

What Is the Destiny of God's Church?

*Why is it so important to become a member?
What is the end result of repentance and water baptism?*

The apostle Peter speaks of the Church in the most glowing of terms. He calls its members 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people' (1 Peter 2:9). Several times in his epistles the apostle Paul refers to the Church as 'the body of Christ'. Have we considered how great an accolade it is to actually be a part of Christ's own spiritual body?

Both James and Paul tell us that members of God's Church are also 'the firstfruits' – initially called to a special reward well in advance of a coming utopian time of general salvation. They are spiritual pioneers – forging a path in advance for those who will follow.

The majesty of God's salvation

Christ is the Rock or Living Stone of our salvation. But Church members are also called 'living stones' (1 Peter 2:5). Paul reverently refers to the Church as a spiritual temple and the household of God, in which the members are being fitly framed together for ultimate salvation in the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Those who are already Christians 'rejoice with joy inexpressible, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls' (1 Peter 1:8-9). They have been called into His marvelous light.

The Church has been given the knowledge of God – precious information that leads to entry into the eternal Kingdom of God. Peter spoke of a rich welcome 'into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 1:11).

Earlier in his first epistle this apostle said, 'God has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled* and that does not fade away' (1 Peter 1:3-4, emphasis added throughout). Christ referred to the kingdom as the 'pearl of great price', 'the paradise of God' and 'everlasting habitations'.

Paul stated: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him' (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The kingdom guarantees an everlastingly fulfilling, successful life as well as genuine brotherhood in the Family of God, along with absolute personal security and a total absence of suffering on the human level. It is not

the pursuit of happiness – *it is happiness!*

Bottom line, helping human beings to gain access to the Kingdom of God is what *The Good News* is all about. Yes, we are in the business of publishing the true gospel and warning the nations, but we are also busily *preparing a people!*

The reward is worth the suffering

Paul tells us that ‘if we suffer with Him [Christ], we shall also reign with Him’. He also penned the wonderful promise that ‘the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us’ (Romans 8:18).

The Church may be likened to the Kingdom of God in embryo. Although the Kingdom is already composed of the Father and the Son, Christ is ‘*the firstborn of many brethren*’ who are yet to fully enter the family of God (Romans 8:29). Jesus Christ’s present role as our High Priest is ‘bringing many sons to glory’ (Hebrews 2:10).

Make no mistake. The path of so great a salvation is no easy road. Paul reminds Christians that ‘we must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22). Yet God promises to deliver us out of all these temporary troubles and difficulties.

Who is a Church member?

Although very beneficial as a start, just reading *The Good News* and the booklets does not make a person a *bona fide* member of God’s Church. The Bible gives us specific directions. It defines a member as one who has received the Holy Spirit of God (Romans 8:9).

Each person has to evaluate his own life and standing before God. If you are beginning to understand the Scriptures, perhaps as never before, and have also been awakened to the need to bring your personal life into line with God’s standards, these are the necessary steps you should take.

True repentance from sinning is the first step towards salvation. The Bible describes this basic spiritual change in a person’s life – genuine sorrow for having trans-gressed God’s spiritual law, and determined resolve to stop sinning – as ‘repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18).

God honours repentance by apply-ing the sacrifice of Christ to each of us, forgiving all of our past sins. Repentance is followed by water baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the ‘laying on of hands’

Biblical Descriptions of God’s Special People

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* summarizes many of the descriptions of the people of God in the New Testament:

‘This Church is not a human organization; it is God’s workmanship (Eph. 2:10) . . . It may thus be described in several . . . phrases, of which the following are to be noted.

‘The Church is the people or Israel of God (Eph. 2:12), in whom there is fulfillment of the ancient covenant promise: “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

‘It is the household or family of God (Eph. 2:19; 3:15; 4:6), consisting of those who are adopted by God as sons and heirs in Christ.

‘It is the planting of God to bring forth fruit to His glory (1 Cor. 3:10: cf. Jn. 15:1f.).

