

‘Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread’

Did you know that some nations are buying up arable land in other countries to secure food for their people? But if chaotic weather and warfare disrupts that food chain, where will we turn?

The title above is an integral part of the well known prayer, often called ‘the Lord’s Prayer’, that Jesus Christ taught His disciples. This prayer helps us focus on the most important aspects of life, especially our relationships with God our Father and with other people.

Somewhat surprisingly, it is also the title of the lead article in the February 2009 edition of *The Middle East* magazine, which I picked up at Dubai airport. The cover article was introduced by the banner, ‘Why rich countries are buying the world’s most fertile land.’

Countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya and Iran are oil-rich but very short of arable land. Shrinking water resources and a shortage of farmland is forcing Gulf States and other Arab countries to acquire hundreds of thousands of acres abroad to ensure long-term food security. Among others, Brazil and Indonesia are two countries being targeted for land purchases.

We could see some dangerous consequences emerging from this quest for

land beyond a state’s national borders. In the past, poor crops due to changing climate conditions have caused vast populations to invade fertile countries in their quest for food. Rarely have these intrusions remained peaceful.

The Middle East magazine article also indicated that Britain and the nations of the European Union are included among those states ‘pressuring poorer states, particularly in Africa, to

The descendants of Joseph have enjoyed benefits and riches far beyond normal expectations. We have been blessed with an overabundance of food and other national resources.

allow them to operate on their farmland and to fish in their coastal waters.’

God provides for His people

Nearly 4,000 years ago, Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, was guided by God to provide food for the pioneer peoples of Israel, as well as Egypt and surrounding nations, in a time of severe food shortages. Our Creator had revealed to Joseph that there would be

seven bountiful harvests before seven years of drought. This foresight led to many people being fed during a seven-year period of severe famine (see Genesis chapter 41).

For two centuries the descendants of the patriarch Joseph – the British, American and Commonwealth peoples – have enjoyed many benefits and riches far beyond normal expectations. We have been blessed with an overabundance of food and other national resources, resulting in national conditions that made our lives a lot easier.

Our nations could have followed the patriarch Joseph’s example and made proper provisions for the downturn that is currently occurring. But in our consumer society saving seems to have gone out of fashion. We seem to prefer the unwise alternatives of mass spending, printing money and going much further into debt.

Noted author and journalist Thomas L. Friedman called the current crisis ‘The Great Disruption’. He asked: ‘What if 2008 was the year when we hit the wall

– when Mother Nature and the market both said, “No more?” (*Inter-national Herald Tribune*, March 9).

Our troubles in the United Kingdom have increased in recent years as we have continued to abandon traditional biblical values. Our people seem to swing between two extremes: (1) feeling guilty for having had an empire and colonies that spread the English language around the world, and (2) pride in thinking that the greatness of our nations was the result of our own prowess.

Both points of view ignore God, who gave us the blessings to fulfil His promise to Abraham. The fulfillment led to the spread of the English language around the world, which in turn prepared our peoples for the publication worldwide of the original gospel brought by Jesus Christ. His followers have preached it down through the centuries as a witness (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20).

In order to understand both the historical legacy and the prophetic promises to the British and American peoples, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

The lesson of Nebuchadnezzar

The experience of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as recorded in Daniel 4:28-30 provides an important lesson. Verse 17 indicates that the king was proud of his accomplishments and greatness. Twelve months after Daniel had interpreted his dream and warned him that his kingdom would be given to another, Nebuchadnezzar again boasts of his own greatness: “As the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” Shortly afterwards he lost his kingdom, and for seven years he ate grass like an animal before his sanity and his kingdom were restored (verses 33-37).

Nebuchadnezzar’s experience illustrates what can happen when nationally or individually we ignore the blessings and instructions of our Creator. How little we in this modern world understand the influence of spiritual forces that we prefer not to acknowledge.

How little we really control many major factors in our lives. The way in which national economies are inter-linked results in financial crises spreading like viruses. In Western nations many are losing jobs and seeing the value of their possessions and savings diminish. Many of us living in city environments would also be unable to provide for our own basic food needs during a crisis, and are vulnerable to broken supply chains.

