

BEYOND TODAY

The British & European Supplement

July/August 2017

The protesting reformer and the uncommitted king

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, we consider whether Martin Luther went far enough in restoring the doctrines of the Bible.

In the autumn of 1517 Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation in Germany as a religious movement, and immediately clashed with Rome. Luther wasn't the first reformer but he became its driving force. Some 13 years later Henry VIII facilitated the Reformation in England by breaking with Rome for personal reasons. Both men defied the Roman Catholic Church and its leader, the pope. Luther's focus was initially on reforming the Roman Church at a time when the English king was still devoted to the Catholic faith. That devotion was not to last long.

Causes and effects of the Reformation

It was in October 1517 that Luther nailed his 95 points of reform (his "theses") to the church door in the university town of Wittenberg. Luther wanted Rome to consider his points which were very critical of the Roman Catholic Church and her religious teachings, especially on "indulgences." This was the idea that one could speed one's way into heaven by monetary payments to the Church instead of helping the poor. It also resulted, Luther believed, in a false sense of salvation based on how much money one had contributed rather than on faith in Christ.

A collision course with Rome was now inevitable. Three years later he also criticised the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

The early "motto" of the Lutheran Church was to look to the Bible for its doctrines and beliefs rather than follow Roman traditions. The Roman Catholic Church has always claimed that "Over the Book [Bible] stands

the Church" (*The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context* by Anne Fremantle, page 11). In contrast "The Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible is the religion of Protestants" was the stated claim of the early leaders of the Lutheran Church. Despite this assertion, very little theological change from the traditions of men back to the truths of the Bible actually took place during the Reformation.

Early doctrines and beliefs changed

About 15 centuries earlier, as the disciples who had known Jesus died out, the change from the true doctrines and beliefs of the New Testament Church to accepting customs and traditions not based on the Bible began in

Very little change from the traditions of men back to the truths of the Bible actually took place during the Reformation.

earnest. Changes continued as the centuries rolled by.

Christ's half-brother Jude had pleaded with his contemporaries in the second half of the first century to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude, verse 3). Even then, the New Testament writer had witnessed how quickly false teachings could replace true biblical doctrines.

Later leaders wanted to move the fledgling Christian Church away from its Jewish roots. In doing so, pagan Roman ideas, days and festivals were introduced so the

populace could participate with very minor tweaks to their customary behaviours and practices.

Among these, the idea of an immortal soul was introduced; the Sabbath, in force from Creation and the day over which Christ is Lord (Mark 2:28), was changed to Sunday; Passover was moved away from its lunar date and the three days and three nights Christ spent in the grave were reduced to a day and a half with the Teutonic name of Eostre (“Easter – a variant name of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar). Later in the fourth century the Roman mid-winter festival was adopted as the birthday of Christ although Scripture clearly indicates Jesus was born in the autumn.

Luther addressed none of these issues.

Henry VIII defends Catholic Church

When Henry VIII encountered Luther’s writings, the English king surprisingly came to the aid of the pope by attacking the proposed church reforms. Pope Leo X who was very much in need of royal support from his princes in Catholic Christendom wasted no time in rewarding “loyal” Henry with the title Fidei Defensor, Latin for “Defender of the Faith.” (The letters FD are still engraved on British coins, originally meaning the Roman Catholic faith, but now considered to apply to the beliefs of the Church of England.) The king also replied to Luther’s attack on the sacraments with a letter in “Defence of the Seven Sacraments,” although the king may have commissioned his church scholars to write the document. As far as Pope Leo X was concerned, Henry VIII was flavour of the month.

Despite this, it wasn’t long before Henry turned his back on Rome. By 1530, the already-married king of England had cast his eyes on Anne Boleyn and wanted to marry her. However, Henry needed Pope Leo X to come to his rescue and agree an annulment of his marriage to Spanish wife Catherine of Aragon, daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Catherine had previously married Henry’s brother Arthur but the elder son of Henry VII died young. The pope had already sanctioned Henry’s marriage to Catherine so was disinclined to see it Henry’s way. Furthermore, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was the nephew of Catherine and emperors were powerful enough to depose popes.

Henry VIII Turns his Back on Rome

During the early years of Henry’s reign, no one could have foreseen that he would break with Rome. When he did, the king gave himself the title Supreme Head of the Church of England which was “rubber stamped” by parliament. Henry further instructed that the Roman

pontiff only be referred to as the “bishop of Rome” rather than the “pope.” The English monarch was now in charge of what became the Anglican Church and the pope was not to have any ecclesiastical authority over the Church of England. However, the king retained the title Defender of the Faith.

