

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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

representing



Blueprint for Unity...

The material Temple in Israel was God's dwelling-place among mankind. It was, then, 'holy'. God's dwelling. Today, His Temple, is the body of true believers '*... In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*' (Ephesians 2:22).

So—the church is 'holy', and no less subject than ancient Israel to maintain its purity of character, both corporately and individually. But, like the Temple, there are unholy elements.

An incident in the first year of the young King Hezekiah is instructive. The Temple had been sorely neglected by the previous—and idolatrous—King Ahaz. His son, however, opened it up and began to restore the true religion. First, though, he was faced with the massive task of clearing out the debris: '*...[Hezekiah] said Hear me, you Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place*' (II Chronicles 29:5).

There is, surely, a lesson here for the twenty-first century Church of God.. History down the ages suggests there is indeed 'rubbish' to be identified and removed from her.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Install a Biblical form of governance**
each assembly is independent, but co-operating with others
- **Redefine 'the gospel of the Kingdom'**

it is the process by which we enter the Family of God

- **Become a unified church**
scrap the clergy/laity divide
- **Build a spiritual membership**
focus on the development of spiritual growth, not external form. Develop spiritual gifts
- **Stop financial abuse**
giving is voluntary, from the heart; there is no coercion
- **Transparency in all matters**
there are no secret conclaves
- **Don't make doctrine an idol**
Jesus tolerated doctrinal diversity, while working to correct distortions and requiring change
- **Be sensitive to doctrinal error**
Perfect understanding eludes all of us
- **Encourage co-operation with other assemblies**
the church of God is one body
- **Welcome enquirers into the assemblies**
it is not a 'closed shop'
- **Train our youth for leadership**
old leaders pass away
- **Leaders are servants and shepherds**
respected but not privileged

Always be humble and gentle. Patiently put up with each other and love each other. Try your best to let God's Spirit keep your hearts united. Do this by living at peace. All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God's people. We have only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God who is the Father of all. Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us.
(Ephesians 4) **Ω**

Evangelizel

‘Evangelism’ is an imperative for the Christian. We are to take the message of Jesus ‘...into all the world’ (Mark 16:15). And the Christian church certainly spends billions annually to that end.

From tiny ‘tent meetings’ to vast evangelistic crusades a form of the gospel is proclaimed around the world. ‘Decades of evangelism’ are launched to bring the ‘unchurched’. into the Christian fold.

But is that the true purpose of evangelism? Most assume so, and invest their time and resources to that end. Yet, as with so many aspects of the faith, the concept needs careful examination.

Divine Plan

Jesus tells us (Matthew 16:18): ‘...I will build my church’. And as he is the Master Architect of our universe it was carefully and meticulously planned.

That plan was in the mind of the Father—and executed by the Word—since before time. Having created the material universe as the launch pad, He said: ‘...Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ (Genesis 1:26). Man, the human race, however, is but the ‘clay model’, created from earth’s elements.—but with an unbelievable destiny: *to become part of the divine Family, the very Kingdom of God.* Now that’s a demanding challenge, and few are willing to pay the full price (Matthew 7:13-14).

But there always have been some, and a number are identified in Hebrews 12. Of Abraham it is said: ‘...[he] obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws’ (Genesis 26:5) Those who similarly responded to God’s invitation are recorded in the ‘Book of Life’ (eg Revelation 3:5).

A New Phase

The coming of the Messiah saw a new phase in the Plan.. Having laid the foundation by means of his life, death and resurrection, Jesus commissioned the apostles (whom he had tutored in the Way) to faithfully proclaim the message of his Kingdom.

Jesus, however, contrary to common belief, is not ‘trying to save the world’. Not in this age. ‘Many are called’, he said. ‘but few are chosen’. There is a selection

The Gospel is the pathway by which man can become part of the world-ruling Kingdom (or Family) of God

process.

The Father ‘draws’ selected individuals to Jesus: ‘... No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him’ (John 6:44). The Father individually creates a hunger, a craving for ‘something’ in those selected.

Evangelize!

Our question is, *How will they hear that call?* Paul’s answer: through hearing the message proclaimed: ‘... How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’ (Romans 10:14). Paul ‘reasoned’ with and sought to ‘persuade’ all who heard him. It’s a task to which he, and all the Twelve, dedicated his life through much suffering—and persecution.