Today the global economy is steadily sliding into deeper trouble, perhaps eventually becoming comparable



Farmer harvesting grain with a scythe.

to the 1930’s. As the enormity of debt becomes evident in Europe, the temptation to print devalued money may lead to the type of hyper-inflation that plagued all of Europe during the Great Depression. That in turn could provide the environment for extreme political parties on the European continent offering national stability and extreme forms of economic protectionism. We have been down this road before.

A future resurrection of the Roman Empire

The scene may be being set for another resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire, perhaps initially founded on the desire to provide financial and military security. The United States economic

model is not what Europe generally wishes to follow, and the new US president is reportedly preparing to withdraw much of its military might from certain troubled areas. This leaves a power vacuum that a revitalised Europe may fill at some time in the relatively near future.

In times of global disturbance, nations will desperately seek to protect food and water supplies. That is not surprising, but there is an important contrast between asking God to provide our personal needs, as Jesus taught us in the Lord’s Prayer, and *The Middle East* magazine article’s focus on solely human initiatives to secure provisions. Times of trouble come when no one can do without God’s helping hand. It comes down to a personal relationship with the One who controls the weather, providing the rain for crops and water for drinking.

About 2,000 years ago, when Jesus Christ walked this earth, the Romans occupied the land of Israel and many resources were exported to supply the Empire’s needs. When famine hit, it became very difficult for the average member of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:28-30). So God’s people in other areas provided the help needed during that time in the first century. The members living in Jerusalem were vulnerable and needed the assurance of God’s protection and provision of their physical as well as spiritual needs.

Could we, like the early Christians, again become desperate for our daily needs, like food and water? The possibility is frighteningly real! Indeed the prayer, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ (Luke 11:3), could begin to impact our generally unbelieving secular age in ways that few would now imagine.

Please request two free booklets that will help put your life into proper perspective with these troublesome times. The titles: *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Please ask for them in print or download your own copies.

Peter Hawkins

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

According to Time magazine (23 February), 'Nicholas Sarkozy wants to make working on the Sabbath legal'. This feature article goes on to say that 'in France it's basically against the law to work on the seventh day.' What was really meant is Sunday. But is Sunday the seventh day of the week, and is it the true Sabbath day on which Christians ought to worship?

Changing national laws can be a very difficult exercise. So far every attempt by the French president to legally allow shopping on Sundays has been effectively stymied by the national parliament. His third attempt failed in January. He may try yet again very soon.

'Never on Sunday' has been on the French law books for over 100 years. Fifty legislators from President Sarkozy's own party, the UMP, are not on the same page with him on this. Said one 55-year old French housewife, 'If the secular government makes the rules, one could think of other days. Why not Saturday, which is holy to the Jews?' (WSJ.com). Good question! Why not, indeed!

Misunderstood: The identity of the day

Many on the European continent and some in the British Isles seem to believe that Sunday is the biblical seventh day of the week – and therefore the Sabbath day. The media compounds this common misunderstanding. Sunday is actually the *first* day of the week – not the *seventh*. As is explained on page 5 of the last issue of the *Good News Supplement* (Jan-Feb), any dictionary or encyclopaedia will show you that Saturday is the seventh day of the week.

In this context it's interesting to note that in the language of the French presi-

dent, the seventh day of the week is *samedi*, which is a derivation of the Greek word *sabbaton* (*sambaton* in the vernacular) and stems from the Hebrew word for the seventh day, *shabbat*. In German the word for Saturday is *Samstag*, meaning 'the day of the Sabbath' and as with French, it is also derived from the vernacular usage of the Greek word for the Sabbath, *sabbaton*.

In Italy, well over 2000 years ago, even before the advent of Christianity,

The sanctity of the seventh day as a day of rest was established at creation, over 2000 years before the Ten Commandments were codified during the time of Moses.

the Latin word for the seventh day was *Sabbata*. As *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* brings out: 'Both Horatius Flaccus (Horace the Poet) c. 65-8 BC and Pliny the Elder c. 23-79 AD use the word *Sabbata* in their writing for Saturday.' The word for 'Sabbath' in Italian today has only changed slightly in spelling over the many centuries to *Sabato*.

So we see that the very word *Sabbath*, with slight spelling variance, is imbedded in some of the key European languages and is always equated with Saturday. The seven-day weekly cycle has remained intact throughout history. Yet many in the media and even mainstream Christendom fail to really grasp the implications of this basic truth.