Some historians doubt whether Henry VIII actually died a reformed Protestant. There are good reasons for such doubt. Whereas Martin Luther ignored Rome’s edicts that forbade people reading the Bible and translated the Bible into German, for a good while Henry VIII continued to forbid the use of Tyndale’s English translations of the Bible. In 1536 Tyndale was executed for heresy – his last prayer being that the king’s eyes be opened.

Following uprisings and protests emanating from his break with Rome, Henry commissioned *The Great Bible* to be written in English (using large parts of Tyndale’s translations), and read and made publicly available in all churches. It seems he felt this action would strengthen his cause. *The Great Bible* was published in 1539.

The Protestant Queen

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the younger daughter of Henry VIII came under pressure by Puritans in particular to adjust the title of Supreme Head of the Church inherited from her father. Puritans and other Protestants believed firmly that no human could be Head of the Church and only Jesus Christ can bear this title. As a consequence, monarchs from Elizabeth I onwards held the position of “Supreme Governor of the Church of England.” That is true of the present monarch as well.

Protestants believed correctly that Christ is Head of His Church. However, in accepting that, most fail to learn His true teachings which pre-date both Catholic and Protestant traditions. They also fail to recognise the commission He assigned to His followers throughout the ages.

Find out for yourself by studying the Bible how Luther and the Protestant reformers didn’t go as far as restoring all the key biblical doctrines that God’s Word teaches. To help you in your studies, the United Church of God has produced a booklet, *The Church Jesus Built*. It’s free to you for the asking. You will find that the Protestant religion falls far short of having restored the true teachings of Jesus Christ, His disciples and the early Church.

Ultimately, it is the Word of God, and not the traditions of men which will judge us all. It’s our obligation not just to study it but to put it into practice.

Gerhard Marx

Beyond Today Supplement



Pound coins display the title F.D. or Fid Def (Fidei Defensor = Defender of the Faith). Shutterstock

It's not just about oil

Prophecy can take many forms in Scripture: A narrative, a vision, or what at first glance seems like a simple parable.

Bible students will be aware that chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew's gospel comprise a long discourse Jesus Christ gave about the end time. Paralleling similar prophesies in the books of Daniel and Revelation, our Saviour's "Olivet prophecy" outlined the events that would occur prior to His return to this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Fewer people may be aware that around two-thirds of this prophecy is not about world events but about the condition of God's Church through the centuries. For example, in Matthew 24, verses 43-51, Christ compares the attitude of a faithful servant with that of an evil servant, both waiting for their Lord and Master to return at the end of the age.

With that context in mind, the parable in verses 1-12 of chapter 25 becomes a very serious matter. "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

In Scripture, a virgin represents a true follower of God – someone unpolluted by the humanly devised religions of the world around them (see for example, 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 14:4). Thus these women represented ten disciples. Scripture tells us that Christ will marry His Church at His return (Revelation 19:7-8).

Spiritual complacency

Oil is symbolic of God's Spirit. These virgins all had received God's Spirit and all had light in their lamps. However, one group also took extra oil, not only in their lamps, but in their "vessels" (Matthew 25:4). These would most likely have been little clay bottles.

Our Saviour repeatedly instructs His followers to be ready, to be "so doing," to be watchful.

So with their lamps all burning brightly, the whole group went to meet the bridegroom, but he was delayed and while waiting, they all fell asleep (verse 5).

They were woken by cries of, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming" (verse 6). The bridegroom represents Jesus Christ at

His return to earth. All the young women awoke and began to trim their lamps. By this time the wick, often a piece of linen, would need trimming (removing the burnt parts), and more oil would be needed to replenish the lamp.

However, the foolish had no extra oil and said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out" (verse 8). The parable continues, "But the wise answered saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you, but go rather to those who sell and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And those who were ready went in with him to the wedding and the door was shut. And afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' but he answered and said, 'Assuredly I say to you, 'I do not know you'' (verses 9-12).

It's not only about oil

Very often people concentrate only on the oil as a representation of God's Holy Spirit. The wise took a reserve supply whilst the foolish only took what was in their lamps. When their lamps began to run out they tried to borrow some from the wise. In verse 9 they were told to go and buy more oil. So what could this mean? The clue is in the words spoken to the five foolish virgins when they returned from their shopping expedition and tried to gain access to the wedding. Christ told them, "I do not know you."

