

— THE —
AWESOME
POTENTIAL
— OF MAN —

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Prepare to be staggered—stunned beyond belief! Incredible truth has remained hidden—*held back*—from all humanity for 2,000 years. A deceived world has been kept from knowing the vital MISSING DIMENSION to resolving mankind’s problems. Scientists, theologians, educators and philosophers have remained ignorant of the truth of why man exists. And yet, this AWESOME TRUTH—this INCREDIBLE KNOWLEDGE—has always been available. But most have not known where to look. Christ came as a NEWSCASTER revealing *future* events—explaining in advance GOOD NEWS for all mankind. This is the astounding story of the *true* gospel that He brought—and how it involves YOU!

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Introduction

The hope of every Christian is to one day receive “salvation,” with most assuming that “going to heaven” is the final and greatest reward attainable for every person on Earth. This is seen to be the pinnacle—the supreme achievement and ultimate fulfillment!—of the human destiny.

But is this true? Or is there something greater ahead for every human being ever born?

The “bound for heaven” idea is based on a long-held *assumption*—on what most have been *told* that the Bible says about life after death. The result has been that few who think about the afterlife talk of any *other* “potential,” either for individuals, specifically, or for mankind, collectively. Even fewer are willing to take the time to get the FACTS!

The awesome truth is that the Bible teaches something *entirely different*—and INFINITELY GREATER!—than this popular supposition believed by the vast majority of people attending *all* the well-known, mainstream churches today.

Here is the problem—here is why few understand the reason for which they were born. Most people never concern themselves with life’s GREATEST QUESTIONS until they are confronted with death, either their own or that of someone close to them. Even then, most only take a superficial interest. Those few who are willing to take a closer look at how they will spend all eternity do not know where to find

PLAIN ANSWERS to their questions. This is either because they do not know how to study the Bible for themselves or believe that they should merely listen to the answers of “learned men” who have “been trained” and who “know about these things.” And they are instructed to “accept on faith” those things about the afterlife they are told *cannot be understood*.

Tragically, taking the easier path, most remain willingly blind, accepting non-answers without resistance.

The nations of earth are speeding toward a time of final, terrible world trouble—the crisis foretold to occur at the close of this age. The growing fear of war, terrorism, famine, disease, crime, pollution, breakdown of the family, and a host of other worsening and seemingly insoluble problems have gripped great and growing numbers, and this includes entire nations.

Evidence abounds that the end of this present civilization is near. Those who wonder “Where is this all going?”, “What is God doing?” and “Is this all there is?” want clear—PLAIN!—*provable* answers to these and related questions.

The very greatest question is “Does God have a MASTER PLAN?”, and if so, what is it? The answer is that He does, and it carries many exciting details—all of which YOU can know. You will learn that God’s purpose is immutable, that it cannot be overthrown or defeated.

You can also know of *your place* within it. In fact, if you read the whole book, you soon will.

This book answers every one of the most important questions that should be on your mind, including many others you would not know to ask—but need to understand. None of the answers are what you expect. Neither are they what “educated” so-called “scholars and theologians” teach, because none can teach what *they* were never taught—what they never learned.

You were put on Earth to fulfill an ASTONISHING PURPOSE—you hold a potential far surpassing your very *greatest expectations*. Prepare now to be SHOCKED at what it is—and INSPIRED beyond your wildest imagination!

How Religion Held Back Christ's Message for 2,000 Years!

The truth of the gospel—God's astonishing *purpose* for man—has been withheld from the world. It explains *why* you were born. It is incredible knowledge that will leave you dumbfounded! This amazing understanding is now revealed—along with the cover-up to suppress it!

Billions are now deceived. Previous billions have been. Even you have been lied to. A complete seduction has taken place, and all the world's religions have played a part in it. Knowledge of your *incredible future*—your AWESOME POTENTIAL—has been kept from you!

Many wonder and worry about the unknown—and what their future holds. Others fear they do not even *have* a future. Still others fear that *civilization* has no future. You need never be in doubt about *your* future again—or of mankind's.

If only humanity knew what God has in store for it! Yet a deliberate suppression of the truth has withheld this knowledge from all but a few. You can be an exception—one of the few who is *not* deceived!

The world has believed a false gospel for 2,000 years. It has generally supposed that Jesus Christ *is* the gospel rather than the Messenger *of* it. The Message—the centerpiece—of the gospel is *not* Christ. By focusing on Him—the Messenger—religious deceivers have been able to successfully suppress and cover up the Message He brought!

The vital knowledge of how man could have solved his problems and understood God's Supreme Purpose has been withheld from the

world, keeping it in darkness. Man does not know what he *is* or his *reason* for being. He does not know the way to abundance, peace and all the good things of life. The gospel would have shown mankind the solution to its most insoluble problems.

And yet, except for the apostle John, all the original apostles were *martyred* for teaching the truth of God's incredible purpose. Jesus was crucified because people did not want to hear His Message!

A correct understanding of the true gospel reveals crucial knowledge. It contains a dimension of understanding that cannot be discovered by scientific inquiry. Every supposed "great religion" of the world has helped suppress it. Their theologians neither comprehend nor are willing to teach it. We will see that they have held back the great *key* that unlocks your purpose for being—YOUR AWESOME POTENTIAL!

How did this happen? And who is behind this suppression of knowledge?

The Super Deceiver

To the unlearned, the Bible is a book of shocking statements. It reveals startling truths, completely unknown even to those who profess to understand it. But there are few statements more astonishing than that found in Revelation 12:9. This verse directly states that Satan the devil—who does exist!—"deceives the WHOLE world."

As "prince of the POWER of the air" (Eph. 2:2), Satan has influenced, guided, controlled and completely deceived the unsuspecting masses.

This is an absolutely staggering revelation—so much so that most simply ignore or reject it, believing that it cannot possibly be true. But it is in your Bible. And the entire world remains deceived about the fact that it *is* deceived! (To learn more about this being, read our booklet *Who Is the Devil?*)

The Bible states that, since his rebellion prior to the creation of man, Satan has greatly "weakened the nations" (Isa. 14:12) and "deceived the nations" (Rev. 20:3) in both understanding and critical knowledge explaining God's purpose. His deception has been complete. We will explore how he does this in greater detail later.

This World's God

The Bible also calls the devil the "god of this world"—another shocking revelation! This is what II Corinthians 4:4 states: "In

whom the *god of this world* has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the *light* of the glorious *gospel*...should shine unto them.”

Satan blinds the world to the true gospel for a personal reason. It describes the soon-coming kingdom of God—God's world-ruling government. Of course, Satan seeks to block people from understanding this marvelous truth, not wanting “light” to shine on God's incredible purpose for mankind. He wants humanity, collectively and individually, to think it *has no future!* Actually, the devil also recognizes that the arrival of God's kingdom means *he* will be banished from his current position (Rev. 20:2-3) of global influence as the god humanity unwittingly worships. He will no longer be permitted to deceive or weaken the nations. He also realizes he can never receive what God has offered to men.

In John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11, Christ refers to Satan as “the prince of this world.” These verses state that the devil will one day be judged. Take a moment to read them! John 12:31 parallels the judgment of this world with Satan's judgment. Why? Because this world *is his!* Paul's inspired statement reveals that he is literally its “god.”

This is the plain truth from your Bible! Man's civilization, with its cultures, ways and systems, is under the control of the devil!

Consider. If Satan has deceived the *entire* world, then this cannot *be* God's world. And since the *whole* world is deceived, it is cut off from God. Deceived people do not know their purpose for being, and practice lives that reflect this ignorance (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25).

We could ask: How can a single being deceive over *six and a half billion people?* There are two primary ways.

First, Revelation 12:9 concludes with, “he was cast out into the earth, and *his angels* were cast out with him.” Notice that it says, “*his angels.*” These beings, which he leads, are referred to as demons (or fallen angels), and they assist Satan in his role of super-deceiver. Therefore, Satan does not work alone—he has millions of deceived spirit beings (fallen angels) who help him.

But there is much more to understand. There is a second, equally important way through which Satan has so successfully deceived such vast numbers of people—and hidden their enormous potential from them.

Satan Has Ministers

Christendom is represented by hundreds of different, competing, arguing—and multiplying—denominations and sects. Supposed Christianity appears in every conceivable “shape, flavor, color and texture” of belief and custom. Most have assumed that this is the natural state of affairs in the “Christian” world—that this is the way God must want it.

How wrong they are!

Put another way, this means that there are hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of *clergy* who represent and teach the beliefs of this kaleidoscope of differing and disagreeing brands of Christianity. Most who attend these various churches have also assumed, therefore, that all *these* must generally be *God’s* ministers—that they represent and teach what *God* wants taught. There could be no more dangerous—or plain WRONG—assumption!

Now here is yet one more shocking statement!

As the god of a completely deceived world, which must, therefore, include all the differing forms of Christianity *and* other religions, Satan has his own *agents*. He uses these agents to unwittingly spread his false doctrines. Yes, he has been able to achieve this almost universal success because he HAS HIS OWN MINISTERS! Of course, his agents—his ministers—are themselves deceived into believing that they are God’s ministers. Some teach a few aspects of God’s truth, but virtually *none* of His most important truths!

Now notice II Corinthians 11:13-15. The apostle Paul warned of the cunning with which Satan’s ministers successfully deceive: “For such are *false* apostles, *deceitful* workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the *ministers* of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

This is a blunt, stunning scripture. Yet, it is true that Satan’s ministers *appear* to be the ministers of God. Grasp this! Satan does not talk directly to human beings. He works through his servants—his ministers!

And here is the greatest deception of these false ministers: The devil uses them as instruments for spreading a false gospel about the *Person* of Jesus Christ—instead of His *Message* of the kingdom of

God, the one that Christ brought. The greatest truth that the ministers, theologians and religionists of this world deny is the incredible potential that each human being carries.

The following verses continue Paul's description of the work of false ministers. They demonstrate the ongoing danger of Satan's agents seeking to penetrate the *true* Church to blind God's *true* servants a second time to the wonderful truth of the gospel and return them to darkness. Notice: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so *your* [the Corinthian brethren's] minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [speaking of false preachers] preaches *another Jesus*...or if you receive *another spirit*...or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted..." (11:3-4).

Paul warned of "another" spirit that was even able to enter the true Church. This very *different* spirit perverted both the truth about the gospel and the *real* Christ of the Bible. Historically, the counterfeit Christianity of today first appeared almost immediately after Christ's death and resurrection.

Also, ask yourself: If Christ *is* the gospel, then why cite "another *Jesus*" and "another *gospel*" as *two* separate doctrinal errors?

We will return to this.

New Testament Warnings

The New Testament contains numerous warnings of seducers, deceivers, charlatans and imposters who would try to enter the true Church and lead away followers into false doctrines. Most of the apostles, in one way or another, warned virtually every congregation of this danger. It is this same system of false Christianity into which most people have been born and spent their lives.

The apostle Peter warned of false teachers "among you (the Church)." Notice: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *MANY shall follow their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*. And through *covetousness* shall they with *feigned words* make merchandise of you" (II Pet. 2:1-3).

These are strong words. Just as false prophets continually plagued ancient Israel, the Church has been assaulted through the

centuries by “false teachers” who, through “feigned words,” did seduce “many” into following them. The goal was to pull people from “the way of TRUTH.”

The apostle Jude, Christ’s younger brother, was equally direct in his warning: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation...and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for *the faith which was once delivered* unto the saints. For there are *certain men CREPT IN unawares*, who were *before of old ordained* to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into *lasciviousness* [license to break God’s Law]...” (vs. 3-4).

This powerful indictment describes those who “crept in” and caused some to no longer fight for “the faith which was once delivered.” Notice it says that some of these imposters had been “before of old ordained.” Because *they* were ungodly, they taught others to break God’s Law as well. We will examine Acts 8 momentarily to better understand *where* these men came from. Their system and doctrines are far from new.

John recorded nearly an entire chapter of Christ’s own words of warning to all His future sheep. Christ pulls no punches when describing the true nature of false leaders and teachers. Here are excerpts from that chapter:

“He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold [the Church]... the same is a THIEF and a ROBBER...the shepherd [Christ and His faithful ministry] of the sheep...the sheep follow him: for they know his *voice*. And a STRANGER will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of STRANGERS...Then said Jesus...I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are THIEVES and ROBBERS: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The THIEF comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an HIRELING...sees the WOLF coming...and flees: and the WOLF catches them, and scatters the sheep. The HIRELING flees, because he is an HIRELING, and cares not for the sheep” (10:1-13).

Take time to read this entire chapter. Notice the repeated use of the terms “wolf,” “stranger,” “thief,” “robber” and “hireling”—these latter are those who abandon the flock, pursuing self-interest. Throughout Church history, when enemies threatened God’s people,

most ministers *did* abandon the flock, and many sheep *were* deceived and swept away from God's Church and truth.

In addition to the Corinthians, Paul warned several other congregations. Here is what he told the Galatians after they had slipped into false doctrines: "You *did* run well; who did *hinder* you that you should not *obey the TRUTH*? This persuasion comes not of Him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the *whole* lump" (5:7-9).

The Galatians had gotten off track. They did not understand that a little false doctrine ("leaven") eventually spreads (like leaven in dough) through the "whole lump" of God's many truths. We will see that these Galatians were losing their understanding of the gospel.

The Mystery of Iniquity

Now turn to a warning Paul gave to the Thessalonians, in which he spoke of a "mystery of iniquity" that was already at work in the first century Church. The context there (vs. 3) also contains a description of events that would immediately precede Christ's Return. A "falling away" and a revealing of the "man of sin...the son of perdition" would first have to take place before Christ's Second Coming. He wrote, "For the *mystery of iniquity* does already work" (II Thes. 2:7). Paul understood that certain events were "already" in play in the Church then, just as they would come to be, once again, at the end of the age.

The book of Acts describes events in Samaria and sets up more facts to consider: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria...and there was *great joy* in that city" (8:1, 4-5, 8).

When the plain truth of God's Word is preached to those whose minds have been opened, it does bring "great joy."

Later, several verses reference one Simon the Sorcerer—often called Simon Magus by various church historians. This man had tremendous influence in the predominantly Gentile area of Samaria. He was a part of the *mystery system* of which Paul warned the Thessalonians (also see Rev. 17:5, and later in this book). This same powerful system, originally led by Simon, has continually sought to enter the true Church.

Now notice: “But there was a certain man, called SIMON, which beforetime in the same city used *sorcery*, and *bewitched* the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (vs. 9-11).

The Bible explains what “word” Philip was preaching: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the KINGDOM OF GOD, and the name of JESUS CHRIST, they were baptized, both men and women” (vs. 12). Notice that these in Samaria were baptized only after “they believed” *this message*—the kingdom of God—not some humanly-devised counterfeit idea.

