth’s scarred face bears witness to past calamity. Down the centuries catastrophies have re-shaped the planet. Millions have died from plagues. Nations have torn one another apart. And there’s the ever-present reports of impending war. But, said Jesus ‘...*see that you be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet*’ (Matthew 24:6).

Much of the ‘Olivet prophecy’ (Matthew 24) was witnessed by the Jews in Palestine between 30 and 70AD. They suffered hor-

rendously—suffering recorded by the historian Josephus—at the hands of the occupying Romans. But not all of that prophecy was fulfilled.

There’s more. For the generation that will witness the return of Jesus will be the generation that experiences the resurrection of the saints (v.31). Wrote Paul: ‘... *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*’ (I Thessalonians 4:16).

At that time Jesus will ‘...*stand on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem*’ (Zechariah 14:4) at the beginning of His reign as earth’s supreme ruler (v.9).

Clearly, none of this has yet happened. But believe that the Scriptures are indeed God’s Word and it will surely happen.

Be Alert

What, then, of our present ‘global credit crunch’, our looming worldwide recession? It has sent millions scurrying to protect their savings. Homes re-possessed, jobs lost. And a big concern for some—Christmas spoiled! *Is this ‘the end’?*

It would be brave—or foolhardy—to answer *yes* or to answer *no* to that question! Time and again the ‘signs’ have indicated ‘*the end is near, even at the doors*’. But we are still waiting. The signs are indeed there today. But— they may pass. *cont’d over*

Prepare...cont'd

Has God finished with mankind? Who knows! At His perfect moment He will intervene to stop human annihilation. Life, for our present world, may recover after a few years. Or, it may not. Most of mankind will just deal with it, experience it, suffer it.

Of all people, Christians should not be fearful. Jesus' counsel is '*...be watchful*', '*...be faithful*'. Whatever befalls—stay close to Him, and draw on his spiritual power. Ω

What's Wrong With Britain?

Few observers of twenty-first century Britain would doubt there is indeed something wrong.

The BBC, standard-bearer of the media, recently sank to a new depth of depraved broadcasting. Noted of late for embracing foul language in many of its programmes, on Radio 2 they lowered the bar by officially authorising the broadcasting of depraved and obscene remarks directed at a 78-year old actor. Bestiality, too, has been screened.

And not just the BBC. The repulsive *Big Brother* series and the '*Celebrity...*' series plumb the depths of gutter entertainment.

Their assumption is that this is what listeners want. Maybe so. But if that's the case—then, literally, God help Britain.

Over the centuries our nation has at times plunged to the depths of depraved behaviour. The work of 18th century satirist William Hogarth bears testimony., as do the writings of Charles Dickens half a century later. Both highlighted the chasm of inequality in British society and contributed to the notion that change was urgent.

Christian Values

Others, too. The preaching of John Wesley mid-18th century provoked a moral revival, while later that century Robert Raikes, editor of the *Gloucester Journal* is credited with popularising the Sunday School movement. This did much to 'civilise' the nation at the grass roots. The schooling taught '*...self-discipline, industry,*

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thrift, improvement, egalitarianism and communalism'. Evangelicals and the chapels became involved and Bible teaching inculcated Christian values, with sound moral teaching

Notably, William Booth began (1865) the Salvation Army with its slogan of '*soup, soap, salvation*'. In contrast to current trends Booth promoted abstention from alcohol, illegal drugs, prostitution, smoking and gambling—all scourges of the Victorian era.

What Went Wrong?

But there were counter-trends. The anti-God movement increased—aided and abetted by evolutionary theory. Two World Wars sapped the nation's spiritual strength, and then increasing prosperity diverted us to wealth creation at the expense of true values. The post-war loss of Empire demoralised the nation.

Undermined by subversive tactics from abroad, the leadership was seduced by anti-Christian values to the extent that our political and spiritual leaders are generally despised for their self-serving, timid and underhand behaviour.

Moral Source

Sound leadership sets the moral high ground. What that may be, however, has come to be devalued, replaced by 'moral relativity': what's right is what *you* believe, and why should I judge you? A clear standard is missing.

At one time, in Britain, the Bible influenced public morals. A considerable proportion of children absorbed at least a smattering of Judaeo-Christian teaching—in school, from their parents, in Sunday School. *cont'd p.4*

Trick or Treat?

'You shall not surely die' (Genesis 3:4)

Halloween and Christmas are in competition in our stores. Pumpkins, broomsticks, pointed black hats, grotesque masks vie with Christmas cards, baubles, toys - even, already, trees (though artificial). This is one face of modern Christianity. Sadly, on the evening of October 31 feral children roam the streets dressed as witches, ghouls - while many elderly cower at home in the dark. *'Trick or treat'* is the cry, too often ending in violence—and even child abduction. Why *Halloween*? Why this night? What does it have to do with Christianity?