Taking these two points together, we can surmise that as well as being filled with the Holy Spirit, the wise had also taken the time to get to know the Bridegroom before the marriage was due to take place. They had built a relationship with Him and knew of His command to be watchful and prepared. That is how they knew they needed extra oil. It was what their Lord and Master would have expected of them.

The twelve disciples had a similar experience of Christ's expectations when they forgot to take bread with them on a journey (Matthew 16:5). Jesus used this lack to teach them a lesson of faith (verses 6-12). Our Saviour repeatedly instructs His followers to be ready, to be "so doing," to be watchful.

The words "I do not know you" suggest there was not even a hint of recognition by the Bridegroom. It appears that the five foolish virgins had not thought it was important to establish a relationship with Him beforehand. By the time they realised they should have done so, it was too late. They had neglected God's Holy Spirit to the extent

that it had been quenched because they had overlooked contact with Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The extra oil of the wise virgins seems certain to represent this close relationship.

A lesson for today

The lesson for Christians today is that we must come to know Jesus Christ and build a close and loving relationship with Him now before He returns. Which bride would not want to know her husband? And would Jesus Christ want to marry a bride He doesn't know?

Revelation 19:7 states, "His wife has made herself ready." How will she be ready? She will have learned what her future Husband expects of her and be practising those things. She will, with the help of God the Father, have developed godly characteristics. Indeed she will have a deep desire to become more like the Father and Christ. She will trust Them both implicitly to know what is best for her, facing trials with faith. She will allow Christ to lead her and will be always seeking to know Him better and abide by His wishes.

Above all will be an acute awareness and gratitude for the price both Jesus and the Father were willing to pay so that in the future she could be brought onto the God-plane of existence. As Eve was a helper comparable to Adam, the bride will have developed the character and knowledge of God's ways and laws to become a helper suitable for Jesus Christ.

This parable shows us that Christ wants a bride He knows and who knows Him. Christ will marry a Church made up of individuals who took the time each day to draw close to Them both. Those who do not will not be a part of the Bride, no matter how much they knock on the door and plead to be let in. We are all only granted so much time to prepare.

Now is the time for each of us to build that close loving relationship with our heavenly Father and with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, before He returns. What a shame it would be to find the door shut and hear those words ringing in our ears, "I do not know you."

Michael Hurst

The Bride of Christ revealed

God's Church comprises the Father's spirit-begotten children who are also the "brothers" of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:1-2; Hebrews 2:11-12, New International Version). The Father desires that all people ultimately become His children. Human parent-child and sibling relationships were intended to portray this greater spiritual reality.

Marriage also pictures a greater spiritual reality. God instituted human marriage between a husband and wife (in the first instance between Adam and Eve) intending it to portray the future marriage of Jesus Christ to the Church.

The joining as one flesh on the physical level has a spiritual parallel in the relationship Christ shares with His people. Individually, Christ's followers are His brothers and sisters, but collectively they constitute His Bride, now betrothed or engaged to Him and later to join Him in a divine marriage relationship for all eternity. As Paul explained, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Those in the Church have not yet entered into the fullness of the marriage relationship with Christ, being still physical. Until that time they have the responsibility to remain spiritually pure. Paul told those he had helped to convert, "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). The marriage will occur, when Jesus Christ returns (Revelation 19:7-8).

Significance of the New Covenant

The New Covenant to which followers of Jesus Christ pledge themselves, is in fact a marriage covenant. This New Covenant had been promised to ancient Israel long before Christ came in the flesh (Jeremiah 31). It was needed because the nation violated the terms of the Old Covenant, which God had entered into with them at Mount Sinai: "My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:32). So the Old Covenant was also a marriage covenant.

The Being the Israelites knew as God in the Old Testament was later born as Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:4 and our free booklets *Who Is God?* and *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*). Israel was thus the Bride of Christ, but the nation broke her marriage vows by worshipping other gods, which amounted to spiritual adultery (Leviticus 17:7; Jeremiah 3:1-6).

The Old Covenant and Israel's marriage terminated with Christ's death. Now resurrected, Jesus still intends to marry Israel but under a new marriage agreement. God's Church is the forerunner in the New Covenant relationship.

May we all remain faithful today, looking forward with anticipation to a joyful eternity of perfect spiritual union with Jesus Christ in the family of God!

Bolster contact with God . . .

God is our “significant other.” He wants us to involve Him in all aspects of our lives.

Throughout my life, God has revealed himself in various ways. At times, I am in awe of how much He wants to sort matters out for me. On many occasions I have experienced His direct intervention on my behalf. Often though, I must first learn a few lessons.