‘It is the temple of God, built by God Himself in Christ to be His dwelling and therefore to be the

center of true holiness and worship (Eph. 2:21f.:

cf. Jn. 2:19f.; 1 Cor. 3:9; 1 Pet. 2:4f.).

‘It is the bride of Christ for which the Bridegroom gave Himself that it might be presented, cleansed, sanctified, and pure at the eternal marriage feast (Eph. 5:25).

‘It is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that fills all in all, Christ Himself being the head (Eph. 4:15f.) and yet also in a true sense the totality

(1 Cor. 12:12), with each Christian being a member in particular (1 Cor. 12:27).’

JOB – Another Perspective

Job is truly an enigmatic book to many! Yet we can learn many lessons from its pages. How should we understand it?

It may come as a surprise to some that God has very little which is bad to say about Job, and conversely a great deal of good to say about him! There are so many ways and perspectives of looking at God's Word. While reading it, we are sometimes surprised by new knowledge that was staring us in the face all the time. It would be a mistake to think that the entire focus of the book is intended only for Job. Should we not follow the advice of Scripture and apply it to ourselves? (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Isn't this God's real purpose for the book?

There are several different ways in which we can view the book of Job. Self-righteousness is certainly a valid consideration. But in this particular article I would like to focus your attention on God's purpose for Job's life and how He pursues that plan and purpose in our lives.

Job is a poetic book

When those who are knowledgeable about poetry speak about the book of Job, they will often say how it is written from the heart and soul of man and that we cannot overestimate its influence on the character, direction and spirit of men and women.

Consider the introduction to the book of Job from *Adam Clarke's Commentary*: 'But on all hands it is accounted a work that contains the purest morality, the sublimest philosophy, and the simplest ritual, and the most majestic creed. Except the first two chapters and the last ten verses, which are merely prose, all the rest of the book is poetic!'

So what is God's book to be in the biblical want us to learn from this Job gives us a revealing purpose, and shows how the

In Job 1:6 we read that angels (spirit beings) for what we would call a conference.

Repentant human beings can take matters to Him in private prayer, personally and directly, at any time. Surely angels can do likewise. This was a particular day when these spirit beings reported to God.

On this occasion Satan came among them and was permitted to converse with God. The devil said he'd been all over the earth, checking up on things. God knew Satan would be in a critical mood, putting up obstacles and looking for faults. The Creator asked: 'Have you considered my servant Job?' He is an example of My purpose and My handiwork. You can see my plan progressing and succeeding in His life. (I'm para-phrasing the story.)

But what was Satan's reply? Job has not escaped his notice, but the devil tells God that His plan is not working. According to Satan, there is a fatal flaw in His purpose. Job is only being righteous out of sheer selfishness. It's in his own self interest because God blesses him. Job knows on which side his bread is buttered. The devil tells God: 'Take your protection and blessings away and he'll curse you to Your face.'

Let's take stock. The angels are in session, all the sons of

God are present, and *the Creator's credibility is being questioned by Satan*. His whole plan and purpose is being held up to doubt and ridicule by the devil. So God allows Satan to proceed against Job although he has done nothing specific to deserve what is about to happen.

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purpose in inspiring this canon, and what does He wisdom book? perspective on God's Creator works in our lives. God has convened the

God's trust in Job

Notice the incredible level

of confidence God has in Job! Tragedies are allowed to happen in two stages. First, all that he owns along with his children is suddenly swept away. Secondly his health is virtually destroyed by the devil.

Job's converted reaction clearly shows that he had a very intimate, personal and durable relationship with his Creator. While he may have made the mistake of relying too heavily on what he knew, this is a common mistake of mankind at all levels and at all times.

Job is put into the hands of Satan without his prior knowledge. So God placed great trust in Job's basic integrity. Our Creator had incredible faith in the way he would react! God knew His man. Tested twice in the most severe manner, he came through both times with flying colours. Somehow Job seemed to realise that God was engineering his salvation, no matter how badly material matters had gone wrong.