The Bible defines the seventh day

There are indications that the word 'Sabbath' referring to the seventh day of the week was known among other ancient nations in addition to the Jews. After all, it was set aside as a rest day at Creation itself. This is borne out by the book that describes man's creation. 'On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done and He rested on the seventh day' (Genesis 2:2, emphasis added throughout). Our Creator doesn't need rest in the human sense, but in order to set mankind a permanent example He did refrain from His creative work. Jesus as the Messiah was baptised by

John the Baptist, even though He was sinless, in order to set us an example to follow (John 3:13). This is equally true of the example of God resting on the seventh-day Sabbath.

In Genesis 2:3 we read that 'God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [set it apart] because He rested from all His work which God had created and made.' The Creator blessed and set apart the Sabbath day from the other six days of creation. So we see that the sanctity of the seventh day as a day of rest from work was first established at creation, over 2000 years before the Ten Commandments were codified during the time of Moses.

The seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) was made for all of mankind, not just

for the Israelites, seeing that the people of Israel became a nation over 2000 years after the day was set apart at creation. In the New Testament Jesus Himself stated: *'The Sabbath was made for man'* (Mark 2:28) – not just for the people of Israel.

The benefits of observing the Sabbath

Why shouldn't all mankind honour their Creator on each seventh day as a commemoration of His creative work in giving us life? Why should the Israelites only be singled out to receive the blessing of resting at the end of each working week from their hard labour?

Certainly everyone needs both a physical rest and spiritual uplift on the Sabbath, when time should be allocated to focus on God's Word, collectively and individually. Why limit this only to the people of Israel?

How sad it is that there are people who call themselves Christian – who have been the inheritors of all the good things that the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures offer them in regard to leading happy and successful lives – and yet find excuses for not honouring their Creator on the day He appointed at creation.

Among the purposes that the Bible highlights are:

- It commemorates the end of the Creator's work in renewing the face of the earth as described in Genesis.
- It gives human beings a weekly

rest day to re-energise their bodies.

- It sets aside extra time to be strengthened spiritually by personal study of God's Word and, where possible, to worship with likeminded brethren in a Sabbath service.

Sanctioning Sunday carries no biblical authority

Christians who hold to Sunday as the weekly day of rest can rely only on *tradition* for such a practice. The Bible remains silent about observing Sunday as the weekly day of rest on which to worship God. The day on which we acknowledge and honour God as Creator can only be the seventh-day Sabbath. The Bible must always be the final judge on how we worship God and on the day in which we remember His creative work.

Jesus Christ warned the religious leaders of His day that their traditions were standing in the way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Quoting from the prophet Isaiah, He said: *'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'* (Mark 7:6-7). If Christ were to appear on the scene today, His warnings would again be directed towards today's religious leaders for highlighting the traditions of men rather than the sacred Word of God.

It's amazing to see the reasons put

forward in attempting to revoke the seventh day Sabbath, and justify Sunday as the biblical rest day for which no authority is given in the Bible. Making the first day of the week, Sunday, a weekly rest day wasn't officially introduced until long after the New Testament apostles had died.

Attempting to honour God on a substitute day, Sunday, doesn't have the backing of the New Testament. (For the complete biblical proof, request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.)

Keeping the day Jesus kept

Jesus Himself kept the true Sabbath (Luke 4:16). So did the apostles and the New Testament Church! God's true Church continues the same practice today. The apostle John, who outlived the other apostles, identified true Christians as those *'Who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'* (Revelation 12:17). One of the Ten Commandments is the fourth one: *'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy'* (Exodus 20:8). The correct day of the week is and has always been the seventh day.

If any of our readers would like to attend a Sabbath service under the aegis of the United Church of God, please write, email, or telephone us. (Our addresses are given at the bottom of page 1.)

Gerhard Marx

Our Appointment with God

In Leviticus 23:2-3 God reveals an important aspect of the weekly Sabbath day and His other festivals: *'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies . . . the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly"* (NIV).

God plainly says these are His

feasts, His 'sacred assemblies'.

The Hebrew word *moed*, the plural form here translated 'appointed feasts', means 'appointed time' or 'meeting' (Lawrence Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, 1985, 'Feast/Festival'). 'Sacred assemblies' and 'sacred assembly' here are translated from *miqra*, which denotes a divinely summoned gathering.