Here is what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. This passage describes various offices Christ established within His New Testament ministry. It explains the purposes of those offices in edifying, unifying and perfecting the brethren of God’s Church. Notice: “And He gave some, APOSTLES; and some, PROPHETS; and some, EVANGELISTS; and some, PASTORS and TEACHERS; for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the *work* of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ: till we all come in the *unity* of the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, *tossed to and fro*, and carried about with *every wind of doctrine*, by the *sleight of men*, and *cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*; but speaking the TRUTH in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (4:11-15).

This is another very strong and instructive series of warnings to God’s people. Christ intended that His sheep listen to true ministers and recognize false “winds of doctrine” that may be packaged in “cunning” and “crafty” ways.

Near the end of Paul’s ministry, just before going on trial for his life, he met with all the assembled elders in Ephesus. This was an emotional meeting, because he knew that he would not see them again. He took time to remind them of their obligation, and of what he had repeatedly instructed them over a period of *three years*! The responsibility Paul described remains for God’s true ministry today.

Carefully note how Paul stressed the importance of his having preached the kingdom of God: “I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD, shall see my face no more...Take heed...to all the flock...to feed the church of God...For

I know this, that after my departing shall *GRIEVOUS WOLVES* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, *speaking perverse things*, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore *WATCH*, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one *night and day* with tears" (Acts 20:25, 28-31).

What Paul had warned of did happen. Heretics entered not only the Ephesian congregation but most of the rest of God's Church and subverted it into false understanding and practices. Church historians commonly refer to the period from the mid-first century AD to the middle of the second century AD as the "lost century."

During this period, the *visible* Church radically changed in appearance, becoming almost unrecognizable. Remaining true believers, who were in the small minority, were forced to flee the visible majority, which had departed into error. The knowledge of God's awesome purpose for human existence became lost to the overwhelming majority of those who were swept away into a false salvation.

Ever since the first century, when Christ established His Church, it has had to fight for the truth. God's people have always had to be careful—extremely vigilant—about the dangers of false ministers coming among them and perverting some or all of the doctrines of God. And these imposters always teach a false gospel. Remember, Paul warned the Corinthians that they had been "beguiled" into accepting "another gospel" (II Cor. 11:4). (My extensive book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* covers this fascinating subject in detail.)

In the next chapter, we will see *why* the TRUE gospel—and the coming of the KINGDOM OF GOD—holds the answers to mankind's greatest problems. Prepare yourself for shocking understanding—and *facts!*

The True Gospel—and Your Awesome Potential Revealed!

The greatest single doctrine in the Bible is the knowledge of the true gospel. You are about to learn why.

Understand. There is only one correct gospel. All others are perversions designed by Satan to replace the incredible truth of its Message. It is *this* enormous understanding that Satan’s ministers always seem to pervert first.

At the very beginning of His ministry, Christ taught, “Repent you, and *believe the GOSPEL*” (Mark 1:15). But what *is* the true gospel? Is there more than one that God approves? The answers to these and other questions about the gospel are found in the Bible—and they are absolutely VITAL for you to understand. But the answers have remained hidden from the vast majority.

Much False Knowledge

Thousands of new books on religion are published each year in America! And there are over *two thousand* separate denominations and sects in America, as well! Yet, there has never been more confusion and disagreement among professing Christians, or in the world as a whole, about the true answers to life’s great problems. *WHY?* Why is there so much knowledge available, while at the same time so much ignorance of the truth about life’s BIG questions?

The answers to these questions have everything to do with the GOSPEL!

The vast majority have been taught—and believe—that the gospel is merely about the *Person* of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Christ's role is an extremely important subject, but He is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that the name of Jesus Christ is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel. Again, His role is vital to Christianity, and must be understood, but He is *not* the gospel!

Some proclaim a “gospel of salvation” or “gospel of grace.” Others believe a “gospel of miracles” or a “social gospel” or a “gospel of foods” or “healing” or “faith.” Still others merely think of “gospel *music*” when they hear this word. These are all manmade ideas that ignore the truth of the Bible!

Let's return to Mark 1, and notice verse 14: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the *gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD.*” This is the gospel Jesus preached. And it was in the same context that He said, “Repent you, and BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.” Again, what gospel? The gospel of the “kingdom of God.” Verse 1 refers to *this* message when it states, “The beginning of the *gospel of Jesus Christ.*” Christ's gospel was about the KINGDOM OF GOD—not something else! One must believe *that* gospel, not a counterfeit or substitute. The world simply does not know of *this* gospel!

Few comprehend. But why? Why do so few today grasp the awesome future of the Christian calling? Paul was inspired to explain: “But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, *the things which God has prepared* for them that love Him. But *God has revealed them* unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (I Cor. 2:9-10). Without God opening the mind, it is *impossible* to understand any of the things of God. It is also impossible to even come to God (John 6:44, 65). Quite literally, this verse states that God's purpose has never entered man's thinking!

God, for His own marvelous purpose at this time, has opened the truth of the gospel to a *very few*—and has put them into His Church. The rest of the world remains blinded. Understand this! The devil does not want human beings to enjoy what is forever denied to him—membership in the God Family, which you will learn of.

Most will not wake up to the deception—the mass delusion—of a seduced “Christianity” that denies the plain truths of the Bible!

God’s plan for mankind is staggering—incomparable to anything human beings have devised to replace it. The world ignores plain, clear scriptures found throughout God’s Word about the kingdom of God. This book explains the astonishing truth that so many ignore—and reveals what can be *your future!*

Strong Warning Not to Pervert Gospel

This subject is so important that God inspired Paul to issue this warning to the Galatians then and to us now: “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other gospel* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach *any other gospel* unto you than that you have received, *let him be accursed*” (1:6-9).

This is a very strong statement! A little later, Paul stressed his hope that the “*truth* of the GOSPEL might continue with you” (2:5). So there is one *true* gospel—with all others *false*. You can now better understand Paul’s warning of Galatians 5:7-9, referenced earlier.

Although some assert that Paul taught a different or additional gospel, it is plain that he never did. Ironically, God used *Paul* to warn against ever allowing such false teaching by pronouncing a curse on any man, angel or even any apostle—“But though *we* [meaning, apostles]...preach any other gospel”—who choose to violate this command (1:8).

What a powerful scripture—and WARNING!

Paul explained that the apostles were entrusted by God to preserve the true gospel. Notice I Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we were allowed of God *to be put in trust with the gospel*, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts.” That is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. *True* ministers must always teach what *God* commands, not what pleases *men* (including Bible “scholars”). So any claim that Paul taught a different or second gospel (usually thought to be *about Christ* or of “peace”) is impossible. He would have literally been pronouncing a curse on himself!

Jesus Was Prophesied to Bring the Gospel

Jesus came as a newscaster carrying an announcement. Everywhere He went He made the same announcement concerning a coming, world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT to be established at His Return.

When speaking to a group of listeners in the desert, Christ explained His purpose—His responsibility. Notice how He explained His commission: “And He said unto them, I *must* preach the KINGDOM OF GOD to other cities also: *for therefore am I sent*” (Luke 4:43).

Matthew amplifies this: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matt. 4:23). Christ’s job was to take the message of God’s kingdom throughout the cities of Israel. He was “sent” for this purpose.

In the Old Testament, Jesus was prophesied to come as a MESSENGER. Notice Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the MESSENGER [Christ] *of the covenant*, whom you delight in.”

Christ was the “MESSENGER,” not the *message*. His message about God’s kingdom is the very core—the *centerpiece*!—of the entire Bible.

Now compare the passage in Malachi with another in the *New Testament*: “The law and the prophets were until John [only the Old Testament scriptures had been preached until John the Baptist]: *since that time the KINGDOM OF GOD is preached*, and every man presses into it” (Luke 16:16). Remember that, in Mark, Christ preached the “kingdom of God” and called it the gospel.

Satan, who knew that Christ was foretold to preach the Message that he hates, sought through King Herod to kill Him in His infancy. This is also why the devil sought to tempt Him in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). He knew if he could be successful in either attempt, he could thwart God’s Plan and retain power over the nations of the world. We will also learn more of this later.

Meaning of “Gospel”

The word “gospel” is an old English word meaning “god spell” or *good news*. The word “kingdom” is also an old English term, simply

meaning *government*. We may accurately say that Christ preached “the *good news* of the *government* of God.” We will learn the who, what, where, when, why and how of this GOOD NEWS and how it relates to the Bible’s greatest prophecy.

The word *gospel* is found 101 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and sometimes “of the kingdom” follows it. Other times it includes “of the kingdom *of God*” or the equivalent phrase “of the kingdom *of heaven*.” Note that it says, “*of heaven*,” not “*in heaven*.” It is heaven’s kingdom and there is a big difference. Just as kingdom *of God* means God’s kingdom, not the kingdom *in God*, the same is true of the kingdom *of heaven* or *heaven’s kingdom*. This is critical to understand.

Throughout the New Testament, the word “kingdom” is found 27 times, “kingdom of God” 75 times and “kingdom of heaven” 34 times. All are clearly one and the same.

Now grasp this point. The subject of the kingdom of God is not only the dominant theme in the New Testament, but it is also the dominant theme of the ENTIRE Bible. Yet, incredibly, most know little or nothing of it. The ministers of this world’s churches are ignorant of the true gospel and never preach about it. Therefore, virtually the whole world stands in complete ignorance of the single greatest truth in God’s Word. Incredible, but true!

Also, ALL who once learned it must constantly beware lest it slip away (Heb. 2:1).

The Apostles Preached the True Gospel

What evidence is there that other New Testament writers preached this same message? A great deal!

Peter preached the kingdom. Notice: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting KINGDOM of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1:11).

So did the apostle James: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the KINGDOM which He has promised to them that love Him?” (2:5).

Matthew’s account mentions the term “gospel of the kingdom” three different times. Here is another example, almost identical to 4:23, already quoted: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (9:35).

In most of His parables, Christ taught the basics of the kingdom of God. Matthew alone, mostly through parables, makes over fifty references to the coming kingdom of God.

Luke records that Christ commissioned His disciples to preach this same message: “Then He called His twelve disciples together... And He sent them to preach the KINGDOM OF GOD” (9:1-2). Soon after, He sent seventy others to preach, and they also carried the message of the “KINGDOM OF GOD” (10:1, 9).

John records Christ’s words before Pontius Pilate on the night He was betrayed. This is an important clue to comprehend. Christ said, “My KINGDOM is not of this world [this *present society*]” (18:36). We will discover the details later of exactly *how* God’s government will be established on Earth.

Recall that Philip, a deacon, preached the kingdom to the Samaritans (Acts 8:12). Notice that he preached separately the kingdom and Christ: “But when they believed Philip...concerning the kingdom of God, *and* the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Philip not only preached the gospel of the kingdom, but he also differentiated it from the teaching about Jesus Christ. Take time to read this entire account. Remember, the messenger is not the message. Christ is *not* the gospel. However, He does stand directly *alongside* it and *will* rule the entire earth when the kingdom is established.

So then Luke, the writer of Acts, further differentiates between preaching about the *kingdom of God* and preaching about *Jesus Christ*! While both are vitally important, they are clearly two separate subjects!

We have addressed how some claim Paul preached a “different gospel.” These are obviously unaware that it was Paul whom God used to pronounce a curse on anyone who did this (Gal. 1:8-9). We have seen that Paul preached the kingdom of God. However, you will notice two verses in Acts, which show that he did not neglect the second subject of Christ’s role in the process of salvation.

First, let’s establish that Paul preached God’s kingdom to the Gentiles. Acts 19:8 states, “And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the KINGDOM OF GOD.” There are many places in his epistles where Paul taught the kingdom to various Gentile churches. His message was always the same, continually preaching and referring to the kingdom of God.

Examine this from Acts 20:25: “I have gone preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD...repentance toward God, *and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs. 21). This account makes clear that Paul preached the same gospel—also alongside the role of Christ—to both Jew and Gentile. (The Ephesians were primarily Gentile converts.)

Next, notice chapter 28:30-31: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD, *and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Like Philip, Paul understood that the gospel and who was Jesus Christ were two separate subjects.

Finally, consider one more passage where Paul made a distinction between the gospel and the Person of Christ, by briefly referencing again II Corinthians 11:4: “For if he that comes preaches *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached...*or another gospel* which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him” (the margin more correctly renders this last phrase “with *me*”). Paul urged the Corinthians to reject false teachers and to hold to what he had taught them. He plainly distinguished the teaching of a *false Jesus* and a *false gospel* as two separate errors.

Again ask yourself: If Christ *is* the gospel, then why did Paul (four times) and Philip speak of them *as two separate matters*?

Every Old Testament Prophet Preached the Kingdom

Many have supposed that the gospel is exclusively a New Testament message. Nothing could be further from the truth! The Bible is literally filled with places, Old and New Testament, which describe various aspects and prophecies about the kingdom of God.

Let’s consider an amazing statement by Peter found in Acts 3:19-21: “Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall *send Jesus Christ*, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution of all things*, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Notice that Peter refers to the Coming of Christ—“the presence of the Lord” (vs. 19), with verse 20 stating that God “shall send Jesus Christ.” Verse 21 describes God’s kingdom as the “restitution of all

things.” Peter stated that this “restitution” (Christ establishing His kingdom) is something that “God has spoken by...ALL His holy prophets *since the world began.*”

This is a stunning statement! But is it true?

Could God have actually used *every one* of His prophets to announce His kingdom? Why do Bible scholars and religionists ignore this—or even reject it outright? Let’s survey the Old Testament.

The Pre-Flood Preachers

Jude wrote that “Enoch [Noah’s great grandfather]...prophesied... saying, Behold, the Lord COMES...to *execute judgment* upon ALL” (vs. 14-15). This obviously refers to Jesus Christ returning to establish a government, ruling ALL nations.

In II Peter 2:5, Noah is referred to as the “*eighth*...preacher of righteousness.” Jude wrote that Enoch was the “*seventh* from Adam.” Hence, Noah, next to follow him, is referred to as “the eighth.” Beginning with Abel, and including Enoch, there were *seven men* who previously held this role before Noah. These eight men’s lives spanned the entire period between Adam and the Flood, and they all preached the same message.

Careful review of Jude reveals that Enoch also preached about sin and righteousness. While much could be said about this sixteen-and-a-half-century period, suffice to say, all of these men spoke the same message. Remember, Peter said, “...since the world began.”

Who else preached of God’s kingdom?

Abraham, Moses, Samuel and David

Is there evidence that the gospel was preached during the period *following* the Flood?

In Genesis 12:3, God said to Abraham, “In you shall *all families* of the earth be blessed.” This is also referenced in Galatians 3:8, but phrased a little differently: “...in you [Abraham] shall *all nations* be blessed.” This same verse states that the gospel was “preached before unto Abraham.”