The task of the church, then, is to faithfully and zealously and in every place to proclaim the message of the resurrected Jesus as Messiah and mankind’s only Saviour—to *evangelize*. The Gospel is the pathway by which man can become part of the world-ruling Kingdom (or Family) of God. It’s the true ‘gospel of the Kingdom’ as proclaimed from the beginning by Jesus and the apostles (Mark 1:14, Acts 28: 31).

To proclaim the Gospel is, too, a privilege shared with us by the Father —and an obligation for all who respond (though few do) to that call to have a part in this vital work .Else how could the divine call be communicated (Romans 10:8-11)?

The Kingdom of God

It is the ‘House of the LORD’ (cf House of Israel). It is the Kingdom of the Father, the Messiah and the faithful from all ages (Numbers 12:7, Hebrews 3:6). After the first resurrection it will rule all mankind on earth for a thousand years

Each of us is gifted through the indwelling Spirit to contribute our resources to that end. For some it is the investment of our time in fervent *prayer* (I Timothy 5:5)—though *all*, of course, must not neglect this essential activity.

Others may be gifted with the ability to *teach* (I Timothy 3: 2). And recall that the apostle Paul also encouraged women who are mature in the faith to participate by discipling younger Christian women (Titus 2:4-5).

It is instructive that Christians escaping persecution (Acts 8:4) ‘...went everywhere *preaching the word [Gk, evangelizing]*’. Filled with the message, the ‘good news’, they couldn’t ‘hold their tongue’ in their encounters with others!

Then there are those—mature in the faith, well-versed in the Scriptures and also ‘...*apt to teach*’—whose gifts propel them into full-time or part-time evangelism, by varied means. *cont’d p.4*

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

Few who follow Jesus Christ would deny the need for 'good works'. It is a concept shared, indeed, by all the major faiths. The apostle Paul urges the Galatian Christians to *'...do good to all men'*. It reflects the words of Jesus: *'...love your neighbour as yourself'*.

Broadly the term is applied to attending to the welfare of the needy, and most Christian churches have such an outreach programme. The homeless are fed and sheltered. The poor are supported. Day Care facilities are provided. All good causes.

There is, however, another side to the term. Consider its opposite—'bad' works (or, in Bible terms, 'evil': Gk *kakos*). The term means worthless, depraved, injurious.. Steven, the first martyr, recounts Israel's history: *'...they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands'* (Acts 7:41). *Evil works!*

Paul, for example, considers the preaching of the Gospel as 'work' (Gk *ergon*) - surely 'good works'. Indeed good works are a step to salvation, for he taught both Jew and Gentile that *'... they should repent and turn to God, and do works [Gk ergon] meet for repentance'* (Acts 26:20). That is, turn your life around, forsake idolatry, begin to develop Christ-like character—and above all enter a personal relationship with the Father through Jesus the one and only Saviour.

It may be assumed, then, that any activities, any works, approved by the Creator God are 'good'. So, trawl through the Scriptures and seek out what He approves—and disapproves. Writes Paul to the Ephesian brethren: *'...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'* (Ephesians 2:10).

Choices

How then, is *your* walk? Recall Steven's identification of idolatry with works. Paul praised one local church for abandoning idolatry: *'...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God'* (I Thessalonians 1:9). Idolatry is not merely having a leering idol or a totem pole in your home or in your church! It's a whole system of worship and day-to-day behaviour. *Evil works*

Or you can choose an alternative. You could renounce idolatry (and be part of the eternal Kingdom of God: Revelation 22:14-15) and worship the Creator as He has prescribed from man's beginning. Like Abraham, for example, who *'...obeyed my voice, and kept my*

charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws' (Genesis 26:5). He fled idolatry, as did Joshua: *'...if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD'* (Joshua 24:14).

It is instructive to note that Jesus, every apostle, every authentic Christian—Jew and Gentile—in the New Testament, as Paul urged, 'fled idolatry' (I Corinthians 10:14). Their 'good works' included not just practical compassion for the needy (especially for fellow-Christians; Galatians 6:10) but they also 'walked the talk', following in the footsteps of Abraham, Moses, Joshua and faithful servants of the eternal God throughout time.

Right to his dying day the apostle Paul was careful to joyfully maintain these 'good works' - even in the face of persecution. Ω

Letter from England

What a contrast! We have just experienced another Festival of Tabernacles—the annual celebration that represents the coming reign over all the Earth of the Kingdom, the Family, of God. A time when Jesus the Messiah will return from the Father to reign as King of all earthly kings, and LORD of all religious lords. A time of abundant health, of universal peace, of prosperity for all, of social harmony. A time, too, of religious harmony—one God, one faith.