One incident I remember vividly was when I went to an ATM machine to withdraw £100. While I waited for the cash the electricity failed and the money failed to appear. Immediately I rang the bank to be told I needed to complete an ATM dispute form.

With the form duly completed I began the procedure of reclaiming my missing money. During this time, it didn't occur to me to include God in the process as I assumed I would get my money back.

Six months of appeals later, both the bank and the ombudsmen ruled against my claim. I was devastated. There didn't seem to be anything else I could do.

About one month later, I was reading in the epistles of Peter where it states, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). It was as if I had never read this verse before. The verse clearly says to cast “all” our anxieties on Him, not just some.

Immediately, I prayed to God for forgiveness for leaving Him out of this situation. Then the phone rang. Even

before I answered it, I knew the Almighty had worked the situation out for me. I felt goosebumps all the way down my spine. It was the bank manager who happened to have my file on her desk. She advised that, although the bank had not ruled in my favour, she was going to overturn that decision. As I put the phone down, it was as if God had said to me, “You only had to ask.”

I've had many direct interventions in my life, but this was one of the most memorable. It was a clear reminder of how much God loves us and wants to be involved in our lives.

Keeping a journal to record the blessings we receive is a great way to be reminded of His love. It helps me to remain encouraged and stay close to God. It also helps increase faith when He says, “wait,” “not now,” or “no” to my requests. We must remember that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Other scriptures tell us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to continue “steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12). If we do that we would involve God more readily in every aspect of our lives and be strong enough in faith to face any trials He allows to test us.

Beverley Livock

. . . and minimise mental clutter

We all need some down time, but unchecked distractions can crowd God out of lives.

Humans are easily distracted. Satan the devil knows this and plays his part by increasing the availability of activities that can divert us from what is important. Our minds can be easily led to focus on less significant relationships, objects and activities.

A recent article by Anna Hart from *The Sunday Telegraph* (5th March 2017) observed that living in the 21st century often means dealing with a mass of extraneous items.

Ms Hart quotes decluttering expert Vicky Silverthorn: “We're only just starting to recognise what a significant, positive impact that decluttering and organisation has on our mental well-being.”

“Clutteredness” can also be seen in the way we choose to spend our time. TV shows, computer games and superficial phone-friends are in most of our lives in some form. Background music intrudes almost everywhere, as do TV screens, with attention-attracting images and often subtitles. Consequently, we can find our minds so filled with shallow relationships and trivia that we have little time for close family and friends or productive pastimes, and cannot meditate and be inwardly still to focus on God, the

ultimate Creator and Father that gave us life.

If we truly believe in His way of life, we will let Him govern every moment of our lives and do more than just make time for Him. We cannot afford to take Him for granted and let the world's distractions divert us from our destiny. The apostle John in his first epistle says, “Everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:16, New International Version).

By making each moment count, we can move towards a tidier and more God-centred, balanced approach to our lives. It is imperative to allocate additional special time in our day to specifically focus on our Heavenly Father and to strengthen our relationship with Him. Trivia cannot monopolise our thinking if our aim is to bring every thought into obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Clutter can fill our homes and, if we are not careful, our lives too. Disciples of Christ should focus on what is really important and avoid filling up their time with trivia.

Sharry Tay-Bradley

One-man's crusade shows how Earth's natural beauty can be restored

A change in agricultural practices today can provide a glimpse of how the world will become productive, ecologically diverse and beautiful when Christ returns.

Ever since I was a small boy, I have admired the beauties of the English countryside. Whether it was the first snowdrops at winter's close, the bluebell woods of spring, trees laden with ripening fruit in autumn – once everywhere seemed to echo with buzzing bees and bird song.

In more recent times, however, I regret the decline of biodiversity, which has been caused in part by modern agricultural practices. Removing ancient hedgerows and habitats has taken its toll over the years.

It appears I am not the only one saddened by the decline in native wildlife. Author and farmer John Lewis-Stempel was so concerned he decided to do something about it, albeit in a small way (*Mail Online*, 5 May 2016, "Imagine if every English field looked like this: How one farmer proved that shunning chemicals can transform our countryside").

Mr Lewis-Stempel planned to restore a field that had been made virtually sterile by contemporary farming methods such as crop spraying to its full natural splendour. He wondered, "If those chemicals dousing the land are so safe, why do crop-sprayers have sealed cabs?"