This is fascinating! Not only did Abraham have the gospel preached to him (almost certainly by Melchizedek—Christ), but it was also preached in Genesis, through *Moses’* writings, about Abraham! Now consider. How could *all* of the nations of the earth

be blessed unless Christ will have established His government on Earth?

While Moses was not a “preacher of righteousness” or an apostle, he *was* a prophet and a judge, and the first man God raised up to lead Israel. Perhaps you have never thought of Moses as one who preached the gospel. Yet, the Bible reveals that he did, to ancient Israel, when they were in the wilderness. We saw that Genesis 12:3 refers to the gospel, as does Numbers 24:17-19, and both were recorded by Moses.

Acts 3:22 plainly states Moses foretold that God would raise up Jesus Christ as a great Prophet (Deut. 18:15) to preach to the whole world (Acts 3:23) at His Return! Most are only familiar with Moses leading Israel out of Egypt, and are completely ignorant of how God used him in this way.

Hebrews 3:9 and 4:2 also demonstrate that Moses preached the gospel to ancient Israel. “For unto us was the gospel preached, *as well as unto them* [ancient Israel]” (4:2). These verses, with Acts 3, show that this included the period all the way up to—and through—Samuel!

Acts 3:24 references Samuel as also having preached the gospel. Notice: “Yes, and all the prophets *from Samuel* and those that follow after, *as many as have spoken* [meaning everyone], have likewise foretold of these days [the Coming of Christ and God’s kingdom].” These are clear and powerful statements. They cannot be glossed over. Make yourself take a moment to reflect on what you have read. This verse declares, “ALL God’s prophets...as many as have spoken...foretold of these days.”

Finally, while virtually everyone knows David was a king, almost no one understands that he preached the kingdom of God. In Psalm 67:4, he wrote, “...for You [the Lord] shall judge the people righteously, and *govern* the nations upon earth.” This statement is a plain reference to God’s coming government.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel

The prophet Isaiah made even more plain statements about God’s kingdom, about how it would appear and bring peace to all nations on Earth. He also made clear that God’s kingdom involves GOVERNMENT. Notice: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the GOVERNMENT shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall

be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His GOVERNMENT and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His KINGDOM, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even *forever*” (9:6-7).

This prophecy is so obvious that it needs no further explanation!

The prophet Jeremiah foretold, “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch [Christ], and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice *in the earth*. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (23:5-6; also read vs. 7-8).

As with Isaiah, these verses need no further explanation. Jeremiah gives a plain description of events that could only be described as the period *after* God’s kingdom has come to earth. So, he preached the gospel to the House of Judah.

The book of Ezekiel describes a time when God will gather His people from coming captivity. This is the period immediately after the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21-22)—the prophesied time of calamity on the modern descendants of ancient Israel. Now notice: “For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land” (36:24).

The next ten verses describe a period of rebuilding and prosperity that can only happen *after* Christ’s Return. Take time to read them.

Daniel wrote this: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a KINGDOM, which shall never be destroyed and the KINGDOM shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand *forever*” (2:44).

Did this prophet preach the kingdom of God? The Bible answers *yes*—and we will see later that he did so in many other places!

All the Minor Prophets

It can be shown that, in one way or another, all those often identified as the “Minor Prophets” preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. (Jonah is a possible exception.) Remember, seeing the phrase “the gospel of the kingdom of God” is not the only way of describing the gospel! Genesis 12:3 and Galatians 3:8 have already shown this.

Review the following verses. In each case, you will find that they refer, directly or indirectly, to the kingdom of God: Hosea 2:16, 19; 3:5; Joel 2:21-27; Amos 9:11-15; Obadiah 21; Micah 4:1-3; Habakkuk 2:14; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 14:1-3, 8-9; Malachi 3:1-3.

After reading these scriptures, it is obvious that Peter was right, and that “God *has* spoken by the mouth of *all* His holy prophets since the world began...the restitution [restoration] of all things,” which can only occur with the coming of God’s government to earth.

It is crucial to make one final point. Acts 3:21 states, “*God* has spoken by the mouth of...” The gospel of the kingdom is a message *from God*.

It should be clear that it is *GOD* who speaks through whatever kind of servant He is using—prophet, patriarch, judge, deacon, preacher of righteousness, king, pastor, evangelist or apostle! If a man was truly His servant, God *always* spoke this *same message* through him—“since the world began”!

Is There a Separate Gospel of Jesus Christ?

As mentioned, Mark 1:1 speaks of “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Let’s ask: Is the “gospel of *Jesus Christ*” a different—a second—gospel? Did Paul *forget* that there was another gospel besides the one about the kingdom?

The answer is an emphatic “No!” But most preachers teach that the gospel of Jesus Christ is *about* Christ, also claiming that He *is* the kingdom of God and that the gospel of the kingdom *is* Christ. We have seen this is false, and completely unbiblical! The gospel of Jesus Christ is *His* gospel—*His* message about the kingdom of God!

We have seen that Jesus was a Messenger sent from God with an ANNOUNCEMENT! It was not about Himself—it was about God’s kingdom coming to reign over the entire earth. In John 12:49-50, Jesus said, “For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which *sent Me*, He gave *Me* a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that *His* commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, *even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak*.” It should now be clear that Jesus functioned as a messenger—as a SPOKESMAN for the kingdom of God.

In John 14:24, Jesus said, “The word which you hear is not Mine, *but the Father’s which sent Me*.” Christ brought the *Father’s* mes-

sage—not His own. This should now be absolutely clear. Remember, He stated in Luke 16:16 that “The law and the prophets were [preached] until John: *since that time the kingdom of God is preached.*”

That is what this Work is doing today. Through this book, and many others, the truth of God’s kingdom is being preached to *you* and to millions of others.

The Kingdom of God Is Coming

Make no mistake! With world conditions nearing the final crises, no *human* could ever bring about a single, world-ruling government that would work. *Jesus Christ* will soon return and establish HIS kingdom.

The disciples did not understand *when* Christ would establish God’s government on Earth. He had to explain to them through use of a parable. Notice: “And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the KINGDOM OF GOD should *immediately* appear” (Luke 19:11). This long parable explains that much time would pass before it came.

Before His ascension into heaven, in Acts 1, after a series of meetings with His disciples, Christ met one last time with them. Until the very end, He continued to expound the kingdom of God to them. But they remained confused about *when* it would be established: “Until the day in which He was taken up...[He was] speaking of the things pertaining to the KINGDOM OF GOD...When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, will You *at this time* restore again the KINGDOM to Israel?” (vs. 2-3, 6).

Christ explained, “It is not for you to know the *times* or the *seasons...*” (vs. 7). We cannot today know *exactly* when it will come, but we can know that it is close.

Now notice Daniel 7:18: “But the *saints* of the Most High shall take the *kingdom*, and possess the *kingdom* forever, even forever and ever.” Then, verse 22 states, “Until the Ancient of Days [Christ here, and the Father in verse 13] came, and judgment was given to the *saints* of the Most High; and the time came that the *saints* possessed the *kingdom.*”

Finally, notice verse 27: “And the *kingdom* and dominion, and the greatness of the *kingdom* under the whole heaven, shall be given

to the people of the *saints* of the Most High, whose *kingdom* is an everlasting *kingdom*, and all dominions [rulers] shall serve and obey Him.”

Daniel knew that the *saints* will one day reign on Earth with Christ!

Jesus’ first recorded sermon, called “The Sermon on the Mount,” states that “the meek shall inherit *the earth*” (Matt. 5:5). Actually, Christ was quoting David, who had recorded this statement in Psalm 37:11—another place where David proclaimed the gospel. The wording there is precisely the same. Other prophecies also demonstrate that David himself will one day rule over all the tribes of Israel (see Ezekiel 34) within the kingdom of God.

Notice three separate verses in Revelation. Christ is quoted through John, saying, “To him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me in My *throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His *throne*” (3:21). Also 2:26-27: “And he that *overcomes*... to him will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule* them with a rod of iron.” Finally, “and has made us unto our God **KINGS** and **PRIESTS**: and we shall *reign* on the earth” (5:10).

Has organized religion told you about any of these verses? Almost certainly not. Yet they have been in the Bible for thousands of years.

No wonder that when Christ was on trial for His life, He added more to one of His statements quoted earlier in the book, “My **KINGDOM** is not of this world: if My **KINGDOM** were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My **KINGDOM** *not from here*” (John 18:36). In this exchange, Pilate had asked Him, “Are you a king then?” Christ answered, “*To this end was I born, and for this cause* came I into the world...” (vs. 37).

Jesus fully understood that He was born to be a King!

Christ To Be a King

Christ’s First Coming was to be a great event. Isaiah prophesied of His birth to a virgin: “Therefore the **LORD** Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a *virgin* shall conceive, and bear a *Son*, and shall call His name *Immanuel*” (7:14).

Before Jesus’ birth, an angel appeared to Mary to explain God’s purpose and what was about to happen to her: “And in the sixth

month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin...Mary” (Luke 1:26-27).

Beginning in verse 30, Gabriel explains more about Christ and how He would eventually rule from the throne of David. Notice: “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the THRONE of his father David: and He shall REIGN over the house of Jacob forever; and of His KINGDOM there shall be no end” (vs. 30-33).

Christ was never in doubt about His life’s mission and purpose. This is why He *continually* preached the kingdom of God *everywhere* He went.

Isaiah spoke in more detail about how God’s kingdom would spread around the earth, eventually encompassing all nations: “And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations* shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge *among the nations*, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (2:2-4).

This identical prophecy is repeated for emphasis in Micah 4:1-3. These passages foretell that God’s kingdom will spread around the world. This is why one of Christ’s parables likened the kingdom to leaven (Luke 13:20-21), which always spreads until it fills its host. The overarching purpose for your life is to participate in the future spreading of God’s GOVERNMENT.

In front of the United Nations Building is the sculpture of a large man forging a plow from a sword. I have seen it hundreds of times, because I conducted church services across the street from that spot for several years. But no one seems to any longer take notice of, or even believe, the amazing prophecy depicted by this famous sculpture.

Jesus Christ came to be a KING who will one day REIGN on the earth. When He returns, suffering, misery, unhappiness and all the

world's troubles and evils will disappear—and world peace will literally “break out,” along with supreme happiness, harmony, prosperity and abundance for all nations. No human government has ever been able to bring these things to even one country on Earth. This is the core of the very gospel that Jesus brought.

Do you believe it? *Will* you believe it?

The Kingdom of God Must Still Be Preached Today

In the Matthew 24 (and 25) Olivet Prophecy, Christ was asked about those events that would be the signs of His Second Coming and the end of the world (age). He answered that a number of different trends and conditions would occur first.

One event preceding Christ's Return is described in verse 14: “And this *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall *the end come*.” The true gospel was foretold to be preached until “the *end come*.” This plainly means that *someone* will be preaching it *now*, in our present age, because the end has not *yet* come.

Some history: The knowledge of the true gospel was restored by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986). It had not been preached to the world for almost 19 centuries until Mr. Armstrong began preaching it in January 1934, as the Matthew 24:14 prophecy began to unfold. Understand! Not since the first century had the world as a whole heard this message. Throughout a 52-year ministry, until his death in 1986, God used Mr. Armstrong to reach hundreds of millions with this understanding. It was *this man* who taught me the true gospel and under whom I was trained to be able to take this same message to the world.

Remember, the end has not yet come. Therefore, The Restored Church of God is continuing this commission, boldly preaching this greatest of prophetic truths. The arrival of God's kingdom is sure—it is certain! When it comes, you too can be a part of it.

7,000-year Plan

Cut off from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2), mankind has believed the lies of the god of this world for 6,000 years. The span of God's plan with men encompasses 7,000 years. Few have understood this. Many *have* correctly understood at least some little of the verses describing

Christ's coming 1,000-year Reign, to begin at His Return (Rev. 20:4-6). But they know *nothing* of God allotting 6,000 years, or six millennial days of a "seven-day week," to man's rule, under Satan, prior to the seventh 1,000-year "day." We are very near the end of the "sixth day."

Let's understand! The Bible states, "But, beloved, *be not IGNORANT* of this one thing, that *one day* is with the Lord *as a thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8; Psa. 90:4). Of course, most *are* "ignorant" of almost EVERYTHING that the Bible teaches.

But you can know!

Man (under the invisible sway of Satan) has been given six "days," or 6,000 years, to try his own ways, governments, religions, philosophies, value systems, codes of conduct and forms of education. Under the influence of Satan, he has practiced sin and disobedience to God's commands for all this time. He has then tried to treat all of the ill *effects* this has brought on, instead of the *cause*, which is the breaking of God's commandments. God is allowing humanity to learn hard, bitter lessons. The masses, who have never known the precious truth of God, must learn that their own ways do not work!

Soon, the whole world will see the fulfillment of Revelation 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever."

Jesus Christ was born to be a King who will rule all nations of the earth forever with the help of other spirit-composed kings: "And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron...and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:15-16).

Has anyone ever told you of these passages? I never learned of them or even heard of them in the church of my youth—and yet, here they are, written with unmistakable clarity of meaning for all who will heed.

Kingdom of God Explained

Matthew 6:33 states, "But seek you *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness..." If you seek something *first* in life, you had better know exactly *what* you seek.

The main purpose in this chapter is not to explain in detail the kingdom of God. (This will be done later.) It is to explain the definition of the *true* gospel and mankind’s awesome potential.

So let’s understand. The word “kingdom” simply means *government*. Of course, you cannot have a government without a nation to govern. Therefore, a kingdom is at least one nation with a government.

There are *four* necessary components to any kingdom: (1) Land, property or territory—however large or small. In other words, one must have a specific and definite set of boundaries that constitutes the *size* of the kingdom; (2) a ruler, king, monarch or governor leading the government; (3) people or subjects living within the territory; and (4) a system of laws and rules along with a basic structure of government. No kingdom is complete without all of these fundamental elements.

But how does this apply to God’s kingdom? Most do not understand the most basic elements of the kingdom of God. Is it a literal, physical place on Earth, with people and laws, presided over by a ruler? Many believe the kingdom is merely something in the hearts of men. Others believe that it is wherever you find a particular church. Still others believe that it is Jesus Christ Himself. Some believe that it is here on Earth now and others believe that it is yet to come, but do not understand—have no idea—how this will occur.

We may ask: How does one actually *enter* the kingdom of God?

One Must Be Born Again to Enter the Kingdom

Paul wrote that Christ is “the *firstborn* from the dead” (Col. 1:18), and also “the firstborn among *many brethren*” (Rom. 8:29). When connected, these verses show that Jesus is merely the *firstborn* from the dead, with many others to follow. But when, and into what, will these others be born?

In John 3:3, Christ said to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily [this means truly, truly], I say unto you, Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God.” In verse 6, Christ continues, “That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit *is* spirit.” Simply believe the plain meaning of this verse. One must *become spirit* to *SEE* the kingdom of God.

