

Gaining Access to the King

In times past, gaining access to the presence of a king or queen of England was a difficult and often expensive process. How easy is it today to gain access to the King of kings?

Hampton Court Palace, what a place! To wander its gardens, courtyards, halls, kitchens and royal apartments is an outstanding opportunity for the history enthusiast to feed the imagination. As we pass through Anne Boleyn's Gatehouse we enter the world of the 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century monarchs of the royal houses of Tudor, Stuart, Orange and Hanover.

At that time social expectations, how one lived and behaved at a royal palace like Hampton Court, were dramatically different from those with which an average person in our times is familiar. The power held by a sovereign king or queen was far greater than that exercised by Queen Elizabeth II today. She fills the role of a constitutional monarch when it comes to governing Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A king like Henry VIII (1509-1547) or, to a lesser extent, William III (1689-1702) exercised the full powers of the executive branch of government as well as being the chief justice of the court of appeal.

With such great power concentrated in the person of the king or queen, access to the royal ear was, in every sense of the word, priceless. If such a royal ruler would grant your request for an audience, you could ask that your fondest desires or needs be fulfilled. All the king or queen need say to the appropriate attending courtier (court servant) was, 'Yes, I'll hear so-and-so. Allow him [or her] to come forward.'

Difficulties of access

As you might expect, great numbers of people wanted to see their royal masters. But gaining access to the king was not easily accomplished. In fact all royal palaces like Hampton Court were architecturally designed and staffed to facilitate the screening of those who wanted to see their sovereign.

During the time of William III the winnowing-out process of audience-seekers at Hampton Court Palace started at the spectacular King's Staircase, which was decorated by the Italian painter Antonio Verrio. The man or woman of substance who wanted the king's attention

had to leave any accompanying servants at the foot of the stairs to this monumental entrance to the king's royal apartments. These servants might have to wait three to six hours or more for their master's return.

This stairway led to a room called the King's Guard Chamber. On its walls are hung over 3,000 muskets, swords, pistols and bayonets as a show of power. Here about 40 yeoman guards inspected the visitors to sort out the idlers from the persons with legitimate interests and status as evidenced by their dress, speech, and manners. There were no identity cards in those days, but the style and quality of their clothing very clearly denoted their position in society.

This recalls Matthew chapter 22 in which a certain king inspected his waiting guests for their dress and tossed out someone who presented himself in inappropriate garments. One aspect of this process which was opposed to biblical values concerned the bribing of palace doorkeepers and other courtiers to make it possible

to proceed along in one's effort to see the king.

If you suitably impressed the Master of Requests, or persuaded a doorman, you would be allowed to enter the King's Presence Chamber. King William III rarely used this room for audiences with the public. Nevertheless, the chamber was equipped with a raised throne and a canopy with the royal seal and an enormous painting of William on horseback. When you entered this room, you were expected 'to make a leg' towards the throne at least twice, regardless of whether it was occupied or not. This entrance and bowing with your left leg forward and turned had to be accomplished with much grace and style if you wanted to impress all the courtiers and staff and increase your chances of seeing the king.

The next stage

If you found favour in the sight of someone important, you could then be invited to watch the monarch eat his lunch in the next chamber, the King's Eating Room. But you won't eat a thing while at the palace, or even have a chance to sit down. Being in the presence of the king was sufficient reward and, no doubt, a talking point afterwards.

The goal of the game was, of course, to get an audience with the king. After the King's Eating Room came the King's Privy Chamber, which was the principal ceremonial chamber in the palace. Here the king received ambassadors and held various court functions. In this chamber were the most spectacular throne, canopy and other decorations. However, in order to talk with the king personally you were going to

have to make it to the next room, the King's Withdrawing Room. Realistically, even if you had everything going for you and you knew a few important people, you might get to see the king after a few weeks of showing up daily and going through the screening process. Otherwise, it might take months or years for you to build up your contacts and improve your status. Most people would never get a chance to talk to the king, as access was barred by a series of

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hurdles that were for all practical purposes impossible to surmount except by the very few.

A more egalitarian society

Today, we live in a society with strong biases toward the casual and the egalitarian in our daily social interactions. For centuries, the modern world has been moving away from the concept of a royal family wielding great executive and judicial authority in the governing of 'their' kingdom, and for legitimate historical reasons. The 16th, 17th and 18th centuries were a time when the few enjoyed a remarkably disproportionate share of the nation's wealth and power at the expense of the average person.

The advice the Bible gives on rulership does not disagree with the right of a king to rule his people. Where God's Word differs in both the Old and New Testament is in how that rule is administered. The kings of ancient Israel, with which

the British monarchs are associated both biblically and historically, were given the correct advice on how to govern their people. The scriptural references are given in Deuteronomy 17:18-20, 1 Kings 3:11 and Luke 22:24-27.