God's plan and purpose is paramount. Are we to be filled with fear at the prospect of the way He may deal with us individually? No, not at all, because it is within God's plan and intention that we be saved (Philippians 1:6). As the apostle Paul declared, 'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us' (Romans 8:18).

Christ told Peter that Satan wanted to sift him as wheat, but God did not permit it. Recall that King David, when given a difficult choice after his sin in numbering Israel, said that the best option by far was to put himself into the hands of God for chastisement, for the Creator's mercies are great.

Job's worst problem

What is the worst thing God actually said about Job? Did you ever look at it that way? The worst indictment that I can find is stated in Job 38:2. 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowl-edge?' Yes, Job thought he knew when he didn't, and God wanted him to recognise this lack so that he could come to fulfil his intended role in God's Kingdom.

God had a great many good things to say about Job, all of which we would all like applied to ourselves.

Our Creator said that Job was perfect and upright and there was

The Lesson from Job's Wife and His Three Friends

How we relate to others when they are suffering trials is a strong message in the book of Job. Do you see yourself in the reaction of Job's wife, or in the reaction of his three friends? Do we stop and consider what could be God's purpose in allowing a particular circumstance?

The fortunes of a wife or husband in a marriage are inextricably linked. When disaster or simple misfortune strike, they both suffer loss. One can so easily blame the other. Notice the phrase Job's wife uses: 'Curse God and die' (Job 2:9-10). Or we may say, 'What's the use? I give up.' It amounts to the same thing.

Job's three friends started out with good intentions. For several days they mourned with him and said absolutely nothing in reaction to his desperate condition (Job 2:11-13).

But when they saw that Job did not admit to sin as a cause for his suffering, they were convinced that he had in fact sinned, and their comforting soon stopped. They called him a windbag and a liar! (8:2 and 11:3).

There is a profound warning for us here! Yes, Job did much of the talking, but God says that he said that which was right about the Creator. We should not assume the same position as Job's friends did. On most occasions there is a need for comfort, not judgement, on our parts. We are called to care for one another, whatever the cause, whomever is at fault.

We have a clear warning in the conduct of Job's three friends. They were short on comfort, long on judgement. We should not follow their example.

When trials and troubles come to others, we are to offer comfort and support. We must be Good Samaritans. It may be that God has allowed a trial for some

When the Tap Runs Dry

Water makes up between 50 and 90 per cent of living matter. Without it we would soon die. Life-giving in a physical sense, water also has spiritual significance. This was among the lessons learned in United's Summer Camp in Britain.

The summer of 2003 is credited with being the hottest in the UK since 1976. It has also been one of the driest in many parts of Britain – yet a welcome relief to those of us in the North West who habitually cannot use the lawn at any time of year because it more resembles a soggy sponge than a solid surface.

The United Church of God – British Isles' week-long Summer Camp in early August for its teens and young adults took full advantage of the fine weather. The national park in Wales where we were based had received rain the week before we arrived, so everything was still fresh and green, yet without the mud to which we are usually accustomed.

Everything was going along swimmingly – until the Thursday morning. At breakfast time, on what must have been the hottest day of the year suddenly, inexplicably, the cold tap ran dry. There wasn't anything we could do, so we set off on our planned outing – ironically to cycle round, or row, sail or canoe on a lake. One person stayed behind at the bunkhouse to try to ascertain what had happened and to find out when the water supply would be restored.

Still no water

On our return it seemed everyone's water supply was back except ours. Some of the teens had a dip under a nearby waterfall to cool off before they went to the cinema, planning to have a late-night barbecue on their return. Meanwhile the adults tried to resolve the problem. A neighbouring farmer kindly set up a pipe from a spring-fed supply, which we could at least use for flushing the toilets, or drinking if we boiled it first. Eventually, after an insistent phone call from one member of staff, Welsh Water arrived with a supply of bottled water.



It seemed that because we were so high up the mountainside they were having trouble clearing air locks in the system. They were very apologetic and appreciated the difficulties of having no drinking water in such hot conditions, especially where children were involved.