Paul taught, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50). The next two verses explain that the resurrection will occur at the Seventh (last) Trumpet, when “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*.”

Christ returns when the Seventh Trumpet of Revelation 11 blows. This is when the resurrection of the dead will occur. Do not misunderstand this climactic event, more carefully explained much later. Suffice to say here, people who were once fleshly human beings will be changed into spirit—will be *born again*—and enter into the kingdom of God. No physical people can enter this kingdom.

John 4:24 states, “God is a Spirit.” Under the Father, Christ leads *His* kingdom, which is composed of spirit beings. At His Return, Christ, as a member of the God Family, will have many younger “brothers and sisters,” who will have qualified to rule with Him.

Think of it this way: There is a plant kingdom, an animal kingdom, human kingdoms and an angelic kingdom. There is also the kingdom of God.

Now notice Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness.” When referring to themselves, the One speaking says, “Us,” “Our” and “Our.” This is proof that there is more than one Being in the Godhead—there are presently two! In this scripture, the Hebrew word for God is *Elohim*. This is a uniplural term like *group*, *team*, *committee* or *family*. All of these represent one entity, comprised of several members or persons.

Thus, we will see that the Bible teaches that there is *one* God, composed of *two* Persons—the Father and Christ—with many more persons to be added later. The first great time when God will add more sons to His Family is when Christ’s kingdom is established. But entering God’s kingdom will not be automatic for anyone.

There Are Conditions to Entering the Kingdom

We read in several places where Christ said only those who *overcome* will inherit the kingdom and rule with Him. There is more to being in the kingdom of God than just desiring it. There are qualifying CONDITIONS that *must* be met.

Jesus said to a young rich man who inquired about eternal life, “...if you will enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matt. 19:17). He explained that one must keep the Ten Commandments to be saved, and specifically cited five of them.

Now what is sin? Since committing it results in death (Rom. 6:23), should you not know what it *is*? I John 3:4 records, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” This is the same law that the young rich man was told he must obey to inherit eternal life.

Many *claim* to be Christian—to be followers of Christ. They *claim* to “believe on Christ” and *claim* to be “seekers of truth,” when they do not want the real truth of the Bible at all. Notice this long exchange that Jesus Christ had with the Pharisees: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which *believed on Him* [these were “believers”], If you continue in MY WORD, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know THE TRUTH, and THE TRUTH shall make you free...but you seek to *kill Me*, because MY WORD has no place in you...But now you seek to *kill Me*, a man that has told you THE TRUTH, which I have heard of God...If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God...Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear MY WORD...and because I tell you THE TRUTH, you *believe Me not* [yet it says they believed “on” Him]...And if I say THE TRUTH, why do you *not believe Me*?” (John 8:31-32, 37, 40, 42-46). Jesus continues in the account by bluntly indicting those who would claim to be Christians when they are really “of (their) father the devil.”

Many assert that they “know Jesus” when they know virtually nothing of the true Christ of the Bible. As He said, they literally “cannot hear” Christ’s words—the TRUTH—though they may think that they do: “He that says, I KNOW HIM, and keeps not His *commandments*, is a liar, and THE TRUTH is not in him” (I John 2:4). The world is filled with hundreds of millions of such “Christians,” professing *a* Jesus, but ignorant of the truth.

Many who are not *practicing* Christianity find their way into the true Church. But eventually they all leave. John continued, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (vs. 19). I have seen this too often. Many seem to only believe “on” Christ, not really believing Him—that is believing what He said, and said to DO!

Recall Christ’s words in Mark 1:15: “REPENT you, and believe the gospel.” Repentance is *from sin* (Acts 3:19). A Christian is one who has turned from—repented of—his sins, and been baptized (2:38) and converted (3:19). Through a lifetime of overcoming sin,

the Christian qualifies for (though he can never *earn*) salvation and spiritual birth into the kingdom of God.

Your Awesome Potential

Recall that God said that He made human beings in His “image” and “likeness.” This verse means what it says. God created *you* to become “like” Him in every way. Through His Spirit entering the mind of each of His newly converted children, a literal, brand new spirit life is begotten. At that moment, a tiny spirit-begotten “embryo” comes into existence, ready to grow and develop in overall spiritual appearance, in a sense we could say, first to “fetus,” then to birth.

Both the Old and New Testaments make this point absolutely plain! While many have some vague understanding that Christians might, in some way, be “sons of God,” none ever consider this: “Beloved, *now* are we the *sons of God*, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be LIKE Him; for we shall *see Him as He is*” (I John 3:2). Comprehend this staggering knowledge, unknown to almost all who consider themselves Christian! We will one day have the very likeness of Jesus Christ. Romans 8:16 states that we are “children” of God and “heirs” *with* Christ.

King David also understood this a thousand years earlier when he wrote, “As for me, I will *behold Your face* in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I *awake*, with YOUR LIKENESS” (Psa. 17:15). Incidentally, this verse dispels the delusion of the “beatific vision” idea made popular by the universal church—that people will not actually *see* God’s face in the afterlife. David understood that we *will* see God—and face to face. So did John. Both knew that at the Resurrection—when we “awake”—we will be exactly like God, in form and character.

So then, God is actually reproducing Himself in human beings who have received His Holy Spirit. He is creating children that will *resemble* Him in every way!

But Peter wrote that Christians must “GROW in *grace*, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18). Christians are to—and must—grow in this lifetime. In order to be given divine authority and power, as joint-heirs with Christ, they must qualify, through the building of God’s holy, righteous character in their lives.

Paul explained that the role of faithful ministers in the Church is to feed the flock. Jesus said, “I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). It is the Church—THAT Church—which is “Jerusalem above...the *mother* of us all” (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-23). Like any mother, the Church nurtures and feeds her children—and she has been doing this for 2,000 years. (More about the Church’s role as our mother will be explained in Chapter Ten.)

An Astonishing Scripture

The book of Hebrews reveals God’s awesome purpose with crystal clarity. The context begins in Chapter 1. Watch the picture of salvation unfold.

First, understand that God created angels to be “ministering spirits” to assist the “heirs of salvation” (vs. 14). This is their role within God’s Plan. Angels are not offered membership in the Family of God. This is why Satan (as a fallen angel) so hates the idea that puny, little, fleshly men can receive what he has never been offered nor can achieve.

Paul quotes two places in the Psalms: “For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are *My Son*, this day have I begotten you? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a *Son?...*” (vs. 5). God has never said this to any angel!

Paul then quotes another psalm, explaining what has always been God’s purpose: “Your **THRONE**, O God, is forever and ever: a *scepter* of righteousness is the *scepter* of Your **KINGDOM...**” (vs. 8). A scepter is a rod or staff used as a symbol of rulership or authority—and in His kingdom it is God who has all power.

Finally, Paul re-frames the same question about angels: “But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (vs. 13-14).

This sets the stage for what we must understand! Let’s really *comprehend* the incredible future that God has prepared for all those who serve Him.

An amazing series of verses continues in chapter 2. Paul quoted David (from Psalm 8:4-6) when he asked the all-important question, “*What is man, that You are mindful of him?*” (vs. 6). Since God is eternal, and sits over the entire universe and has all power under His

control, it is no wonder David asked, and Paul repeated, this most central question of life.

The astounding answer begins in the next verse: “You made him [man] a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him *over the works of Your hands*.”

God will eventually share rulership of His entire creation with His Sons. Again, Christ is merely the first of *many* Sons. The birth of a firstborn son does not preclude the birth of additional sons (and daughters) to that same family. I have two sons and am a firstborn son with a younger brother. My father was a second born son, having an elder brother and so on.

Paul goes on to explain that God plans to give enormous power and *authority* to His Sons: “You have put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left NOTHING that is not put under him. But now we see *not yet* all things put under him” (vs. 8). This has not *yet* happened—but it will soon.

When God says that “all things” will be put under the feet of man, that is what He means! The vast universe, with all of its quadrillions of stars and one trillion galaxies, will be put under the authority of men who have been born into the Family of God. In fact, the Moffatt translation renders the Greek word for “all things” as “THE UNIVERSE.”

This is truly staggering knowledge! Take time to grasp it. Savor what can be YOUR future!

Before continuing, consider a fascinating verse about another related aspect of salvation not understood before. We have seen that Christians await a truly awesome salvation. But the entirety of creation is also intensely awaiting the appearing of those new sons to be added to God’s Family. Carefully read the following verses from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible:

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for *the creation* [all things in the known universe] was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because *the creation itself will be set free* from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the CHILDREN OF GOD. We know that the *whole creation* [everything] has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only *the creation*, but we ourselves [Christians], who have the *firstfruits* of the Spirit [the FEW now called], groan inwardly as we wait for [*birth*] as sons” (Rom. 8:19-23).

All future “sons of God” will eventually be liberators of a creation now in bondage, and foretold to grow much worse. A decayed and wounded earth, sun, moon and stars—the universe!—will soon be renewed and returned to a state of beauty, harmony and tranquility under the leadership of Christ and the resurrected saints.

“Bringing Many Sons unto Glory”

Now we can continue the all-important account in Hebrews 2: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with *glory* and *honor*; that He by the grace of God should *taste death for every man*. For it became Him, for Whom are *all things*, and by Whom are *all things*, in bringing MANY SONS UNTO GLORY, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (vs. 9-10).

This passage reveals the staggering potential planned for all Christians. When Christ returns, Paul reveals that it will be “MANY SONS” who are brought “*unto glory*” through the “Captain of our salvation.”

Verse 11 states that Christ “is not ashamed to call them [the other many sons—us] brethren.” These are all those of whom Christ is called the “*firstborn*.” Truly, the begotten person has been called to “*glory*” and to be one of “*many sons*.” It is Christ’s suffering and sacrifice that allows Him to be the “Captain of *their* salvation”—and potentially *yours*!

What an awesome potential for those Christ “calls...*brethren*.” Now notice this final verse: “For both He that *sanctifies* and they who are *sanctified* are all of one: for which cause He is *not ashamed to call them brethren*” (vs. 11). Christ and the saints share the same salvation.

This verse shows that Christians are “sanctified” (set apart). How? John stated, “Sanctify them [begotten Christians] *through Your truth: YOUR WORD IS TRUTH*” (John 17:17).

The cherished traditions and fables of men, about life after death or anything else, collapse under scrutiny. Christians, having come out of a deceived, confused world, are set apart from the world by the TRUTH!

If Christ is “not ashamed to call them (us) brethren,” then we, God’s begotten sons, must not be ashamed to defend the very truth that sanctifies us—and the truth of the gospel (Phil. 1:17). We must

“grow up” unto Christ (Eph. 4:13) and hold to the true doctrines of God. We must QUALIFY to one day stand beside Christ over “all things.”

Now step back. Do you see what is described here? The incredible goal of a Christian is to be born into the kingdom of God—to become a spirit being RULING under Christ, as a very Son of God. What could be more wonderful—more GLORIOUS!—for a Christian to look forward to?

Christ Returns

Matthew 24:27 states that when Christ returns, His Coming will be like lightning shining from the east to the west. This will be an earth-shattering event, impossible to miss.

Daniel spoke of Christ coming in the “clouds of heaven” (7:13). Before His Return, God officially grants Him AUTHORITY to rule the world. The saints cannot be given authority with Christ until He is given authority first. Only then can He give power to others. Notice: “And there was GIVEN Him [Christ] *dominion*, and glory, and a KINGDOM, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His KINGDOM that which shall not be destroyed” (vs. 14).

But the Christian’s responsibility in this life is to QUALIFY to be part of God’s kingdom. No wonder Christ stated, “And he that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: and He shall *rule them* with a rod of iron...*even as I received of My Father*” (Rev. 2:26-27) and a few verses later, “To him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne*...” (3:21). When Christ returns, the saints will rule with Him!

The excitement of eternal life will be beyond description. We shall have the power of God, never experiencing fatigue, suffering, pain or evil of any kind. Anticipation of new projects, thrilling accomplishments and unspeakable joy will last for eternity.

Who would not want this? Why has mankind not known that this has *always* been its DESTINY—that all human suffering and misery could be eliminated, if man understood the origin of human nature, the source of evil of every kind—and overcame it?

WHY is the world in the terrible mess that it is? WHY was man *offered* eternal life, yet made of the dust of the ground—mortal—able to die? WHY—and how—is he different from the animals? WHY

is he able to think and reason—resolve problems and find solutions—while animals cannot? WHY is the human mind infinitely more capable than any animal brain? Exactly what is the difference between them?

Read on for the PLAIN ANSWERS that scientists, theologians, philosophers and educators have missed!

Prehistory and Man's Creation

The world has reached the twenty-first century. All my grandparents were born in the *nineteenth* century. Within that time span—just a little over one hundred years—the world has changed beyond recognition. Mankind now stands on the threshold of annihilation by weapons of mass destruction, with the frightening specter of terrorism spanning the globe.

World conditions grow more ominous as the news of each day seems worse than the last. Events are speeding toward a great crisis at the close of this age.

How did there come to be such appalling evils and terrible suffering on a worldwide scale?

And why have world leaders failed to improve the countries they govern and the world at large? What is wrong?

Why has progress in knowledge, science and technology not delivered man from his problems?

Why does civilization stand on the brink of catastrophe—even extinction—without some kind of intervention and rescue?

Many know *something* is wrong—but do not know *what*. The supposed experts lack answers to life's greatest questions. Few understand that there *is* a great purpose that God is working out here below. Fewer still know *what* this purpose is—and they do not understand the forces at work that have controlled civilization since man first appeared on Earth.

The Greatest Kidnapping

Most assume that things are the way they are because mankind has *evolved* to its present state or condition. This thinking permeates modern education but it is a false—an entirely *WRONG*—premise. Evolution is a fiction created by men who have been led to this theory by the one who seeks to blind all the inhabitants of earth to God's awesome plan—His staggering purpose for mankind.

Those who hold to the evolutionary theory are prevented—actually blocked!—from comprehending *why* conditions on Earth are as they are. And many statesmen, leaders and thinkers *do* feel trapped by trends and conditions, and the general flow of world events, unable to do anything about them. Indeed, they *are* trapped. But we need to understand why.

This is *not* God's world. It is *cut off* from Him and held hostage by an unseen SUPER KIDNAPPER. All of humanity has been deceived into believing the soothing words of this great CAPTOR, thinking themselves better off under his care and leadership. I speak of Satan the devil and his hijacking—6,000 years ago—of Adam and Eve and all of the inhabitants of planet Earth ever after! The world has remained a *willing* captive ever since.

Anyone who reads newspapers understands kidnapping. This crime often involves executives of large companies, whose release is obtained through paying a ransom.

Hijackers work in the same way, except this crime usually involves seizing an aircraft, bus or some other type of vehicle full of victims.