No wonder Christ had to remind His disciples of the need for humility for those in authority, seeing that they had accepted the Roman approach to lording it over others instead of embracing what the Holy Scriptures taught. 'Now there was

also a dispute among them [Christ's disciples], as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He [Jesus] said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise

authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves'" (Luke 22:24-27).

The critical difference lies in the attitude of the sovereign who governs.

A future kingdom

The Scriptures talk about a future Kingdom over the entire earth, not of human but of divine origin, for which Jesus Christ qualified to be the King (1 Timothy 6:14-15), ruling with justice and equity. That government will be far different from what the world has experienced during the rule of man.

The angel who prophesied to Mary about the nature and future

(Continued on page 6)

How Our Actions Affect Our Lives

There is a cause for every effect, and there is no better example of this principle than reaping what we sow.

Making a good impression is the aim of everyone when starting a new job. Some time ago I had the opportunity to train a new recruit. Every aspect of his performance was monitored during his 12-week temporary contract. This young man was bright, capable and a pleasure to work with. He learned quickly and performed all the tasks well. However, timekeeping and attendance proved to be a concern. He would be late and occasionally not report for work. So senior management decided not to retain him.

Reaping what we sow

I pleaded that he should be given another chance. So he was offered a new contract with the provision that he must not be late or absent without prior arrangement. He agreed to these terms and for the next few weeks everything was fine. Then he started to be late for work and worse still he began to miss days. By the end of the contract he had missed twelve days. He had sowed the seeds of unreliability and was not offered further employment.

Whatever endeavour we are involved in, we will eventually reap what we sow. Our lives are made up of decision-making. My work colleague had the choice of whether or not to report for work and on time. Too often he made the wrong

choice, and it cost him his job.

In the Bible Adam and Eve were presented with a basic choice in the Garden of Eden. God had explained to Adam that they could eat of all the trees in the garden except one. If they chose to eat of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil', they would die. But Satan (in the form of a serpent) promised, 'You will not die, but be like God.' They

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did not die instantly, but eventually reaped the ultimate penalty of that wrong decision.

Mankind has followed that same general pattern ever since. If we continue to sin we will reap the consequences of what we have sown.

We will reap the emotional, physical and spiritual consequences of what we have sown in our lives. The apostle Paul explained this fundamental truth in Galatians 6:7-8: 'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; *for whatever a man sows he will also reap.* For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life' (emphasis added). If we sow according to our own selfish desires, we will reap

sorrows and suffering, but if we sow according to God's way, we shall reap eternal life.

Making the same mistake

All too often, the mistake we make is that we fall for the very same line as Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Satan lied to Eve when he said, 'You will not surely die' (Genesis 3:4). We know that the penalty or wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and yet we think we can somehow avoid the consequences.

Just like a smoker who ignores the clearly stated warning, 'Smoking Kills', on every packet of cigarettes and continues to light up, we ignore warnings and believe we can somehow beat the odds.

We are constantly tempted to sow the wrong kind of seed. The apostle Peter experienced this as well. He took direct action in defence of Jesus Christ when he lashed out at Malchus, the servant of the high priest, with a sword (Matthew 26:51-53). But Jesus corrected Peter, telling him to 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.' Those who sow a hostile, violent lifestyle will reap the same.

Jesus went on to say that He could have asked for angelic intervention by prayer to His Father. We too can pray for help when faced with difficult situations. We are told to

‘watch and pray’ so that we are not tempted to make wrong choices (verse 41). God is willing to help and guide us, but the flesh (our humanity) is weak. So we must ask God for help in prayer.

Sowing good relationships

Our relationships with others are very important. Good relationships are the result of sowing the right seed. Most longstanding married couples can tell us that their husband or wife is not only their lover, but also their best friend. Enduring relationships begin with friendship. Proverbs 18:24 tells us that if we want friends we must first be friendly ourselves. We should seek to be a friend based on giving and serving – in other words an outgoing concern and respect for the other person.

We show this love and respect by ceasing to gossip about others.

When we have something to say – we should say it to the person concerned, and not to everyone else. In this way we are building strong, trusting relationships.

Avoiding the forbidden fruit

Remember that Eve encountered the very attractive forbidden fruit that was so ‘pleasant to the eyes’ (Genesis 3:6). And in the world today there is so much attractive, exciting-looking fruit just waiting to be picked. Young people influenced by their peers are very vulnerable to the lure of dangerous drugs, illicit sex and misuse of alcohol. The euphoria seems so good for a time, but leads only to misery and ruined lives.