Contrast that with our 'present evil world', as the apostle Paul calls this era. Disease afflicts millions. A never-ending sequence of wars and rumours of wars. Famines, drought, unemployment, poverty afflicts universally. Disrupted families, sexual confusion, unruly children, rampant criminal behaviour. And total religious chaos, with myriad ideas about God, doctrinal disputes, fanaticism.

All of that will change under the 'benign dictatorship' imposed by Jesus and His brothers and sisters—the resurrected saints from all ages. They are the *'...called, faithful and chosen'* by the Father. All those who respond to His invitation will have their part in that world of tomorrow, a world just over the horizon.

The *Outreach Ministries*, as resources permit, reaches out with the invitation to become part of that team. If YOU sense that divine call, if you are seeking to satisfy that 'spiritual itch', you are urged to search the Scriptures every day. Writes the prophet Isaiah: *'...Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have compassion upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon'* (Isaiah 55:6).

James

Request the free articles:

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

Persecuted

Literally millions who profess the name 'Christian' are currently suffering persecution in some form. The Scriptures provide insight as to how the enemies of the true faith will conduct their 'war'.

- Religious leaders will "incite" normal people to be angry (*Acts 6:12, 14:2, 14:19, 13:50, 17:5*)
- They will hire legal and forensic specialists to accuse us (*Acts 24:1*)
- We will be accused of being a cult (*Acts 24:5, 14, 28:22*)
- Instead of dealing with the content of our message, the issue will be diverted to attacking our character, through lies and slander (*Luke 23:1-2, Acts 16:20, 17:6, 18:13-21:28, 22:22*)
- They will seek to catch us in one mistake in our words in order to accuse us (*Luke 11:54, 14:1, 20:20*)
- If we pray hard enough, the modern day apostles will be delivered from jail (*Acts 12:5*)
- If we do not, they will not be delivered (*Acts 12:2*)
- Thinking there will be revival without persecution is a deception (*Acts 14:22*)
- Everything will be acceptable except one thing: the name of Yeshua (*Acts 4:17-18, 5:28, 5:40*).

Asher Intrater:
Maoz Israel Report (September 2011)

Evangelize!...cont'd from p.2

All of us, however, contribute in our own way to the whole. Every Christian has his or her part to play in making the truth of the Gospel available to those the Father is inviting to participate with Him in begetting true children of God. From the 'widow's mite' through to the most powerful evangelist we all may help forward the plan God. **Ω**

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Prophetic Caution

The current economic crisis that affects so many of us coupled with 'the Arab Spring', world over-population, acute shortages of food and water and rampant disease have generated a rash of articles on Bible prophecy. Much focus is on December 2012—a date disputed by others. What should you make of it?

One certainty of Bible prophecy that is writ large in Scripture, however, is that 'the age of man' is about to close. Humanity is 'lord of misrule' of our planet since records began, but that misrule ends soon. The Messiah, Jesus, will return to establish the rule of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible maps out for us a God's eye view of the end times. In essence our meddling with fundamental spiritual laws provokes chaos both physical and economic and political. (Yes, spiritual neglect affects the ground under our feet, our health, our well-being!) And to solve the problem world leaders are taking a lead from Jesus—globalisation.

Except, of course, that man's solution will lead to enslavement to a cruel world-ruling religious and political dictator with his instruments of oppression. All opposition mercilessly eliminated.

Missing Factor

Such factors are in plain view in Scripture—and indeed are highlighted by most who write about prophecy. Often with a barely-suppressed sense of glee!

The missing factor, however, and the factor that has caused most confusion among the pundits is: *when?*

It's a question that intrigued even Jesus' most intimate disciples. And a question Bible students to this day ask and ask again. Jesus' answer was simple: *that's not your business*. Only the Father knows when the time will be ripe to call a halt to mankind's madness.

There are indications in the Scriptures, but not a firm date in sight. Prophetic events engulf our shores in waves. Generation after generation gears up for the return of the Saviour—only to die without experiencing that momentous event. Another wave now laps the shore. Is this 'it'? Is this 'the end'?

Be Vigilant

Jesus *will* return—in the Father's perfect timing. The date you anticipate may or may not be the one. Tot up prophesied events—and the time may, thankfully, be cut short! What Jesus said was '*...Be vigilant*'. Watch. Be prepared. Hold fast to the true faith. Don't let your love grow cold.. Serve. Be patient. **Ω**