Most hostage victims are captives until someone either performs a daring rescue or a ransom is paid. Earth is now in a state of captivity, requiring supernatural deliverance—rescue—through ransom payment.

Here is modern man's predicament: Imagine yourself picking up a twenty-chapter book and trying to understand it by starting with the last chapter. You would be lost, completely unable to understand the meaning of persons and events described. In the same way, none can understand events *in the modern world* because they do not have proper background of what has happened in the previous chapters of mankind's existence on Earth. And it is the very *first* chapter of the story of humanity that is key to *all* "nineteen chapters" that follow.

The World Before Man

We need to examine prehistory, the time prior to the appearance of man on Earth, to understand *how* Satan came to be as he is.

Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This scripture sets the stage for our study.

The book of Job best describes the time when God created the earth, billions of years ago. God asked Job a series of questions: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it?...When the *morning stars sang together*, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (38:4-5, 7).

These “stars” were angels (Rev. 12:4), also described as “sons of God.” (Of course, literal stars do not sing.) Notice that it says “all” of them “shouted” and “sang together.”

Job 38 is a remarkable passage revealing that at the beginning of the physical creation there was peace, harmony and happiness. But this is not the actual beginning of God’s creation—it is the account of the beginning of His *physical* creation—of all things that are made of *matter*.

The *true* beginning of all things—where the account of God’s creation *really* begins—is *not* found in Genesis 1, but rather in the New Testament, in John 1. This is where the Bible records who or what existed before the creation recorded in Genesis.

Here is how John writes of the earliest time that the Bible records: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things* [“the universe” – Moffatt translation of same word in Hebrews 1:2] *were made by Him*; and without Him was not ANYTHING made that was made” (1:1-3). This is all-encompassing.

But who is “the Word”? John answers a few verses later: “And the Word was *made flesh*, and *dwelt among us*, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (vs. 14). The only God-Being who ever became flesh in order to dwell among men is Jesus. He was not flesh until He came to earth to become the Savior of mankind.

In the original Greek, the term “the Word” actually means “Spokesman.” While Christ only became the Son of God at His human birth,

He was an eternal Being—He was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3).

Plainly, these verses speak of Christ both before and after His human birth. Again, only one God Being “became flesh and dwelt among us.” But John 1:1 reveals more! Notice it says that Christ, the Word, “was” God and was also “with” God. This can only be possible if TWO separate Beings are being described. These TWO eternal Beings—Personages—existed before any of the physical universe had been created. They existed from the beginning and all earlier time.

Ephesians 3:9 confirms John 1: “God...created all things *by Jesus Christ.*” Having been “the Word”—the Spokesman—for all eternity, Christ said many times throughout His ministry that He only declared what God wanted Him to say. Since Christ was “the Word,” we can understand why Psalm 33 states, “By *the Word* of the LORD were the heavens [the universe] made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it was done” (vs. 6, 9).

Psalm 33 is expanded in Colossians 1. Verse 12 speaks of the Father and of “His...Son” (vs. 13) “who is the image of the invisible God...for by Him [Christ] were all things [the universe] created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (vs. 15-17).

We have just summarized the Bible's statement about persons and conditions that existed through the entire period of prehistory! No angels or physical matter existed with God. Only these two supreme Beings existed—ALONE—for the entirety of previous eternity.

These Beings were God, having infinite power of both mind and creative ability. This is why They created man, a long time after the physical universe was created—to have creative mind power. This fits the pattern of God's own creative power and ability.

Human beings can design, draw up plans and build almost anything that they choose. The enormous power to reason, think through, make judgments and proceed toward goals of their own choosing differentiates human beings from animals.

If God had never made anything else, just think of how awesome must be their POWER—that they could create the human mind, with its seemingly *unlimited potential*.

But Job 38 reveals that angels were created *before* the physical universe, which preceded the appearance of man by perhaps billions of years.

Angels are composed of spirit. They are literal beings, but are not made of matter. They were given immortal life from the moment they were created. Though less powerful than God, these created spirits have far *more* power than physical human beings. They were the pinnacle of God's creation throughout the period of billions of years of prehistory.

The World at the Creation of Man

Now we must examine the creation of man and what God said about His "product" after it was finished.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. Its 50 chapters describe a period of over 2,000 years. Therefore, it is not written to show detail. Rather, it represents a look at the most important *high points* of human history. The creation week and the time immediately following it are described in the first three chapters.

Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God"—but who is the One speaking, calling Himself God? Moses recorded the first five books of the Old Testament in the Hebrew language. We saw that the Hebrew word translated "God" is *Elohim*, a word similar to *team, group, family* or *church*. God is one Family—one God—composed of TWO Beings.

God and Christ enjoy complete harmony and agreement. They reflect perfect outgoing love, concern and cooperation. The Father is the supreme leader of a Family that both Persons chose to expand. First, God created the angels and then the entire physical universe, including earth. Next came man.

Remember, God said, "Let US [more than one] make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness" (Gen. 1:26). As seen, there was clearly more than one person involved in the creation of man.

Verse 25 shows that each animal was made after "his kind." Notice: "And God made the beast of the earth after *his kind*, and cattle after *their kind*, and every thing that creeps upon the earth after *his kind*: and God saw that it was good."

Verse 27 continues, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." This verse is a key to understanding that God's very purpose is to

reproduce Himself. The human family and human reproduction is a type of this plan. Verse 28 begins with an important statement: “And *God blessed them*, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”

The next two verses explain that God entrusted the entirety of His creation (animals, plants, etc.) to man's dominion—his overall control. Genesis 2:19 describes how God brought all the animals to Adam “to see what he would call them.”

The Genesis 1 account concludes with vitally important verse 31: “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was *very good*.”

In chapter 2, God presented Adam and Eve with the choice that they would face (chapter 3) between the Tree of Life and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” In this choice, they would be offered the opportunity to decide between God's “divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4)—building and developing His character—or taking on Satan's sinful nature.

If Adam would have been willing to obey God's instruction, he could have qualified to replace Satan and restore the government of God on Earth. We will see that Satan had rebelled and overthrown God's government on the earth.

Is God's Creative Power Limited?

We might ask, with the seemingly unlimited capacity of His creative genius, is there anything that even God Himself could not create *immediately*? Has God any limits? Is there a single item—of any kind—that is beyond His ability to create *instantly*?

Yes—one thing! And it is ALL-IMPORTANT.

God cannot create the perfect, holy, righteous character possessed by both the Father and Jesus Christ. Before continuing, get this enormously vital piece of understanding clear in your mind. God cannot impart perfect character overnight—*by divine fiat*. And yet this most important quality must be present in a human being for God to achieve His ultimate creative purpose.

This kind of character is the ability to choose, to *do* and to *live* the right way, even against the pulls and temptations of self-desire. It is a complete yielding, on the part of a free moral agent, to God and His perfect way of life—voluntarily and unconditionally. It is submitting to God's government and God's Law.

This quality of mind—CHARACTER—cannot be built overnight. It is a lifelong process. Character must be developed through *repeatedly* choosing (with God’s *help*) to live and do what is right. God cannot automatically instill this into anyone. It is built through tests and trials of every sort. Free moral agents must *continually* yield to God and choose to do right, over and over again, until it is part of their fundamental, intrinsic CHARACTER!

The importance of this knowledge—this truly crucial understanding—cannot be overstated.

The angels were created with free moral agency. They were given minds capable of making choices, decisions. They were capable of reasoning and thinking through problems and of setting their will. God revealed His true way of life to these free moral agents. And He allowed them to *choose* which way they would go.

Jude 6-7 reveals that God placed the angels on Earth as their “first estate...their own habitation.” His intention was that they use the earth as a *testing* ground—a *proving* ground—to build character.

The pre-Adamic world was populated by giant “prehistoric” creatures. This *was* a time of prehistory, as far as man is concerned. Men were created later, after the time that Satan and his demons ruled the earth as Lucifer and his one-third of the angels—and after the time of their change in nature.

Obviously, the potential that once belonged to angels now belongs to human beings.

What Changed Everything?

We saw that Job 38 described how the earth was created in a wonderful, beautiful condition, with great joy and singing on the part of the angels. All of creation was supremely happy. This means that there were not yet demons at the time of creation in Genesis 1:1, only faithful angels. Now read Genesis 1:2.

This verse is mistranslated and does *not* reflect the *meaning* of the original Hebrew. The King James Version of the Bible reads, “And the earth *was without form, and void.*” Three key Hebrew words are all mistranslated here, thus obscuring, and actually *hiding*, the true meaning of the passage.

The word translated “was” is *hayah*. In Genesis 2:7, this word is correctly translated “became,” and in Genesis 9:15, “become.”

The words for “without form, and void” are *tohu* and *bohu*. Correctly translated, they mean “chaotic, in confusion, waste and empty.” In short, a perfectly created earth (vs. 1), “became chaotic and confused” (vs. 2). *Tohu* and *bohu* are translated identically in Jeremiah 4:23. Isaiah 34:11, among other places, translates this phrase as “confusion and emptiness.”

Notice Isaiah 45:18, which clarifies how God did *not* create the earth: “For thus says the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain [*tohu* meaning chaotic or waste], He formed it to be inhabited.”

From this passage, it is clear that the earth *became* chaotic *after* God had created it—*between* the events described in Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Thus, verse 2 describes the *RE-creation* of the earth 6,000 years ago, and verse 1 describes the *original* creation of the entire universe that, according to scientists, occurred as many as 17 billion years ago.

Psalms 104:30 states that God “*renews* the face of the earth.” The seven days of the creation week are when God *renewed* what had become a damaged, injured, flooded earth, then completely covered with water (Gen. 1:2). But Acts 3:19-21 reveals that only the Return of Christ will bring the ultimate “restitution [the restoring] of all things.”

So we know *what* happened. But *how* did it happen? How did the surface of the planet go from being beautiful and perfect at creation to chaotic, confused, waste and empty? Since God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), we know that *He* did not destroy the earth. Then *who* or *what* caused this?

Lucifer's Rebellion

Now, for some history. Where did Satan come from? How did he become the way he is?

The Bible reveals many important facts about a subject if one reads *all* of the scriptures that pertain to it. With this in mind, let's read about Lucifer *after* he had become Satan.

Isaiah 14:12-15 tells a remarkable story containing many clues about where Lucifer was once located, what he did and what happened to him. Read carefully, noticing the emphasized key phrases: “How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you *cut down to the ground*, which *did* weaken the na-

tions! For you have said in your heart, I will *ascend into heaven*, I will exalt *my throne* above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the *sides of the north*: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: *I will be like the Most High*. Yet you shall be brought down to *hell* [the “grave”—verses 9 and 11], to the sides of *the pit*.”

The one called “Lucifer” could not possibly be a man. The things he did are impossible for any human being to do. Only the devil could “weaken” all nations, and could have said he would “ascend into heaven.” Certainly no *man* could be “cut down to the ground” in the way described here. Finally, no *man* has a throne that could be put above the “stars of heaven.”

GOD lives in the north part of the heavens or the “sides of the north.” Job sheds light on Lucifer’s attempt to overthrow God *there*: “He [God] stretched out the *north* over the *empty place*, and hangs the earth upon nothing” (26:7). The “empty place” in the “north” coincides with what astronomers have noticed is a significant and strange *lack of stars* in that region of space. It becomes evident that Satan attacked God in *that* direction when he sought to ascend from his own throne to take over God’s throne in the “sides of the north.” This is what the Bible reveals!

Satan had been trained at the very headquarters of God’s universe-ruling GOVERNMENT. He had been taught basic matters of ADMINISTRATION of God’s government on Earth. God appointed him to be, and calls him, a “king” over this earthly administration.

Ezekiel 28:12-17 parallels and reinforces Isaiah 14, and is equally important for study. This account describes one who some “scholars” claim was a *human* “king of Tyrus.” Careful reading shows this is impossible—and ridiculous.

This verse speaks of one who “seals up the sum, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty,” who had also “been in Eden the garden of God.” No human has ever been perfect, and it was the devil—the serpent—who beguiled Eve in the garden. Verse 13 states, “you were created,” and Satan is a created being. Verse 14 calls him “the cherub that covers.” (Exodus 25:17-20 describes the remaining two faithful “cherubs that cover[ed]” God’s throne in the Old Testament tabernacle. Their wings cover the “mercy seat.”) No earthly king fits this description.

The latter part of Ezekiel 28:14 says that this “king” was “in the mountain of God” and “walked...in the midst of the stones of

fire.” This describes the area around God’s throne! Verse 15 declares, “iniquity [lawlessness] was found in you” and verse 16 refers to it as “sin.”

Verse 16 also describes this cherub as having been “cast...out of” heaven. God also said He would “destroy” (Hebrew: *expel*) Lucifer from heaven. Verse 17 reveals that his “heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty” and that his wisdom was “corrupted...by reason of [his] brightness.” The verse ends with God “casting him down to the ground,” where the kings of the earth would “behold him.”

Lucifer was a brilliant being—an “*angel of light*,” as are “his ministers” (II Cor. 11:13-15). The word *Lucifer* means “the light bringer.” This once perfect being originally brought *brilliant light* to all that were around him. But he rebelled and sinned—thus becoming the “prince of *darkness*.” His rebellion turned him into a twisted, perverted being. While of great intelligence, he has literally become an *insane fallen angel*, no longer knowing right from wrong!

God originally created three archangels: Lucifer (who became Satan), Michael and Gabriel. Each ruled one-third of hundreds of millions of angels (Rev. 5:11). Lucifer ruled the pre-Adamic world with his third. He, along with his angels, rebelled against the government of God, and today he leads these now fallen spirits, or demons, as the god of this world.

Cast to Earth With All His Angels

Revelation 12 tells of Satan and his demons being “cast to this earth” (vs. 13). Actually, this chapter is an inset in the middle of the book of Revelation, and is a brief synopsis of the entirety of New Testament Church history, covering the high points of the last 2,000 years.

Verse 3 there describes Satan as a “dragon” who “drew the *third part* of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth” (vs. 4). Recall that these “stars” were the one-third of all angels under Lucifer before he rebelled.

II Peter 2:4 offers another clue about this “casting down” of Satan and the angels that he “drew with” him. Notice: “God spared not the *angels that sinned* [Satan was not the only angel who sinned], but cast them down to *hell*.” (The Greek word here is *tar-*

taros and it means either “prison” or “place of restraint”—this is the earth itself.) These demons with Satan have been “reserved unto judgment,” having been “delivered...into chains of darkness.” This reveals that many other fallen spirits are delivered to this dark prison by God to join the “prince of darkness.”

Peter recorded that the “angels...sinned.” What exactly does this mean? Recall God’s definition of sin: “For sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). They broke the Law of God in several ways.