- interested non-Christian observers must surely believe Christians have left their senses! They may seek in vain for the origin of Halloween in Christianity's foundation document - the Bible. But where is Halloween? Certainly not in the Scriptures
- *Halloween* - or, the evening preceding All Hallows - is widely celebrated late on October 31st. It is the time known in Ireland and Scotland as Samhain. *Hallowe'n* is followed by *All Souls* and *All Saints* (together known as *Hallowmas*)
- *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*: "The theological basis for the feast [All Souls] is the doctrine that the souls which, on departing from the body, are not perfectly cleansed from venial sins, or have not fully atoned for past transgressions, are debarred from the Beatific Vision, and that the faithful on earth can help them by prayers, alms deeds and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass"
- *Hallowmas*, however, is rooted in the Satanic concept that man has an 'immortal soul' (Genesis 3:4), that the soul survives death and continues its existence eternally. The doctrine permeates all religion from the earliest times. It gives rise to the veneration of ancestors - also to mummification, elaborate burial chambers (*eg* pyramids), the Mexican 'Day of the Dead' *etc.* The widespread concept of *Heaven*, *Hell* and *Purgatory* derives from the immortal soul fallacy. As does *Halloween* and *All Souls Day*. The remembrance of 'saints in heaven' - *All*

Saints - is equally fallacious. But the observance has a long pre-Christian pedigree:

- "according to Celtic and Wiccan lore, Samhain is a time when the "veil" that separates the world of the living and the world of the dead becomes thinner, allowing spirits and other supernatural entities to pass between the worlds to socialize with humans. It is also the time of the year when ancestors and other departed souls are especially honored, and sometimes entreated for luck. Some neopagans have elaborate rituals to honor the dead ..." *Wikipedia*
- the concept of 'darkness' was personified by the Druids as Lord Samhain, and a festival was celebrated on the eve of November 1 - the Druidic new year. In the observance of Halloween the Devil, Satan, was worshipped as 'Lord of the Dead'. [Samhain signifies 'end of summer' with its increasing darkness]. The concepts of darkness, the colour black, evil spirits - perceived as grotesque - and human spirits returned from the dead are reflected in the Halloween celebration. Since 1000AD in Catholicism '[Hallowmas] was celebrated similarly to Samhain, with big bonfires, parades, and dressing up in costumes as saints, angels, and devils'
- in the Old Testament the king of the northern House of Israel - Jeroboam - replaced the divinely-revealed *Festival of Tabernacles* (held in the seventh month, September/October) with a new festival a month later, in our late October/early November. The idolatrous worship he invented - he had learned similar practices during his time in Egypt where the cult of the dead was endemic - and the priests he appointed became the foundation, centuries later, for the Druidic faith, carried from Israel to the West by the 'Celtic' people of the House of Israel. What is now called *Halloween* was a major festival with the Druids
- God's festivals are in spring, summer, autumn (*see* Leviticus 23). However, they are linked to the *harvests* and do not celebrate phases of the sun or moon. In Christianity *All Hallows* is rooted in a festival that celebrates 'end of summer', while *Christmas* is [cont'd p.3](#)

Request the article:

[When Someone Dies](#)

Britain ...cont'd from p.2

That influence has waned. All is undermined by Government-imposed directives, while multiculturalism imports alien morality.

The face of modern Britain—as with the United States, Australia—is defiled by this moral slide from Biblical values. Not that we as nations have ever been perfect! There has, however, been a retreat from true values—and adverse consequences will follow.

The LORD—the one and only Creator God—has detailed the way to national peace and prosperity, for us and for all nations. *He* is the Source. We ignore Him at our peril, and His call is for us to turn back to His revealed path to life. Even if the nation won't heed, each of us can personally 'choose life'. Ω

**Request: What Do You Mean—Repent?
Should You Be Baptized?**

TRICK OR TREAT? ...cont'd

- rooted in the idea of the 're-birth' of the sun in late December. *Easter* is widely celebrated with sunrise services. The 'sunburst' adorns many church buildings. Yet God warns: '*...[do] not lift up your eyes towards the heavens [lest you] shall see the sun, and the moon and the stars, and be drawn away and worship them, and serve them*' (Deuteronomy 4:19)

The Hallowe'en season - based on a '*doctrine of demons*' - cements in humanity an irrational fear of death. It promotes on the devout a burdensome round of useless ritual. It blinds Christians to the true divine worship pattern. And it obscures the glorious hope for the Christian of a resurrection from among the dead at Christ's future coming. *Jesus*, now, is LORD of the dead: '*... Christ both died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord over both the dead and the living*' (Romans 14:9). It is not for Christians - and by no means harmless fun Ω

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The Jolly Season

With supermarket shelves now clearing black pointed hats, witches' broomsticks, huge orange pumpkins and a lorry-load of grotesque masks—get ready for the next shopping onslaught, Christmas.

The media have already featured distraught parents worried that the economic recession will 'spoil Christmas'. In case you have forgotten—that is the annual celebration of the birth of the planet's most humble person, Jesus, who '*...for our sakes became poor*'.

However much debt you pile up over the next couple of months—consider this. If you are not a disciple of Jesus then Christmas is just another public holiday, a break from the dark days of winter, a time to 'let your hair down' in hedonistic excess.. But nothing to do with Christianity, or with the purpose for which Jesus was born. Unless you have a relationship with him it is pointless

But if you consider yourself to be his disciple, observing Christmas obscures the very purpose of his coming into our world. He is '*...the way, the truth, the life*'. Yet at this season even dedicated church-goers spin a web of lies to their children, after the manner of '*the father of lies*'. Nor do they follow his 'way'— a narrow and difficult way. A way that alone leads to living forever.

The LORD, however, has invited us to a series of authentic celebrations—His very own set of festivals which portray His true plan. For a Biblical explanation request our free articles: *Christmas—what would Jesus do?* and *God's Holy Days*. Ω