In other words, God says His

Sabbath is a divine *appointment* that He commands His people to keep through their gathering before Him with other believers (compare Hebrews 10:24-25).

The Sabbath is God's day, not ours. It is a time for reading His Word, for prayer, for fellowship with other believers, for your family – but, most of all, a time for *His presence with you*, especially as you are taught from His Word at His commanded assembly.

Discouragement, Depression and Disillusionment

Don't Let Them Ruin Your Life!

The current credit crisis has hurt citizens across the country in various ways. Marriages have been adversely affected. Adultery is on the increase as distraught partners indulge in so-called 'recession sex'. Yet there is a biblical way to cope with adversity.

When the last UK recession occurred (1990-1994), divorce rates skyrocketed. Today's divorce lawyers have stated that their caseloads have risen some 40 per cent since the current recession really began to bite. When the breadwinner husband loses his job, in all too many cases, instead of looking to his wife for support, he withdraws into himself. Then the confused and isolated wife looks elsewhere for solace. One young British couple suffered a home foreclosure and had to move to a smaller house in a different neighbourhood. Their three children had to go to another school as well, suffering an additional disruption to their lives.

Deepening financial recession has brought about discouragement and even severe mental depression. Anxiety attacks are common during a period of serious economic downturn. People often react immaturely in times of financial stress and worry. They make unwise monetary decisions.

A *Financial Times* article (9 March) stated: 'The financial downturn could increase cancer, mental illness and other diseases across Europe unless member states take remedial action, the European Union's health commissioner warned'.

Support from the God Who cares

Distressed individuals often fail to let God into their lives. Too many don't

look to their Creator for the needed help, support and encouragement. Jesus Christ said to one of His Church congregations. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me' (Revelation 3:20). The Holy Scriptures are replete with God's promises to care for and comfort His people. God the Father and Jesus Christ are personally concerned!

Jesus said: 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden [with

Encouragement ultimately emerges from a good understanding of God and His Word.

difficulties], and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls' (Matthew 11:28-30, emphasis added throughout).

Christ is a living Saviour who wants to aid and help His people. He also stated: 'I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

God the Father has the very same approach as His Son. The apostle Paul expressed it this way. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort' (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Paul and his colleagues looked to God for help during very difficult and stressful times. 'For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus' (2 Corinthians 7:5-6).

God often works through other human beings to relieve our afflictions. His ministers take their cue from God. 'Thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus' (2 Corinthians 8:16).

Well over 40 years ago a distressed friend of mine sought an elder's help. One of the points of advice this minister gave him was to 'ask God to encourage you'.

During my own down times ever since, I have followed this advice, and God has never failed to encourage me. On occasion I've had to exercise a little patience and wait awhile, but God has always come through for me at the end of the day.

Back in the early 50s a line of a popular song ran like this: 'It is no secret what God can do: what He's done for others He'll do for you.'

Yet sometimes one needs to learn a lesson or two from these trials. Humility is one. The apostle Peter said: 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you' (1 Peter 5:6-7). We can

only do that through daily contact with God in prayer and regular Bible reading as well.

Helps in getting to know God

Getting to know God involves getting to know your Bible. We become discouraged and disillusioned with our lives because we don't realise that ultimately only the Bible has the answers and the solutions to our dilemmas and problems. God's Word is loaded with timeless advice to help you to be successful in your finances, marriage, family relationships, careers and every other major aspect of life. The United Church of God has gathered many of the topical biblical passages and the principles that flow from them, into various free publications.

Our booklet *Making Life Work* covers several subjects, including health matters. Another one that focuses on marriage and family life is entitled *Marriage & Family: The Missing Dimension*. Included within its pages are sections about dating dos and don'ts, guidance on child rearing, and a chapter about helping your teenagers.

Yet another booklet tells us how to transform our lives spiritually. The Bible tells us to 'be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2). But what does that mean and how does this happen? The title is *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Still another publication asks what the Bible tells us about God. People have all kinds of ideas about Him. But where do their opinions come from? Is your concept of God founded in His Word or based on human concepts of Him? The booklet *Who Is God?* reveals some surprising truths about our Creator.