Jude 6-7 describes their rebellion—their sin—this way: “And the angels which *kept not their first estate*, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

After sinning, the angels’ nature changed. Their character was no longer perfect—righteous. They became spiritually corrupt, and filled with wrong thoughts and attitudes, and disqualified themselves for permanent rulership within the Plan of God. God likens them to the perverted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which became so corrupt that He had no choice but to destroy them. The inhabitants of these cities became completely useless to God’s Plan—*unqualified* for and *disqualified* from all positions of leadership and authority, too vile to be allowed to continue living.

Revelation 12:7-9 describes, in more detail, *when* Satan and his demons are cast to the earth for the *last time* with no further access to heaven. Verses 12-14 show that the devil’s response is great wrath. This terrible time lies just ahead for the whole world! But this final casting down again is not to be confused with what we have already read.

Satan ignored the danger that when wrong attitudes enter, over time, they take root and grow. They eventually spread throughout the character of the one who permits such attitudes to enter. If enough time passes, this attitude will spread to other individuals, until their character is also corrupted. This has been called the “rotten apple” principle. If one rotten apple in a barrel is not removed, it will *spread* to other apples in the barrel, and in time will rot them.

Revelation identifies Satan as a “destroyer.” He systematically destroys, rots, ruins and perverts everything that he touches. On the other hand, God is a CREATOR—a BUILDER! He develops, upgrades,

restores, builds and *improves* everything He touches. This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the God of heaven and the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4).

One BUILDS—the other DESTROYS!

What God Saw

God realized that His supreme creation, Lucifer, had rebelled and disqualified himself as earth's ruler. Though disappointed, God was not surprised. He fully understood in advance the possibility of Lucifer's rebellion. He had planned ahead, recognizing what this would mean.

God now realized that He and Christ were the only Beings who *could not* and *would never* sin. He purposed, through His Son, to expand His Family by creating perfect character in men.

But He knew that He could not initially make man of spirit—and immortal—like the angels. He had to ensure that there would be no more immortal beings who could turn, in rebellion, and become deceivers and destroyers.

His Plan for man would have to take into account that those offered the opportunity of building His character had to be given free moral agency. They *could* rebel and practice sin as their chosen way of life. God understood that this would always be a possibility with *every* free moral agent. But, if they rebelled, He had to preclude that they could live forever, like Satan and his demons, in continuing misery and unhappiness, spreading it to all those around them.

God had to take all of this into account in His Plan to expand His divine Family beyond Himself and the Word—Christ. He could not have one, as a member of His Family and possessing the very power of God, rebel and run amuck throughout the universe. So He made man of flesh—of the dust of the ground. He intended to work out a purpose so incredible—of such AWESOME POTENTIAL!—that it is beyond the comprehension of the most brilliant human intellects to discern on their own!

A Plan to Replace Satan

Satan demonstrated that he could not be governed by God. Therefore, a successor had to qualify to replace him, because Satan's government was still in place on Earth. The devil was still in office—re-

maintaining the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) and the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4).

Of course, God understood that Satan, as deceiver (Rev. 12:9), would do all in his power to defeat God’s master purpose by destroying His new physical creation—man.

Understanding that man would have free moral agency, God had to plan and decide, with “the Word,” that this only other Being in the Godhead must be “made flesh” (John 1:14) and come to earth. This would be for the purpose of becoming Savior for all who would sin (Rom. 3:23) and who would need to be redeemed from the penalty of eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

God understood that He could resurrect Christ from the tomb after He had paid the death penalty for all mankind. These were all important facets of a plan that God thought through in every detail. We will see that part of His Plan had to include imparting into mankind a tiny bit of His own nature, through the begetting of His Holy Spirit into the minds of all who would be converted to His way.

God’s Holy Spirit contains and reflects the perfect character that is His and Christ’s, and His marvelous Plan would allow God, who is composed of Spirit, to place a little amount of His own character into human beings, only made in His physical image and likeness. We will learn in Chapter Five exactly *how* God’s Spirit enters and works within the human mind.

What Christ Faced

Almost immediately after Christ was baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9-11), He entered an extraordinary, extended battle with Satan.

Successfully resisting the devil’s temptation was the key to Christ overcoming sin and qualifying to replace and remove him at the establishing of the kingdom of God. Matthew 4 contains the account: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit... to be *tempted* of the devil” (vs. 1). Through enticement, the devil repeatedly baited Christ, in various ways. Take time to read the account. At the end of several attempts by Satan to break Christ’s will, the account climaxes.

Notice that after being offered all the world’s kingdoms by Satan, Christ rebuked him (vs. 10) and commanded him to leave. The

temptation ended and the devil departed. Christ had successfully resisted—and qualified!

Grasp this. Jesus Christ passed a very real test! He overcame the world, His flesh and the devil in defeating sin and qualifying to pay for the sins of the world.

God's Purpose Must Be Completed Before His Kingdom Can Arrive

Though Christ qualified to replace Satan over 2,000 years ago, there are several reasons for the long delay in establishing God's kingdom.

Since God's Plan encompasses 7,000 years, and the sixth day is drawing to a close, with the seventh one-thousand-year "day" of God's Plan now to follow soon, Satan will soon be bound (Rev. 20:2). But this could not happen before the first six thousand years are complete.

Again, man has been given 6,000 years to try his own ways, governments, religions, philosophies, value systems, forms of education—and methods of trying to solve the world's greatest problems. Under the sway of Satan, he has practiced sin—disobedience to God's commands—for all this time. Then he has tried to treat all of the ill *effects* instead of treating the *cause*—breaking God's spiritual laws. Hard lessons are being learned. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, are having to learn that their own solutions simply do not work!

Having conquered sin, Christ qualified to replace (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) the "god of this world." He assured that the devil will soon no longer be able to deceive (Rev. 12:9) and confuse mankind (I Cor. 14:33). Having not *yet* been bound, Satan does everything within his power to thwart God's Plan. His deceived ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15) teach, in effect, that God has failed to save the world. Yet, only by God's *permission* does Satan hold sway over this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4; I John 5:19). Recognize that God is not losing a kind of great cosmic "wrestling match" over which He has full control. He knows exactly what He is doing, and the beauty of His plan *can* be known. No true God would ever condemn humanity without offering salvation to ALL!

There are other reasons for the delay in Christ's Return. He had to first call and train the original disciples to become apostles—to become the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20) and to take the

gospel to the world. Then, throughout the New Testament period, He had to train the rest of an administrative team to rule with Him.

Christ did not establish His kingdom immediately, because He had to ascend to heaven to become High Priest of those God calls. Christians are reconciled to God by Christ's death, but they are saved by His LIFE (Rom. 5:10)—His Resurrection. Also, while still human, Christ could not install Himself as Satan's replacement. Daniel showed that He had to return to heaven (also Luke 19) to be CROWNED with power and glory before He could return.

What Is God's Purpose for Humans?

Most people have absolutely no idea WHY they were born. This is spiritually *revealed* knowledge, unattainable to all whom God has *not* called to understand His truth (John 6:44, 65).

In the next chapter, we will explore more of the difference between men and animals and that God is working within the minds of those He calls toward His AWESOME PURPOSE!

God's Plan for Expanding His Divine Family

Think for a moment. What could be more important to understand than the purpose for your life?

Atheists refuse to know. Those who do not accept the existence of God certainly cannot accept that He has a Master Plan.

Cynics scoff at the possibility of knowing. They see the confusion and wide disagreement over this question and conclude it can never be answered.

Scientists cannot discover this knowledge through laboratory analysis. Astronomers, microbiologists and others honest with the facts acknowledge that God exists, but this alone does not reveal His Purpose for mankind.

Philosophers cannot discern it through meditation or discussion. Divinely revealed answers cannot be obtained by centuries of pondering questions.

Educators cannot teach what they themselves were never taught. Those who merely teach from books written by other men cannot teach what those books do not contain.

Astrologers dazzle with tricks that reveal nothing of value. Do any seriously think that such “business people” (those who *sell* fortunetelling as true understanding), supposedly in contact with the “dead” and the “spirit world” (actually demon spirits), hold the meaning of life?

Theologians offer humanly-devised theories and counterfeits. All religions *profess* to hold the answers to life's questions, but their

ideas pale as cheap substitutes—empty counterfeits—when the awesome truth of God’s Plan is fully understood.

Most people live their entire lives without a clue as to why they are here. They drift aimlessly, unconcerned about the answers to life’s greatest questions—*why life* and *why death*? Others enjoy debating the meaning of life, but never arrive at the correct answers. Many conclude that mankind is little more than a product of evolution—blind, dumb luck!

The Pinnacle of God’s Creation

If you have read much of my material, you know that the Bible is God’s *Instruction Book* for mankind. It is the source of revealed knowledge and understanding that man cannot discover for himself. It explains life’s most important questions. It contains ANSWERS!

Again, the Bible begins with the book of Genesis, which means “beginnings.” The *genesis* of a matter is its beginning—how it *began*. Genesis explains how God began His Plan for mankind.

Chapter 1, verse 25 reveals that animals were made in a different way and that each was made after “his kind.” Notice that it said, “And God made the beast of the earth after *his kind*, and cattle after *their kind*, and every thing that creeps upon the earth after *his kind*...”

Horses look like horses. Dogs look like dogs. Cows look like cows. Birds look like birds. None of these—and nothing else—is formed and shaped in the image and likeness of God. So says God, who inspired this account in His Word!

Men are not part of the animal kind. They do not carry the likeness of any “beast of the earth.” As part of the *God* kind, man was created to enter a relationship with his Creator that animals can never realize.

It is critical to understand something about WHO and WHAT God is. Genesis 1 reveals vitally important knowledge. Again, the One speaking there used the plural instead of the singular. Recall verse 26: “Let US [more than one] make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness.” This verse records the God FAMILY doing the speaking and creating. God is one FAMILY—presently composed of two Persons.

The pagan Trinity doctrine teaches that God is three Persons in one Being. This hides the crucial truth that *Elohim* is a FAMILY com-

posed of more than one Person. In terms of its relationship to the *human family*, the importance of this knowledge cannot be overstated.

Great Purpose Revealed!

Evolutionists are stymied—completely trapped—within the boundaries of their theory. They see no greater reason for the birth of a human than of a puppy or a giraffe. If, as they assert, human beings are merely the highest of animals, and products of blind, dumb evolution, it is impossible for them to simultaneously believe in a transcendent, God-ordained PURPOSE for human life. The two positions are opposites. No one can honestly accept both!

Though often of great intelligence, the evolutionist's dependence on human reasoning, accompanied by rejection of revealed knowledge, leaves him utterly incapable of knowing God's great purpose for humanity. He has literally shut himself out of true understanding!

This book is written to those who *will* consider what God reveals, not to the unwilling. God *REVEALS* that man has an awesome purpose completely beyond the bounds of human imagination. After hearing God's explanation, *you* be the judge of whether it makes more sense than that offered by evolutionists and traditional Christianity.

Created Incomplete

The Psalmist wrote, "...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (139:14). But you were made *incomplete*.

Genesis 1 records the account of man's PHYSICAL creation. Adam was created so that he looked like—appeared like—God in *physical* form and shape. Though physically complete, Adam was left spiritually incomplete. A vitally important spiritual component was missing.

Notice Genesis 2:7: "...God *formed* man of the *dust* of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul." Man is made out of physical matter—flesh. While not composed of Spirit, like God, he is fashioned—*formed*—in the "image and likeness" of God.

Adam was physical. He breathed air, and required food and water. Without any of these, he could not survive.

Though Adam was made in the form and image of God, there was an obvious—and big—difference between him and God. Adam

was made of the dust. He was flesh (Gen. 2:7). Since God is a Spirit, He is made—composed—of *Spirit*.

Two “Adams” Reveals Supreme Purpose

A vitally important parallel exists between Adam and Christ, who was the God of the Old Testament (John 1:1, 14; I Cor. 10:4). It offers another clue to God’s *purpose*. Paul makes the comparison this way: “And so it is written, The *first man Adam* was made a living soul; the *last Adam* [Christ] was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward [at the Resurrection] that which is spiritual. The first man [Adam] is of the earth, *earthy*: the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also [by the Resurrection] that are heavenly. And as *we* [converted, Spirit-led people] have borne the image of the earthy [made of flesh], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [composed of spirit]” (I Cor. 15:45-49).

Paul’s inspired statement starts with a reference to Genesis 2:7. Notice the phrase there “And so it was written...” This is *New Testament verification* of the Genesis account! Paul knew Adam “was made” by God, that this *did* happen. He believed the Old Testament account.

The goal of a Christian is to receive a Spirit *body* at the Resurrection—to “bear the image of the heavenly.” Just as God created animals—elephants, dogs, cats, horses, etc.—to reproduce after their kind, He (Elohim) created man after the God kind.

Grasp this point. God intended to begin His spiritual creation with Adam—with humans. This process has never included animals. Now, we must understand why.

Human Mind vs. Animal Instinct

Animals possess instinct. No evolutionist has ever successfully explained why this is or how it is even possible.

Why would bees return to their hive day after day, generation after generation, making honey in the same way they did 1,000 years ago, unless they were *designed* to do this?

Why do birds know to fly south, and at just the right time? Then, how do many know to return each year to the exact same tree in Cen-

tral or South America—and then fly back north, right on schedule? Instinct!

How would *all* bears “know” to eat enough food to survive hibernation all winter—and how would *all* bears even know to hibernate, unless this was *built into* their instinctive behavior?

Why do baby cows and horses stand up almost immediately after birth? It was *programmed* into them—through instinct.

Why do all wolves hunt the same way—in packs—and eat the same things?

Why does almost every bird have its own distinct nest-building design?

There was once a test conducted with weaver birds. Five successive generations were deprived of nest-building materials. The fifth generation was given the materials but had never seen a nest. It immediately proceeded to make nests that looked exactly like all weaver bird nests.

As marvelous as is this instinctive capability, it is dwarfed by the capacity and power of human intellect. Humans are able to acquire knowledge. They can reach the moon and create super-computers. They can design buildings the height of six football fields and discover secrets of the atom. Animals have no such capability.

People do *not* instinctively know everything that they need to know to operate successfully throughout their lives. They must acquire ever more knowledge as they grow older and as more demands are placed upon them.

All knowledge falls into two categories: (1) The *physical* knowledge of how to work with matter and physical things, and (2) the *spiritual* knowledge necessary for people to develop personal relationships with both God and their fellow man. All knowledge is either physical or spiritual.

Physical knowledge is acquired through the five senses—*sight, hearing, smell, touch* and *taste*. People understand that they must ACQUIRE certain knowledge and add to it throughout their lives. The senses enable them to continually add more physical knowledge.

Created to Obtain Knowledge

God gave Adam and Eve “dominion” over the earth (Gen. 1:26). This meant that man would be able and need to learn and produce—to generate—much knowledge as he subjugated the planet.