Just as with Adam and Eve, the penalty is not always instant. King Solomon observed: ‘Because the sentence against an evil work is not always executed speedily, therefore

the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil’ (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The reckoning will often come much later.

To avoid that pain, let us all follow the advice that God gives us in both the Old and New Testaments. He says: ‘I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; *therefore choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:19). Our Creator makes it plain that He wants us to *choose life* by sowing the right seed in our lives.

The outcome of such positive action is very rewarding. God will give ‘eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour and immortality’ (Romans 2:7).

Frank Jarvis
United Church of God pastor

What Is the Way to Eternal Life?

We have all sown and reaped the consequences of sin in our lives. The good news is that the ultimate consequence of eternal death can be avoided. ‘For the wages of sin is death, *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*’ (Romans 6:23, emphasis added). God in His love has formulated a wonderful plan to redeem us. We need two things.

Firstly, the full cost of our sins must be paid. Secondly, we need unrestricted access to God the Father through His Holy Spirit. His great plan provides for both.

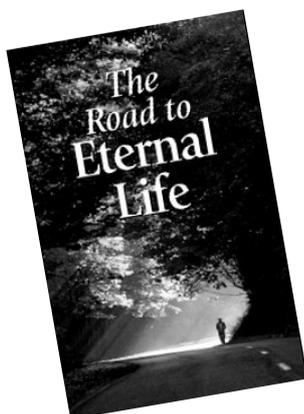
The full cost of our collective sin can only be paid by the One who never sinned. This being is God’s own son Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14). He was prepared to die on the cross as a sacrifice to save each

of us from the ultimate penalty for our sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

What we have to do is admit our sins (the breaking of God’s laws), and turn away from them (this is repentance). Then we recognise Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour (acknowledging that He died for us), and ask God to forgive our transgressions.

We demonstrate our repentance by asking for water baptism – showing our determination to live a new life based on observing God’s laws (Acts 2:38). Symbolically we die and our former sins are buried in the watery grave of baptism. This enables God to give us the gift of His Holy Spirit. This wonderful gift gives us a full understanding of what God’s law requires, and guides us in our decision-making (Romans 8:14).

This is how we can follow the example of Jesus Christ Himself (who lived a sin-free life) and like Him we shall inherit everlasting life. For a more complete understanding of this precious spiritual knowledge, please request our free booklet *The Road to Eternal Life*.



Is It Important To Ask in Christ's Name?

*Why do Christians use Christ's name in closing their prayers?
How significant is this practice?*

We all do the same thing when giving someone a reference or introduction to a friend. We say: 'Tell them I sent you.' It shows the person comes with our recommendation. We hope that the individual will then be afforded the same treatment we would expect ourselves.

When we use someone's name it usually reveals our association with that person and that we have their backing. If we can use a powerful and influential person's name, all the better. It can open difficult and normally closed doors.

Using Christ's name

When Christians pray they make their requests of the Father in heaven in the name of Jesus Christ.

Why? What does it achieve? Is it a custom based on tradition? Is it optional?

Christians give thanks before partaking of a meal, and generally conclude their prayer by asking in the name of Jesus Christ. But are we clear about the importance of this practice?

In John 16:23-24, Christ said to His disciples: 'Most assuredly I say unto you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

Christian disciples are followers or students, those who try to follow in Christ's footsteps to the best of their ability. Christ tells them they must pray to the Father in His (Jesus') name.

We see from this passage that it was not done before the time of Christ's instruction. A privilege indeed not even shared by great patriarchs and prophets like Abraham, Moses and David. Whatever we appropriately ask in Christ's name has God's blessing!

Much more than the phrase itself

It's important that we understand what we are doing when using

Using Christ's name identifies us with Him by our right words and actions. It is a great privilege when used appropriately and respectfully. It guarantees God's blessing!

Christ's name. The Bible makes it clear that it must not be done lightly or disrespectfully, as the consequences of taking God's name in vain are serious. (Our free booklet, *Who Is God?* explains that Jesus is God.)

Is it just the repetition of the phrase, 'in Jesus' name,' that smoothes the way to an answered prayer? Of course not, there is much more to it than that. Followers of Jesus Christ will have Christ living in them through the presence of the Holy Spirit

(Galatians 2:20), helping them to strive to keep God's law just as Christ did. In 1 John 5:3 we are told that 'this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.'

Christians go to their heavenly Father not just with the association and recommendation of Christ, but with a track record of practising His way of life. God will recognise and respect people who go to Him in this way. Christ said: 'The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God' (John 16:27).