The water finally returned just before midnight, full of silt and air bubbles, which caused additional problems. The pressure burst a valve



in one of the toilet cisterns. The silt, we assume, caused a problem in the water heating system and we then had no hot water for a further 24 hours. We had just about used every dish, plate and piece of cutlery in the place and for a while had no way to wash up. It wasn't until Sabbath morning that the water ran consistently clear again.

Taken for granted

Turning on a tap and having clean, fresh, drinkable water flow out is something we take very much for granted in Britain and many other nations. Indeed we assume that there will always be plenty of water, and thus probably waste much of it. Citizens of many countries, and not just those in the developing world, would be much more frugal. To lose the supply completely was quite a shock to us and in the extreme heat left us feeling very vulnerable.

The scripture 'the desert will blossom as the rose' (Isaiah 35:1, 6-7) came to mind a number of times that day in the searing heat.

Important biblical symbolism

Water is often used symbolically in the Bible to represent life – sometimes physical life, sometimes eternal life. This is hardly surprising from a society where water was a precious commodity and droughts were fairly frequent occurrences, bringing famine, starvation and death in their wake. Wells were dug (Genesis 26:15, 19), fought over (Genesis 26:20-21) and often used as meeting places (Genesis 24:11, 13; John 4:5-7). Scripture also records that springs of water were considered a blessing and were given as gifts (Joshua 15:19).

Zechariah 14:8 speaks of 'living waters' flowing out from Jerusalem at Christ's return. Very possibly this 'living water' will return the Dead Sea to a productive state. Isaiah 35 shows how the arid regions of the world will be restored to fruitfulness and beauty by an abundance of water during the millennial reign of Christ.

Jesus Himself, during the Feast of Tabernacles which also looks forward to His rule on earth, used the same terminology to describe the regenerative power of the

Summer Camp in South Wales

The United Church of God – British Isles' week-long summer camp for teenagers and young adults took place in early August this year. Thirteen of the Church's young adults and teenagers, plus a young man from the USA currently working in Dublin, attended the activity. Eight other adults made up the total of 22 who gathered at the bunkhouse just outside Brecon in South Wales.

The setting, looking across to the mountains of the Brecon Beacons National Park, was immensely inspiring and the weather was perfect. Visitors brought the attendance to 32 at the Sabbath service, which was held in the shade of two large oak trees.

Activities included a trip to a coal-mining museum called The Big Pit, where everyone was kitted out with safety helmet, lamp and respirator before descending 90 metres in a lift for a tour of the old mine working. There was cycling around and sailing, canoeing or rowing on a local lake, as well as games and sports on a 'slightly' sloping field.

Each day there was an open discussion of subjects that had mostly been suggested by the young people themselves. Subjects discussed in these forums included modesty, whether God hears everything, personal development leading to and within marriage, the Church as a community, boy/girl relationships and sex within marriage.

The final forum addressed the place of young people in the Church and their importance to it. It concluded with encouragement to the teens and young adults to consider baptism in due time, and to discuss it with the ministry, their parents, and other Church adults.

Following the Sabbath service, campers, staff and visitors enjoyed an outdoor meal, with the tables and individual placements specially decorated for the occasion. This was followed by the traditional skits or parodies

Questions & Answers

Q. *I am altogether disillusioned with human nature and the structure of human society. What should I do now?*

D O, Cardiff

A. The apostle Paul expressed a similar view of human nature and this world's systems and power structures. He summed it all up by describing it as 'this present evil age' (Galatians 1:4). Jesus also made His views clear in the real 'Lord's Prayer' while He was still on this earth as a human being. When He was interceding with God for His disciples, He specifically stated, 'I am *not* praying for the world, but for those you have given Me [Christ's disciples], for they are yours [the Father's]' (John 17:9, New International Version).

He stated that His followers were still in the world, and then asked God the Father to 'protect them by the power of Your name' (verse 11). A little later Christ said that 'they are *not of this world* anymore than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of this world, but that You protect them from the evil one [Satan]. They are not of the world even as I am not of it' (verses 15-16). Notice the repetition for emphasis.