God designed human beings with minds that could create, devise, reason, observe and experiment. Through this inherent ability to reason, *physical* knowledge could be processed. This was good and right, as long as it was used within the framework that God intended.

Adam and Eve's problem was they reasoned that *every* kind of knowledge necessary for salvation could be obtained on their own, through experimentation. Once they moved off course from God's intended way, they had no hope of reaching the *destination* that He purposed for them—and neither does mankind, which followed their choice. Once Adam and Eve accepted the *wrong premise* as their STARTING POINT—that they could reason everything out themselves—they were destined to fail!

The accumulation of vast amounts of knowledge over millennia has not changed, and could never change, the fact that mankind is headed for the wrong destination.

Revealed Knowledge

Every sophisticated or technical device or product comes with an *instruction manual*. Without this, the owner would find the object useless. He would not know how to properly operate it. Nor could he repair or maintain it.

We previously explained that God gave an Instruction Manual—the Bible—that contains vital REVEALED knowledge, otherwise unattainable. Unlike the modern system of education, it teaches *how to live*, not just how to earn a living. It explains history, prophecy, important knowledge of doctrine and thousands of other points and principles that govern every aspect of life.

Now understand. The Bible was never intended to contain ALL knowledge, just that which is essential for salvation—knowledge that man could not discover through human reason, experimentation, analysis and observation. The Bible was not intended to teach mankind how to design marvels of engineering, telescopes that can probe the outer reaches of the universe or computers that can perform trillions of calculations per second.

Men were given the capacity to reason out and design these and many other highly complex, technical inventions. Education in physical knowledge is important.

Here is why. Most of earth's population live in abject poverty, disease, filth, squalor and illiteracy. They lack the most fundamental

education that the developed “have” nations enjoy. Therefore, basic education can lead to *physical* improvements and advancements for civilization.

But surely 6,000 years of misery, unhappiness and every conceivable evil, ill and woe that humanity has suffered ought to tell the world that it should carefully heed the *Instruction Book* of revealed spiritual knowledge that it has ignored. Yet, man continues to reject God's SPIRITUAL REVELATION.

However, cut off from the right channel and path of spiritually understood cause and effect and from God's revealed law, man still possesses the power of physical, human reasoning, which, sadly, has led to weapons of mass destruction and terror, cruelty, slavery, repression, pollution, crime, religious confusion, and so much more.

Hence, man's misery and woes compound and mount at every turn.

But remember, God's process of SPIRITUAL CREATION is still in progress. It is *not complete!*

Product of God's Workmanship

Let's continue examining the bigger picture of God's PURPOSE.

You are not the first to be concerned with God's overall Plan—or wonder why you exist. Job asked this same question: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (14:14).

God inspired him to answer his own question: “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. You shall call, and I will answer You: *You will have a desire to the work of Your hands*” (vs. 14-15).

Job acknowledged that he was the “WORK of God's hands.” He knew God “desired” a certain purpose that involved a process at work within him. He understood that one day God would “call” him from the grave, and that he would “answer,” thus fulfilling his purpose.

This is important knowledge that could only be revealed by God. Job could not otherwise have known it.

God is at work in those He has called. He is fashioning, molding, and building within them His very character. Now notice what Isaiah recorded: “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the CLAY, and You our POTTER; and we all are the WORK OF YOUR HAND” (64:8).

Tragically, many will not allow God to work with them. They fight His PURPOSE. They think they know better than Almighty God

who made them. Many refuse to be told what to do and to be clay in God's hands. This was Adam's problem.

Isaiah also wrote, "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to *Him that fashions it*, What make You? Or Your WORK, He [God] has no hands?" (45:9).

Most people have absolutely no idea that God actively works within human beings He has called—or *what* He is doing when He does. Again, this is spiritually *revealed* knowledge, unattainable to all whom God has *not* called to understand His truth (John 6:44, 65; 17:17).

God is now actively working in the minds of only those *few* who have His Holy Spirit within them (Acts 2:38). Humans are not born with God's character. And, again, God cannot instantly infuse them with it. Character must be *developed*.

The true Christian increases in understanding and "grow[s] in grace, and knowledge" (II Pet. 3:18). He endures a lifetime of overcoming, because he is in training for a great purpose. Those called understand that "...he that shall ENDURE unto the *end*, the same shall be SAVED" (Matt. 24:13).

Bible study and earnest prayer are part of the Christian's daily schedule. The one who is called has found the "pearl of great price" and is determined to build the SPIRITUAL CHARACTER and NATURE of God. While none of this will earn him salvation, it is the *substance* of his character that determines his reward.

Paul understood how God works in Christians. He recognized that salvation (Rom. 6:23), and even faith to receive it, are free gifts. They cannot be earned. But this does not mean God is not *actively working* (requiring good works) in human beings, as He REPRODUCES HIMSELF.

Consider: "For by *grace* are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus *unto* GOOD WORKS, which God has before ordained that we should WALK IN THEM" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Did you catch the phrase Paul used—"we are *His* workmanship"? What could be plainer? God has a Purpose at work within each person!

The verse continued by saying that Christians must "walk" in "good works." The false notion of "just believing in Jesus" thwarts God's Supreme Purpose of fashioning people through careful WORKMANSHIP, like a potter with clay.

Salvation, though of “grace...through faith,” involves good works. This means that salvation is a *process* and not something that happens immediately upon “giving your heart to Jesus.”

Notice what else Paul wrote about this process taking place within those God calls: “And be *renewed* in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the NEW MAN, which after God is *created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:23-24). II Corinthians 5:17 puts it this way: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*...”

Those whom God is working with are literally a NEW CREATION!

The one who serves God is being transformed in his mind. He yields his own will and seeks to replace it with God's will in all matters. He seeks to please God—not *self*!

Born to Build Character

Each person that God calls is presented with the same choice that Adam and Eve faced—yielding to God and *His* government or yielding to Satan and *his* nature.

God is a Father. He has one Spirit-composed Son, but will later have many *more* sons (Rom. 8:19). He is reproducing Himself by developing His character in yielded, conquered, Spirit-begotten human beings. As human fathers beget their children *physically*, God begets His children *spiritually*.

Just as little children grow up to look like their physical parents, so also do God's children slowly take on the spiritual likeness of their Parent, in holy, righteous character—“divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). Peter described Christians as “partakers of the DIVINE NATURE”—the nature of God. There is the physical nature of creation, *human nature* and GOD'S NATURE. God is re-fashioning corrupt, carnal *human nature* into wonderful, glorious, perfect, holy, SPIRITUAL CHARACTER—His DIVINE NATURE!

Character is understanding—knowing—right from wrong and DOING *what is right instead of what is wrong!* God reveals what is right, but it is through the power of free moral agency, deciding to DO what is right, that righteous character is built.

Character is consciously *choosing* the right way, against resistance. It is not the easy way. It is swimming against the current, rather than drifting lazily in the direction it is flowing. It is building love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

temperance (self-control), wisdom, knowledge, understanding, humility and more. This takes time, because character is built through *experience*.

Animals develop none of these traits.

God has perfect character in all respects. He *is* love (I John 4:8, 16). Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10; I John 5:3), which requires yielding to God. It is outgoing, outflowing concern for others, putting them first—ahead of self-interests.

Satan's nature is selfish, incoming and concerned only with what is best for self and how to get more for self. This is the attitude he injected into Adam and Eve when they ate of the forbidden fruit.

Are you seeing that, while God made man in the form and shape, physically, of Himself, it does not end there?

You were created to BECOME LIKE GOD—to build perfect, holy, righteous character. God is *reproducing Himself* in human beings. Just as you are the child of parents, and possibly have children of your own, *God is your Parent*. Again, as you physically look like your parents, and your children resemble you, God wants you to look like Him—in *spiritual character*! In this life, God begins to spiritually re-form and re-shape those He calls. His Purpose is to build within them His nature.

So then, God is reproducing Himself in those who have received His Holy Spirit. He is creating children that will look and BE just like Him! *To build the very character of God* is the reason you exist—is *why you were born!* But there is more to understand.

We have previously explained that God has allotted 7,000 years—seven *millennial days*—to work out His Plan “here below.” We are nearing the end of the already explained sixth day allotted to man under Satan. Christ will soon return to establish God's government and perfect spiritual law on Earth. Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:2) and no longer able to sway this world to evil and rebellion against God's revealed knowledge.

After Christ returns, and with Satan bound (Rev. 20:2), only a few will reject God, refusing to obey Him. They will trust in their human minds and reject the missing dimension of God's Spirit, which would have led them to eternal life. They will reject building righteousness in their lives and choose to remain *incomplete—unfinished*—in development and purpose. But more about this time will be discussed later. First, we must see another dimension of the character-building process.

But Whose Righteousness?

It is supremely important—absolutely vital!—to understand that Christians only grow through being connected to Christ.

The Bible often speaks of “Christ in us” (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17; II Cor. 13:5). The Christian does not do the character-building works. Jesus Christ at work in him does them. Understand. The Father guides this process as each person remains in contact with Him through the Spirit of Christ (and God) in him.

Keep this clear. It is not anything that *you* do, of and by yourself, which produces works of righteousness. Romans 10 warns of those who do not understand God's role in building character, good works and righteousness: “For they being *ignorant* of *GOD's* righteousness, and going about to establish their *OWN* righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (vs. 3).

It is a complete waste of effort to build your *own* character, your *own* works of righteousness. They gain you nothing with God. All spiritual growth comes from Him! But you must do *your part* in yielding to God.

Paul wrote, “For we are laborers *together* with God: you are *GOD's* HUSBANDRY, you are *GOD's* BUILDING” (I Cor. 3:9). This is profound understanding. God is *building* a Family. He is a Husbandman. True Christians are the product of *His* “husbandry”—*His* “workmanship.”

GOD, not any man, is building His Church. Christ said, in Matthew 16:18, “*I* will build My Church.” No wonder Paul wrote, “*you* are God's *building*.” Yes, God is building something special within those He calls, just as He is building His Church overall.

Of course, every stable building has a proper foundation. This helps it remain solid. In I Corinthians 3:11, Paul adds, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which *is Jesus Christ*.”

Your life must come to be built on the stable, solid foundation of CHRIST—and Him at work in you!

The Coming Resurrection

As we have seen, most professing Christians believe that they are “born again” in *this* life. Invariably, they believe this follows on the heels of “receiving Jesus.” This is *not* what the Bible teaches.

We saw that Paul stated, “...*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery*” (I Cor. 15:50-51). This knowledge *is* certainly a mystery to most.

While flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God, *spirit can!* Because Christ wanted to allow no room for misunderstanding, He likened spirit to wind in John 3:3-8. Like wind, spirit is *invisible*. It cannot be seen. Only at the resurrection are all true Christians changed from flesh to spirit, as we have seen, and BORN AGAIN!

What You Will Look Like

Since human beings are made in *God's* “image” and “likeness,” this process will not—and cannot—be complete until the Resurrection, when we are no longer composed of “flesh and blood.”

Then John adds, “Whosoever is *born of God* does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is *born of God*” (vs. 9). We will one day have the very likeness of Christ. At that time, we will be born of God. But Romans 8:16 states that we are “children” of God *now* and heirs *with* Christ *now*.

Recall we saw that David and John understood that, LIKE Job, they would “awake” at the resurrection and look exactly like God, in image, form *and character*—and be composed of spirit!

So then—let me also repeat this—God is reproducing Himself in human beings who have received His Holy Spirit. He is creating children that will look and *be* just like Him!

Paul amplifies what John and David referred to when they said that Christians will be “like Him”—and with His “likeness.” Notice: “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; *from whence* [Christ is coming here, not the other way around] also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

This is mind-boggling knowledge. Nothing compares to it! But let’s make it even clearer.

The following is a direct description of Jesus Christ, as He now exists in full glory. Meditate on it, realizing that YOU will look—and be—*like Him*: “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white

as snow; and His eyes were as a *flame of fire*; and His feet like unto *fine brass*, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was *as the sun shines in his strength*" (Rev. 1:14-16).

What this astounding description reveals about your future is not my personal opinion. It is what *your Bible* reveals! This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, *we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*" (I Cor. 15:49). While we are physically formed and shaped like God now, we shall later become Spirit, and take on the "IMAGE of the HEAVENLY."

Grasp this. The very Spirit of God in us will allow us to awake in the resurrection. Notice Romans 8:11: "But if the *Spirit* of Him that *raised up Jesus* from the dead *dwell in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead *shall also quicken your mortal bodies BY His Spirit* that dwells in you" (also I Cor. 15 and I Thes. 4:13-18). Christ was *raised* (resurrected) to return to His position alongside the Father. He had fulfilled His task of becoming the Savior.

Now, understand this point! It is the very same Spirit, dwelling in us from the moment of begetting, which will raise us (all those begotten of God) to join God in His kingdom.

Like the newly-begotten baby grows in its mother's womb, the Christian must also *grow* sufficiently before he can leave the womb. Christians are to *GROW* in this lifetime. In order to be given divine power and authority, as "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17) *later*, they must qualify, through building God's holy, righteous character in their lives *now*!

The Role of Suffering

Earlier, this book spoke about the terrible suffering, misery and insoluble problems of a world cut off from God. His mercy will soon cut this short, bringing it to an end forever. Man's allotted time under Satan will soon be over, and *all* human beings will be taught why they were born.

But why has such terrible suffering been necessary—and for so long? What purpose has it played in God's Master Plan?

Much! We read that Christ, as the "Captain of our salvation," was "made PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS." It is critical to understand *why* Christ was required to suffer.

Hebrews 5:8-9 explains clearly: “Though He were a Son, yet LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE by the things which *He suffered*; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”

What a profoundly important verse to grasp. Suffering kicks the spiritual learning mechanism into gear. When people suffer—encounter adversity—they LEARN (Ecc. 7:14)! They gain experience—learn crucial lessons. This is critically important to the character-building process—to fulfilling their purpose for being!

Though He was sinless, even Christ learned through suffering. This allowed Him to “Captain” the salvation of the *many* sons that God will add to His Family.

Can you now understand *why* the world must suffer? Can you now better understand that it is through difficult, painful experience that people will eventually understand life’s deepest lessons? (This will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Six.)

Of course, the deepest lesson of all is that men must recognize they can achieve nothing—accomplish NOTHING!—apart from God. They desperately need REVEALED SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE, so that they can come into harmony with God’s great Purpose of reproducing Himself!

Paul wrote to the Philippians that he (Paul) wanted to know Christ “...and the fellowship of *HIS SUFFERINGS*,” so that “...by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (3:10-11). This is why he told the Ephesians, “...to make all men see what is the *fellowship of the mystery* [which involves the need to suffer and endure hardship in order to learn], which from the *beginning of the world* has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ... according to the eternal PURPOSE which He PURPOSED in Christ Jesus our Lord” (3:9, 11).