What does using Christ's name achieve? Our salvation depends upon using it! The apostle Peter stated: 'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

Notice now what the apostle Paul wrote: 'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Christ] and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven [angels], and of those on earth' (Philippians 2:9-10).

These passages show the incredible power and influence of the name of Christ. But more than that, converted Christians can go to the Father because Christ is in them through the Holy Spirit. 'Whoever

receives Me, receives Him [the Father] who sent Me' (Luke 9:48).

In conversation with the Father

When we use Jesus' name in conversation with our Father in heaven it identifies us with Christ and reminds us who we are and by

whose authority we act.

We close our prayers in Christ's name because we're told in Scripture to do it, but even more than that we are showing great respect for our Creator.

Recall that Christ said we were to render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what belongs to God.

We owe our Maker enormous respect!

Using Christ's name identifies us with Him by our right words and actions. It is a great privilege when used appropriately and respectfully. It guarantees God's blessing!

Will McLoughlin, Assistant Pastor of the Bricket Wood congregation

Access to the King

(Continued from page 2)

office of the child she would bear said this: 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father [King] David And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end' (Luke 1:31-33).

In the book of Revelation Jesus is given the title 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (Revelation 19:16). As King, Jesus is going to have His court and courtiers who accompany and serve Him. The Scriptures say that those who will join Christ when He returns are 'called, chosen, and faithful' (Revelation 17:14). Those privileged to assist Jesus Christ will sit on royal thrones 'and shall reign with Him a thousand years' (Revelation 20:6).

Access policy of the King of kings

Formerly, direct access to God's presence was strictly limited to the very few, just as with human monarchs (Hebrews 9:1-8). This was symbolised by the veil that separated the Holy of Holies, containing the Ark of Covenant with its mercy seat. However, when

Jesus died for our sins, this symbolic veil was torn in half (Matthew 27:51).

Since Jesus' death and resurrection, access to the great throne of the coming King of kings has been open to those who desire mercy and forgiveness from their Sovereign. This is because Jesus had the character traits of His Father perfected in Him through the suffering he himself experienced as a human being (Hebrews 2:10).

That is where we come in. Instead of remaining only outsider subjects of the great King, many throughout the ages have been called, chosen and proved faithful in order to become part of the King's own royal family. That invitation is extended to those whom God is calling *during this age* (Acts 2:37-39).

Unlike human monarchs, the King of kings offers human beings the opportunity to become part of God's family, as the following Scripture makes clear: 'For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you"' (Hebrews 2:11-12, NRSV).

Such persons can have boldness as they are promised direct access to the King of kings' throne of grace (Hebrews 10:19). However, access to the coming King's throne

is by no means unconditional. Some few, who have knowingly and willingly rejected their opportunity for salvation, will be denied access to the King's privy chambers in His new capital city and palace!

'But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life' (Revelation 21:27).

The scriptures are quite clear on the nature of the defilement that will deny a person access to the King. 'Out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person' (Matthew 15:18-20).

Yet access to the coming King will be available to many who would never have had access to the resident kings of Hampton Court.

God's Holy Day Plan

God has a great plan for all humanity, as Christ died for *all* human beings. 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, *will draw all peoples to Myself*. This He said, signifying by what death [crucifixion] He would die' (John 12:32-33).

Our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan* explains how in this age of man God is calling a relatively few people whom He calls the firstfruits. In the coming millennial world, He will call all of humanity and give them an opportunity for eternal salvation.

Jeffrey Patton

Questions & Answers

Q What is your opinion on whether God's ancient people Israel are still the chosen ones?

I A, Devon

A The answer to your question is found in 1 Peter 2:9: 'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.'

Who did Peter have in mind? The people of Israel or Judah, or the followers of Christ? The next passage enlightens us: 'Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy' (verse 10).

Peter is addressing God's Church in Asia Minor (Turkey), whose membership would have been from various backgrounds, notably Gentiles but also including Jews. Other parts of the New Testament make it clear that 'God's elect' today includes Jews, Greeks, Romans, freemen and slaves (Romans 8:33; Galatians 3:28).

All who are called to salvation and respond to God, no matter what their background, nationality or colour, are identified as the people of God in the New Testament (see 1 Peter 2:10). Every human being is a potential recipient of Christ's supreme sacrifice atoning for sin (John 3:16; 12:32-33).

Understanding this, are the Jews (and the rest of the tribes of Israel) then no longer God's people? Has God cast the people of Judah out of His sight with no hope of salvation? Not at all! The apostle Paul gives us the evidence: 'I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!' (Romans 11:1).

Further down in the chapter Paul explains the fact that Israel in general was blinded in not seeing God's revelation through Jesus Christ (verse 7). In verse 11 Paul states, 'I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles . . .'