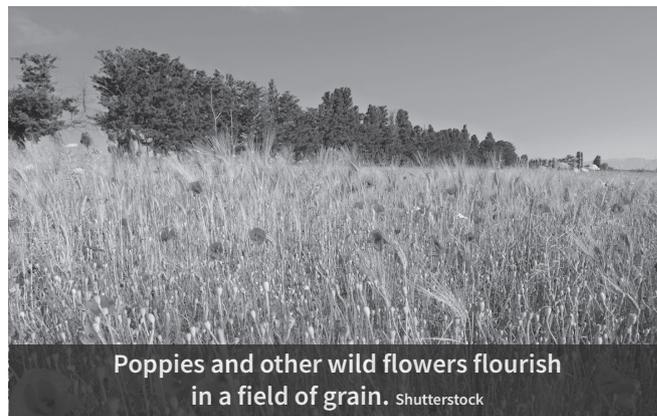
Early on he realised there were very few earthworms in the field, indicating that the soil was practically dead.

A first step was to sow wildflower seeds along with wheat. He also imported some hares and installed a bird-feeding table. The latter attracted birds such as goldfinches, song thrushes and redwings, where previously there had only been jackdaws and rooks.

Once natural methods of production had been restored the wildlife returned and the four-acre field, previously as "silent as a mausoleum," now teemed with life. It also produced five tons of grain.

Even without human intervention, God has blessed the natural world with restorative powers of its own. In October 2016, BBC 2 showed a three-part series entitled "British Art at War" presented by the art critic Andrew Graham Dixon. One programme showed how the artist Paul Nash's work had been affected by the First World War.

It was a pleasant surprise to see how the once battered landscape of Flanders had been transformed into areas that were quite picturesque. Grassland and healthy trees



predominated where Nash had depicted scorched earth, churned mud, and trees reduced to matchwood. Shell holes had become ponds.

After the great battle at the end of the age the entire earth will be in need of similar restoration (Matthew 24:21-22). With Christ ruling the earth for a thousand years, that process of healing and rehabilitating the environment will proceed apace (Ezekiel 47:7-12; Isaiah 35:1-7).

Scripture indicates that God will supernaturally change the landscape to make it productive and beneficial for human habitation (Isaiah 40:4). Yet human beings, working under the direction of the resurrected saints, will still have their part to play in the rebuilding process (Amos 9:13-15). The end result will be astounding beauty everywhere.

Not only will the physical creation be returned to its original beauty but mankind's relationship with God will also be restored. For more information on this encouraging topic please request or download our booklet *Christ's Reign on Earth*.

When we see the ugliness and chaos of much of today's world, we can find solace in the knowledge of the good things God plans for the earth and its inhabitants. A world of splendour, harmony and beauty is coming that will far exceed anything Mr Lewis-Stempel or any other human being has ever imagined.

Philip Perry



Q Does Colossians 2:16 imply we can choose to keep God's Sabbath and Holy Days or pagan days such as Christmas and Easter, or both?
Reader from Kent

A As the Church expanded from the Holy Land into areas such as Asia Minor, Italy and Greece, it encountered pagan philosophies, some with ascetic beliefs. Asceticism taught that spirit is good while matter is evil. The physical body, consisting of matter, was considered evil and was to be treated harshly (see the verses that follow the queried scripture – Colossians 2:18-23).

The Colossian Christians were being judged by a worldly philosophy for their approach to God's festivals, the new moons and Sabbaths, which they apparently observed in a joyous and festive manner – a manner entirely contrary to the ascetic approach of self-denial. They understood that the Sabbaths, new moons and annual festivals are clearly described in the Old Testament and some had specific commands to “rejoice” (note Leviticus 23:40 for example).

By cautioning the Colossian members not to let others judge them for how they observed these occasions, Paul didn't question whether they should be kept. Nor did he

Let the Bible Answer . . .

How should we respond to human rulers?

Attitudes towards rulers can be found in Exodus 22:28 (repeated in Acts 23:2-5); Proverbs 25:6-7; Ecclesiastes 10:20; 1 Peter 2:17 and Jude 1:8-10.

Warnings regarding rulers are mentioned in Psalm 118:8-9 and 146:3-4. Examples of handling conflict with rulers can be found in Exodus 1:17; Daniel 3:8-18; 6:12-23; Acts 4:18-21; 5:29.

indicate that they should return to the pagan days they had kept prior to conversion. Indeed, verse 17 confirms that God's Sabbaths and Holy Days foreshadow a future fulfilment in Christ. (Please request our free booklets *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* and *God's Holy Day Plan*).