Encouragement ultimately emerges from a good understanding of God and His Word. Life has its pitfalls, but superbly workable coping mechanisms are recorded in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Request the four above-mentioned booklets and you'll be on your way to a basic understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

John Ross Schroeder

Four Enemies of Faith

Faith in God is a very effective antidote in combating discouragement. These four enemies of faith provide a good environment for discouragement.

Have you ever wondered why we don't see more evidence of faith? The Bible identifies several tendencies that undermine faith.

- *Worry.* Jesus cautioned: 'Do not be anxious . . . But seek first the kingdom of God' (Matthew 6:25-33).
- *Fear.* While on a boat in the middle of a storm, the disciples awoke Jesus and pleaded that He save them from drowning. He answered, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He rebuked the sea and it immediately grew calm (Matthew 8:23-26).
- *Doubt.* Peter saw Jesus walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee and asked if he could do the same. Jesus invited him to join Him, and Peter, too, began walking on the water. 'But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid' and began to sink (Matthew 14:30). Christ 'stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"' (verse 31).
- *Human reasoning without spiritual understanding.* Jesus warned His disciples, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees' (Matthew 16:6). He was cautioning them against the teachings of religious leaders (verse 12) who appeared outwardly correct but lacked spiritual understanding (Matthew 23:25-28). The disciples did not understand this straight away, and their own reasoning was flawed (Matthew 16:7-12).

To understand the positive aspects of faith, request our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*.

Letters From Our Readers

(Continued from page 8)

enormously informative. I certainly learned more than I dreamt possible. I now have a good grounding in the Bible after doing these lessons. I would be interested in being baptised.

L K, Denmark

- *The Bible Study lessons are written to help students develop a relationship with the Father and His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Repentance and baptism is a natural result for all who recognise what God is offering us. We will be glad to counsel you for baptism.*

The *Bible Study Course* is testing. The questions are well put together and they are the ones that are most basic. You give answers to the questions that come up and so I am glad to be doing the course.

S F, West Bromwich

Spreading the gospel

Jesus said to go into all the world with this vital message of His Kingdom coming to this earth. I believe that you are doing just that. Thank you for sending me *The Good News*. Please accept this donation.

Mrs I G, Tonyrefail, Wales

I enclose a cheque to help with the costs of your magazine. Be sure to continue sending me copies. They are a wonderful help in these difficult days and are much appreciated.

D A C, Leeds

Thank you so much for all the publications that you send me. They have helped me enormously to understand the Bible. I enclose a small donation towards the costs.

Mrs A H, Sutton Coldfield

Questions & Answers

Q Wasn't Jesus using the foot-washing at the Last Supper as a picture of how He was a Servant as well as Lord and Master? Surely, He didn't expect us to carry on this particular ceremony each year. After all, we don't live in a hot, dusty country and we certainly don't wear sandals at the time of the Passover.

E H, Warrington

A You may not have realised that the footwashing ceremony is an integral part of the annual New Testament Passover service. Both Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul made it clear that the Passover continues as a Christian observance. Jesus Himself instituted *new Passover symbols and practices* to teach Christians important truths about Himself and God's plan of salvation. (The footwashing ceremony is intended as a symbolic act entirely independent of the condition of our feet.)

Let's examine Christ's specific instructions concerning the footwashing ceremony and the lessons we should learn from it.

The apostle John describes the initial events of Jesus Christ's last evening with His disciples as a human being. 'Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the

Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.'

During the Passover meal Jesus 'rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded' (John 13:1-5).

In the first century, washing the feet of guests was an act of hospitality. It was normally the task of the lowliest household servant. Rather than ask a servant to perform this function for His guests, Jesus humbly chose to carry it out Himself to teach us an important spiritual lesson. The account continues: 'When He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"' (verses 12-14, **emphasis added throughout**).

They knew that Christ had just washed their feet, but didn't fully grasp the significance of this humble act. He told Peter: 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this' (verse 7). In performing the footwashing, Jesus left for His disciples, down through the ages, a lasting reminder of the importance of humble service to others.

This reinforced an earlier lesson He had given them that is recorded in Matthew 20:25-28, where He warned His disciples about presuming to rule over their brethren in an autocratic way. 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'

The simple act of *literally* washing the feet of others at the beginning of the annual Passover ceremony teaches us a vital lesson associated with taking the new symbols of the bread and wine. Jesus concluded: 'I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you' (John 13:15). The basic lesson is clear. Our Christian lives should be devoted to the service of God and our fellowman.