Then in Romans 3:9 Paul explains that both Jews and Greeks are under sin and the only escape from that burden is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In verse 29 Paul shows that God is the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us plainly that it is sin which has separated us from God. Whether one is a Jew, an Israelite or a Gentile doesn't matter. All those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and have repented of their sins, including the recognition of being responsible in part for Christ's death, are classified as God's elect and His chosen people.

Today is not the only day of salvation. To understand further, please request our free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *What Happens After Death?*

Q What Church are you please?

*Mrs A M P,
Sevenoaks, Kent*

A We publish a full-colour booklet entitled *This Is the United Church of God*. It will explain the goals and purposes of the Church and how we fit into the world picture.

A companion booklet, *The Church Jesus Built*, will help explain our history. Both are free of charge for the asking.

We would be glad to answer any additional questions about the Church.

How our literature is funded

The United Church of God *British Isles* is registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 1079192). The publication of this Supplement and other literature is funded by the generosity of members of the Church, coworkers and our readers. Following Jesus Christ's instruction (Matthew 10:8), it is supplied free of charge so that His message can be made available to all. We are grateful to those who assist financially in the work done by *The Good News*.

Donations may be sent to: *The United Church of God, PO Box 705, WATFORD WD19 6FZ.*



Letters from Our Readers

Daily Mail advertisement

I am responding to your advert in the *Daily Mail* posing the question, 'When Disaster Strikes, Where is God?' It is a question that is coming from many quarters in view of the loss of so many lives and the massive ruin of homes, schools, businesses and natural resources. I am sure this question has been asked many times throughout the generations. The only true answer to all such questions is to be found in God's Word, the Bible: 'Thy Word is Truth'.

J M C, Salisbury, Wiltshire

Thank you so much for placing your advertisement in the *Daily Mail*. I don't know if you placed it in any other papers but do know that as a committed Christian, it lifted up my heart to see such a thing. Please find cheque enclosed as I would like to receive your magazine. I know there is no cost, but they don't come free to you.

Mrs A W, County Durham

On reading the *Daily Mail* newspaper I was so pleased to see the piece printed, especially on the question that was asked: 'Where is God? And, 'Does He really care?' Now that all these awful things have happened: tsunami, floods, so many taken away, little children left alone – people have no desire to worship. I know it says in the Bible that these things will happen before our Lord comes. I do hope that many more people have taken note of what you have written.

Mrs K L, Cardiff

Why so much suffering?

Thank you so much for sending me copies of *The Good News*. Although I am already a committed Christian, I find so much to encourage and enlighten me, particularly the articles on suffering and why God allows it.

R A-C, Eastbourne, East Sussex

I have to tell you that having witnessed so much suffering recently I find it difficult to accept that God exists, although a Bible student and a church worshipper. Perhaps you can convince me otherwise.

E S, Wales

• *We posted the free booklets Why Does God Allow Suffering? and Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist? We hope they have been of help.*

The Good News

Every copy of *The Good News* magazine I have read is loaded with amazing, in-depth truth that has been hitherto hidden or vague. Please keep on digging deep into the ocean of God's wisdom.

J O, Tel Aviv, Israel

Thank you so much for *The Good News* and other literature that you have sent me. It is, as you say, a unique publication. I particularly like the words in your letter: 'You'll find its themes timeless, full of faith, hope and love.' Thank you for this encouragement.

D H H, Basingstoke

I am grateful for the magazines. I find them very informative and great study aids. They help me to provide Christian-based answers to

issues we encounter in life. Please find enclosed a cheque as a donation towards the magazines.

Miss F W, Doncaster

Bible Study Course

Thank you for sending me lesson one of the *Bible Study Course* and all the other booklets together with *The Good News* magazine. I am thrilled with the information and it has made me more eager to learn how to come closer to God – something that I desperately needed to do. I am also listening to the lectures on your web site. I enclose the test card to answer the questions on lesson one, for your scrutiny and response. I look forward to lesson two and can tell you now that I will be continuing this course to the end.

J R, Bude, Cornwall

God's Holy Days

Do you have a booklet that tells the exact things to do on God's Holy Days? I was very interested in *Holy Days or Holidays?*, but it did not give precise information on how to celebrate them properly. Of course, they should be observed. I see that now. God the Father and Yeshua [Jesus] have never rescinded them.

I A, Paignton, Devon

• *We posted our free booklet God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind. It explains quite a lot. But if you still have additional questions, please feel free to write (PO Box 405, Watford WD19 6FZ) or telephone (020 8386 8467) and we will be glad to answer them.*