These verses show gentile Christians observing God's festivals. In no way did Paul tell them to desist from following God's instructions, or to seek out for themselves alternative celebrations. Instead, the issue he addressed is that Christians should not let others judge them by misguided ascetic standards concerning what they ate or drank as they observed the Sabbaths and festivals.

Q Acts 2:41 says that about 3,000 people were baptised in one day. Is that really possible?
Reader from Derbyshire

A Such a number was probably a challenge to the twelve apostles and their helpers (anything up to 70 according to Luke 10:1, 17). However, if that number were not able to be baptised that day Luke, the author of Acts, would have been a laughing stock.

Baptism symbolises the “death of the old person” (Romans 6:3-5). Following repentance the adults would have been fully immersed in water possibly by helpers, as the disciples had done for Jesus (John 4:1-2). Next the apostles, and possibly others designated by them, would have laid hands on the newly baptised and in a brief prayer asked God to grant His gift of the Holy Spirit to them (Acts 2:33; 8:14-18; 1 Timothy 4:14). It would have been a very busy time, but not an impossible number.

Q Why did John the Baptist not call down fire from heaven to destroy Herod before he could behead him?
Reader from London

A Jesus referred to John as the greatest of the prophets, even though there are no mighty miracles attributed to him (Luke 7:28).

When Roman soldiers who came to him asking him what they should do as a sign of their change of heart, John told them to “Do violence to no man” (Luke 3:14, King James Version).

Jesus later rebuked His own disciples for wanting to call down fire from heaven to destroy some who had refused to welcome them. He told them, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of” and that “the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them” (Luke 9:54-55).

Wishing evil on someone is not an attitude a disciple of Christ should have. See also scriptures such as Romans 12:20; 1 Corinthians 4:12 and 1 Peter 2:23.



Letters From Our Readers

Comments from Bible Course students

Now I know how to get the best from these lessons. I need to focus more on the material sent because the answers to the tests are all in the lesson booklet.

Student from London

I am very grateful to be on this course. It is helping me a lot to know the Bible and more things about God.

Student from London

The lessons are very good. I am finding the course challenging.

Student from Wolverhampton

Up-to-date magazine

Please could you forward me *The Final Superpower*. Thank you for your wonderful magazine, *Beyond Today*. As always it is up to date on world-wide situations and is uplifting and encouraging as we watch and wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader from Newton Abbot

Thank you for all your helpful literature. It gives so much hope and enlightenment in these difficult times.

Reader from Gloucestershire

The topics and lessons are very interesting. I found deep understanding of the Bible prophecies and how they relate to present day.

Reader from Ireland

I really appreciate your thought-provoking magazine and booklets. I find it a wonderful tool to keep abreast of what is happening in the world in relation to biblical prophecy.

Student from Dorset

Holy Days or traditional holidays

Thank you so much for explaining the subject which had bothered me for some time. As you suggested I would get more explanations from the booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*, please send me a copy.

Thank you for the good work you do. Your booklets are treasure for me.

Reader from Cheltenham

I am a member of an [Anglican] church in Manchester. Unfortunately, the church practises pagan beliefs, for example, Christmas, Easter and Easter eggs. I found this out by studying the Bible and going to websites for more information about how pagan beliefs entered the church. This

is how I came across your United Church of God website.

The booklets you have sent me are very interesting and helpful in understanding God's message through the Bible, His purpose for mankind and what's going to happen in the future.

Reader from Manchester

Booklet read and re-read

This is such a helpful booklet [*What Happens After Death?*] that I would love another one. I have already read and read and read my copy and have now given it away.

Thank you.

Reader from Salisbury

Editor's comment: No problem! Another copy has been sent to you.

Hard to find truth

It's hard these days to find the truth. It's such a shame that in a lot of cases it is protected by a wall of lies. This latest copy of *Beyond Today* is a timely word indeed to clear the fog.

Reader from Norwich

Our literature can be downloaded from our website, www.ucg.org or requested from the address at the bottom of the front page.

How our literature is funded

The publication of this Supplement and other literature is funded by the generosity of members of the Church, co-workers and our readers. Following Jesus Christ's instruction in 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 United Church of God.

Donations may be sent to *Beyond Today* or United Church of God, PO Box 705, Watford WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom; or donated through your bank (ask us for our bank details), or online at www.ucg.org.uk/donate.html through Paypal or Charity Choice.

The United Church of God – British Isles is registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 1079192).