Further information about the *complete* annual Passover service may be obtained by requesting our free booklet *God Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. It will show that Jesus Christ kept other Holy Days found in the Bible. So did the apostles, years after His death and subsequent resurrection. If you have any questions, please write, email, or telephone our British office.

How our literature is funded

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We are grateful to those who assist financially in the work done by *The Good News*. Donations may be sent to: United Church of God, PO Box 705, WATFORD WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom, or donated online at www.ucg.org.uk/donate.html through Paypal or Charity Choice.



Letters From Our Readers

Response to BBC Radio 4 programme

When I heard the podcast of the *Beyond Belief* programme of the 22 December, 2008, entitled 'The Pagan Origins of Christmas,' on which Peter Hawkins appeared, I was most impressed with the way that Mr Hawkins [co-ordinating pastor of the United Church of God British Isles] dealt with the subject matter in the meagre time [4 minutes] that he was allotted to state his points, which for those of our persuasion were compelling arguments for not keeping Christmas.

Regrettably, most of the programme was given over to other so-called Christian views on the subject which dismissed Mr Hawkins' views as irrelevant in a 21st century context. Unfortunately, many of these other views were based on syncretism and did not reflect what the Bible says on the subject. Given the short time Mr Hawkins had to deliver his message, it was very well-delivered, logical and calm – as well as convincing. I personally think it did credit to the Church and certainly reflected Isaiah 58:1.

B R, Dunstable

• *This broadcast is archived at http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/realmedia/beyond_belief/. Our readers with access to the Internet may wish to hear it. You may also request our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?**

Reader renews *The Good News*

Due to ill health and the worries of this world, I had lapsed in my vigour and thirst for *The Good News*. Please forgive me and reinstate my subscriptions for *The Good News* and *World*

News & Prophecy. The vital work you do involving the spread of the good news of the coming Kingdom, as well as enlightening us to the implications of current and future world affairs, is an absolute necessity. Your literature is much needed for those of us striving to draw near to God in a world beset by the influence of Satan.

A R, Dudley, near Birmingham

Still learning

I have been profoundly deaf since birth and have enjoyed reading your magazine for years. I have been studying the Scriptures eagerly and am still learning. I have put my faith in Christ for about 30 years. But I am also interested in the debate between creationism and evolution. I am a member of the Church of Scotland and go to a church for the deaf on Sundays. I worship and praise our heavenly Father every day. I do not worship on the pagan festivals such as Christmas Day. I believe that Christ was born on Sukkoth [the Feast of Tabernacles].

T B, Kilmarnock, Scotland

• *You may wish to request our free booklet on *Holidays or Holy Days?**

Readers wish to attend the Festival of Tabernacles

We are looking forward to each issue of *The Good News* and are growing in faith more and more every day. We would love to attend the next Feast of Tabernacles.

Mrs J D, Wigan

Struggling to find the truth

I am struggling to find a truth that I can believe and hold on to. Is there any truth to be found?

P T, Sheffield

• *We are sending you a previous Supplement article entitled 'Do You Believe the Truth?' (May-June, 2008). Jesus Christ stated that He came to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37). Earlier He had said that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). The apostle Paul told Timothy that some had strayed from the truth (2 Timothy 2:16-19), so it's very important that you do find that unique truth that Christ spoke of. You may wish to request our free booklet about The Gospel of the Kingdom.*

Thank you very much for all the literature you have sent me. I found it all most helpful. I really want to know more about the United Church of God. Therefore, may I request a copy of your free booklet *This Is the United Church of God?* I have enclosed a small cheque to help cover some of the costs. I look forward to becoming an active member of your church. You see, I am looking for a new church to apply my loyalties to. I really hope the Holy Spirit has led me to you, the United Church of God, because I am really sick of playing church. It's been a long journey.

Reader, Bexhill-on-Sea

• *You may also want to request a companion booklet, *The Church Jesus Built*.*

Questions have been answered

Believers ask questions and they are always answered by spirit-filled and gifted brethren in your church. It has been a big help to me and I pray that this will continue till the Lord comes back.

W M, Bellshill

Bible Study Course

I have completed all 12 of the Bible lessons that were put out and found them

(Continued on page 6)