Christ's message is clear. True discipleship has very little in common with society's structures, which are based on the vagaries of human nature influenced by an unseen Satan. (Please request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

Indeed the shocking biblical message to Christ's true followers is to 'Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins' (Revelation 18:4). They are further told: 'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and Father but from the world.

'The world and its desires who does the will of God 17, New International

But where does a person view wishing to seek God go

His responsibility is to changing his life in order to Kingdom of God. Acts 2:37- must be taken: real baptism followed by the Spirit.

Our free booklets and *The Road To Eternal* and reveal the role of the spiritual process.

Jesus Christ said He and that it would endure (Matthew 16:18). Searching the task of everyone whom knowledge of His truth.

Jesus Christ His Church with His own wants those men and women now to be turned 'from

Fellowshipping With Others

The United Church of God *British Isles* continues to plan additional meetings for study and fellowship throughout Britain. We already have congregations in or near **Bricket Wood, near St Albans**

(just north of London)

Tonbridge, Kent
Gloucester
Preston in Lancashire
Birmingham
Edinburgh
Ramsey, Isle of Man

We have a Bible Study group in **Chelmsford, Essex** and are starting two more in the Northwest and Southwest of England.

If you are interested in attending any of these groups, or desire fellowship in other areas, please contact us as soon as possible at

PO Box 705, Watford WD19 6FZ
E-mail info@goodnews.org.uk

does – comes not from the passes away, but the man lives forever' (1 John 2:15-Version).

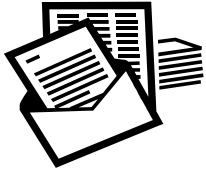
having the Christian world from here?

ask God for help in meet the standards of the 39 sums up the actions that repentance and water receiving of God's Holy

Transforming Your Life Life will explain in detail Church in this whole

would build His Church, throughout this age of man for that Church becomes God is calling into the

purchased the members of blood (Acts 20:28). He whom the Father is calling darkness to light, and from



Letters From Our Readers

Please send your letters to: *The Good News*, PO Box 705, WATFORD WD19 6FZ, United Kingdom.
Tel: (0)20 8386 8467 Email: info@goodnews.org.uk

'Teen Sex: The Silent Epidemic'

I happened to see *The Good News* magazine in my neighbour's house and read a few of the articles. I believe that this is the magazine which will help my family and me in our spiritual growth. Since I also have two children, I was touched by the article, 'Teen Sex: the Silent Epidemic That's Killing Our Kids'.

P Z, Bristol

Reader practices English

I must admit that initially I asked for your magazine in order to practice English in a biblical context. However, having gone through the studies, I've also acquired a far deeper knowledge of the Bible than I ever had before. Your articles help me to gain a real insight into today's political events.

A C, Hungary

Darwin and Deuteronomy

I have a shelf full of books about Christianity and other religions. I hope there is an afterlife. You have just sent me *What Happens After Death?* which I shall read with interest.

I do not like the Old Testament. I am more for Darwin than for Deuteronomy. I like the New Testament and would always honour Jesus and

His mother. A Catholic friend calls me Thomasina. She has a point.

S J E, East Yorkshire

- *Regarding Darwin, you might wish to request our free brochure, Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe? Actually about one third of the New Testament consists of quotations or allusions from the Old. While conquering Satan's temptations, Jesus Christ quoted the book of Deuteronomy three times (Matthew 4 and Luke 4).*

Anglican reader

I am an Anglican but originally from a free church background. I believe the Bible prophecies will come true and would like to know more. At this time I would appreciate *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

M A, Isle of Wight

What church?

Thank you for a wonderful and interesting magazine. You are doing a great job, whatever church is behind it. I am a Swedish Christian who is very concerned about the state of the world today.

M S, Sweden

- *We recommend that you request our free brochure, This Is the United Church of God.*

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, co-workers and our readers. Following Jesus Christ's instruction (Matthew 10:8), it is supplied free of charge so that it can be made available to all who wish to receive it. 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.