God’s Plan truly *is* a mystery to this world. But His PURPOSE has not changed since the *beginning of the world*.

You now understand more of how YOU can be a part of it!

The Unseen Component Connecting Men to Spirit Sonship

Modern science is continually bringing new knowledge to civilization. Each important scientific discovery—each new piece of knowledge—is received worldwide with excitement and acclaim.

Think about all that science has given to mankind at large. It has put men on the moon and created weapons of mass destruction. It has broken down the genetic codes of DNA and cloned various different creatures. It has learned much about the staggering size and nature of the universe—outer space—and discovered incredible things about the tiny sub-atomic particles in different kinds of atoms—*inner* space. It has made numerous medical breakthroughs and accomplished amazing feats of engineering.

The scope and potential of science seems limitless. Most believe that, given time, scientific discoveries will solve most or all of mankind's problems. Yet science is limited in a vitally important way that involves you. There is a discovery it will never—and *can* never—make about the nature of the human mind!

Your mind contains a dimension that cannot be understood or discovered by any process or experiment known to science. This world's religions have missed it. Their theologians neither teach nor comprehend it. They have completely overlooked this critical component—this single great KEY—that unlocks the enormous difference between men and animals. Only by understanding this revealed KEY can you learn your purpose for being!

The Amazing Human Mind

Look at all of the amazing works of nature—both on Earth and throughout the heavens. The kaleidoscope of God’s handiwork that can be seen by the human eye is staggering.

Consider the planets, stars and galaxies. Each is its own marvel. Then reflect on all of the species of plants found on Earth. There are millions, diverse in color, shape, size, function and beauty. The brilliance of their various designs and purposes is incredible! Now think of the millions of different kinds of animals and insects. They are as marvelous and fascinating as the world of plants, with their diversity of purpose, appearance and behavior.

But none of these creations rival the complexity and nearly unlimited capability of *your mind*. And as fascinating, marvelous, beautiful and amazing as are all the things described above, none is more amazing than the HUMAN MIND. It is the absolute pinnacle of all living organisms. Nothing else in God’s creation even comes close. What else can plan, think or create to even a fraction of the same degree?

Just think about how many things the human mind can design and produce: Houses, telephones, trains, automobiles, planes, rockets, computers, fax machines and other sophisticated devices that are practically limitless in complexity and usefulness. The only thing it cannot design and build is ITSELF!

Who Made Your Mind?

When the psalmist said, “...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (139:14), this is most true of your brain—the HUMAN MIND!

The Creator of your mind sent with it detailed, vital information, explaining the nature, design and purpose of this greatest of all creations. He identifies the hidden key—the missing dimension!—to the right and proper use of the mind, opening the way to peace, happiness, abundance and universal prosperity.

But this information is almost universally ignored, misrepresented, misunderstood and rejected! As a result, the problems, troubles and evils of civilization mount with no solution in sight and conditions only growing worse.

Stop and think! Apply basic logic.

Would God create His marvel of engineering—your mind—and send it without an *Instruction Book* explaining how to use it? Of course not!

Yet this great Book remains a mystery to so many—with few even professing to understand it. Most spend their entire lives worried about what PEOPLE think and say. Few concern themselves with what GOD thinks or says. Be honest and examine *yourself*. Do you derive your opinions from people? Or do you regularly search and accept the plain Word of God as the guide for your life?

The following scripture explains why even the most brilliant minds are completely unable to learn certain understanding, unless it is *revealed* to them. Notice: “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have *hid these things from the wise and prudent*, and have revealed them unto BABES” (Matt. 11:25). The great thinkers of this world cannot fathom the things God has revealed in His Word! They are literally HIDDEN from them.

We must be willing to examine God’s Word for what He reveals about your mind. It will open your thinking to incredible *new* understanding about why you were born—and of your awesome future and potential. However, we must start at the beginning.

A Non-Physical Component?

Many suppose that the composition of the human mind is entirely physical. Is this true? Others believe that each person possesses an immortal soul. Is *this* true? What does the Bible say? Does it endorse either of these ideas? Or does God’s Word teach something completely different—something completely overlooked by all religions, and unable to be discovered by all methods of science?

First, we must consider the difference between human MINDS and animal BRAINS. There are facts that science tells us about the comparative qualities of both. All understand that in some way animal *brains* are entirely different from human *minds*. But in what way? *How* are they different?

For instance, certain creatures, such as chimpanzees and dolphins, have brains that are relatively similar in size and weight to that of humans. Some larger animals, like whales and elephants, have larger brains than man. Yet they are far less intelligent, far less

creative and incapable of understanding any kind of complex thought.

Science has never been able to explain—to adequately account for—the enormous difference between the human brain and the brains of animals. While man has a brain that may be only slightly more complex than animals of relatively similar brain size, the difference in capability is vast. There is simply no comparison.

Animals function almost entirely on INSTINCT. They do what they do automatically, and from birth. For instance, almost immediately after birth, a calf knows exactly what to do—how to stand up and take steps, and where to find milk. Human babies require far longer to even stand up with support, and have to be taught how to do virtually everything.

Having minds, human beings have been given hands so that they can create. Merely having brains, animals function on instinct and possess paws, claws and hooves. This leaves them incapable of building something complex like a television—let alone a jet airplane or space-traveling rocket—even if a mind were directing them. Animals are also not capable of acquiring knowledge beyond a very rudimentary ability to react to certain stimuli.

Humans are capable of acquiring knowledge, drawing conclusions, gathering and assessing facts, making decisions—and of building character. This is the single, greatest, overarching difference between men and animals.

Animals are greatly limited because God has merely programmed into them, through instinct, everything that they need to function effectively within their environment.

On the other hand, people do *not* instinctively know everything necessary to function successfully in life. They must continually acquire more knowledge throughout their lives to address new challenges and demands made upon them.

This is made possible by an unseen, unrecognized component of the mind. Without this invisible, non-physical element, mankind would be just another dumb beast!

A Spirit in Man

Let's now establish a basic Bible teaching. The Bible records, "But there is a *spirit in man*: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding" (Job 32:8). This is a plain statement. Here, God

reveals that men possess a kind of spirit, called the “spirit in man.” Fully understanding this spirit requires an examination of the other scriptures that describe it.

But before looking into the truth of this matter—before searching to see what the Bible says about this human spirit—we must understand and accept what the Bible does *not* say.

To do this, we must examine the most *popular fallacy*—the MYTH!—taught and believed by countless millions about this subject.

Not an Immortal Soul

Many read verses like this one and conclude that it is speaking about *immortal souls*. But is it? Is the phrase “spirit in man” synonymous with an “immortal soul” composed of spirit?

Most people do not understand the relationship between physical men and souls. They assume that human beings are born with immortal souls. The popular belief is that, upon death, the souls of sinners go to hell forever and those of the just go to heaven forever, since all souls are supposedly immortal. Is this what the Bible teaches?

We saw that Romans 6:23 states that “the wages of sin is *death*,” not life in hell. So, does the Bible somehow also teach that people have immortal souls? It does talk about “souls,” but in what context?

The Bible *does* teach that there is a connection between men and souls. Genesis 2:7 states, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man BECAME a living soul.”

This verse does not say that men *have* souls, but that they *are* souls. Adam BECAME a soul—he was not *given* one. Then, almost immediately, God warned him, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof YOU [not just your body] shall surely DIE” (vs. 16-17).

When placed together, these three verses reveal that men *are* souls and that souls can *die*!

Ezekiel confirms the Genesis account. Twice he was inspired to write, “The soul that sins, it shall *die*” (18:4, 20). Death is the *ab-*

sence of life. It is the discontinuance—the cessation—of life. Death is not life in another place. It is not leaving “this *life*” for “another *life*”—the “next *life*.” (Read our booklet *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?* to learn more.)

Finally, on the subject of whether the soul can die, notice this in Matthew 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him [God] which is able to *de-destroy* both *soul* and *body in hell*.”

The Bible says that souls can be DESTROYED! According to this verse, they can be destroyed as much as *bodies* can. We all recognize that bodies eventually die and that, afterwards, they naturally decompose and are completely “destroyed” due to the process of natural corruption. This verse explains that God does the *destroying* of souls IN HELL! Bodies can die in many ways. But souls are destroyed in hell by God. (This subject will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Ten.)

The Human Spirit

You are now prepared to discover what almost NO ONE understands. While man is composed of flesh, he has a *non-physical* component, the spirit in man, which can only be known of by what God has revealed in His Holy Word.

Because man is made of physical matter—flesh—God, composed of Spirit, had to have a way for Himself (Spirit) to be able to work with and communicate with man (flesh). Later, we will understand more regarding the vital spirit connection between God and humans, and exactly how it works.

Notice this: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, says the LORD, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, *and forms the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1). It is God who creates, designs and “forms” the spirit of man in each human being.

The following verse explains that all people possess this spirit: “Let the LORD, the God of *the spirits of all flesh*, set a man over the congregation” (Num. 27:16). The One who creates all the spirits in men calls Himself the God of these spirits.

All physical creatures eventually die. This applies to men and animals. Consider: “For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast:

for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows the *spirit of man* that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?" (Ecc. 3:19-21).

Solomon is not saying that there is a spirit in beasts, but rather asks rhetorically, "*Who knows...the spirit of the beast that goes downward...?*" Many verses reveal that there *is* a spirit in man, but men are ignorant of this truth and of whether *animals* also have some kind of "soul" or spirit. This verse shows that this cannot be talking about mere breath, plainly something different. But animals have no such spirit.

Astounding Knowledge

Now notice this astonishing verse. Paul in the New Testament wrote, "For what man knows the things of a man, save the *spirit of man* which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the *Spirit of God*" (I Cor. 2:11).

Do not try to "interpret" this verse. Let it interpret itself. Accept it for what it says. This passage identifies two different kinds of spirit—the "Spirit of God" and the "spirit of man." They are not the same. Each provides a different function in acquiring knowledge, and this verse identifies how.

Human knowledge ("the things of a man") is acquired because God has given men a human spirit—the *spirit in man*. Paul's inspired statement also makes clear that spiritual knowledge ("the things of God") can only be acquired by the presence of the *Spirit of God*. Even this very knowledge—that these two spirits exist and how they work—is in itself truly amazing! Think of it this way. Virtually no one has the *knowledge* about HOW either *physical* or *spiritual* KNOWLEDGE is acquired!

Remember the plain statement, "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding." This repeats exactly what Paul said. He identified this spirit, while distinguishing spiritual understanding (or knowledge) as something that comes from God—"the Almighty"—through His "inspiration." This happens through the indwelling of the Spirit of God in converted minds.

Animals do not have the spirit in man. Animal *brains* are different from human *minds*. Humans are given this spirit from conception, allowing them, through use of the five senses, to acquire and retain

knowledge. Remember, without this unseen spirit element, mankind would just be another dumb beast. But he has been given the power to acquire, retain and use knowledge for all kinds of purposes.

All human beings were created by God to receive two entirely different spirits. One comes at conception, and the other comes by completely different means—repentance and baptism. Without the Spirit of God, people are simply *incomplete*. Their existence remains limited to what they can acquire on their own without God's help. Thus, vast amounts of *spiritual* knowledge remain beyond reach. Though the human ability to acquire physical knowledge is beyond that of brute beasts, men cannot attain to any of this other marvelous understanding.

Let's learn more about how the Spirit of God works with the human spirit in *converted* minds. Proverbs 20:27 offers important insight: "The *spirit of man* is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly." Think of this verse in the following way: God can work within a physical brain—communicating with and inspiring it—by means of, or through use of, the non-physical component of the spirit in man.

God Communicates Through the Human Spirit

Consider one example of how God can work through the human spirit. It illustrates an important principle. The setting involves King Cyrus of Persia. God wanted him to return to Jerusalem and build a second temple to replace Solomon's, which had been destroyed. Notice: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD *stirred up the spirit* of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing" (Ezra 1:1).

God communicated with Cyrus through ("stirring up") his *spirit*. He does the same today. Now examine the following scripture. It adds a new dimension to the verses we have read about the spirit in man and how it works.

God's Spirit Works *with* the Human Spirit

In the *converted* mind, both the Spirit of God and the spirit in man are present. They work together, with one another: "*The Spirit* itself

bears witness WITH *our* spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

This is truly fascinating understanding. The converted person is different from animals in TWO distinct ways.

But first recognize that science could *never* learn what you have just read!

Now consider an additional point. From the very moment you are converted, purchased by the blood of Christ, God owns your spirit: “For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in *your spirit*, which are God’s” (I Cor. 6:20). God has literal ownership of your spirit—and at conversion it becomes His to work with.

It is critical to understand the character-building process at work in the converted mind and how it involves the human spirit. Notice: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules *his spirit* than he that takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

Self-control—temperance—is listed as a fruit of the Spirit of God in Galatians 5:23. Take time to read it. When placed together, these verses show that only through the Spirit of God working with the spirit in man can temperance be built!

God Preserves the Spirit in Man

At the end of the converted person’s life, God returns the human spirit to Himself. In it, He has preserved a complete, detailed record of all that pertained to the life of that individual. This is the plain statement of scripture. Notice: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God *your whole spirit* and soul and body be *preserved* blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thes. 5:23).

The spirit, soul and body represent all that was the person. The personality, experiences, accumulated knowledge and character of each human being is reflected in the human spirit—the spirit in man.

This is why the spirit in man returns to God at death: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and *the spirit* shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). So then, at death, the human spirit returns to God, who formed and placed it in the mind.

Recall Ecclesiastes 3:21: “Who knows the *spirit of man* that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the

earth?" Now *you* know what few others know—that the spirit in man *does* return to God.

The deacon Stephen understood. As he was being stoned to death for preaching a powerful sermon that antagonized his listeners, the Bible records, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, *receive my spirit*. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell *asleep*" (Acts 7:59-60). That is right! Stephen died ("fell asleep") knowing that God would receive his spirit and it would reunite with him, we will learn, at the resurrection.

Now we are ready for one final scripture before continuing. It is the capstone that explains the "preservation" of all human spirits and exactly where God keeps them. Understand this: "But you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to *the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb. 12:22-23). This is an incredible passage. The God of "all spirits" (and of all "just men made perfect") keeps them with Him, until the resurrection.

It is in heaven—the heavenly Jerusalem—where the spirits of all God's saints since Creation are held—are *preserved* intact—awaiting the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. 5:23).

Satan's Spirit of Disobedience

Before continuing, we need to at least mention one other kind of spirit. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church about the power of the devil and his influence upon the world: "Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the POWER of the air*, the *spirit* that now works in the *children of disobedience*" (2:2).

Besides the Spirit of God and the spirit in man, it should be noted as such that the devil is a spirit. He is part of the angelic realm of spirits, consisting of faithful angels and demons (fallen angels).

Notice that verse 2 states Satan's "SPIRIT...*works* in the children of disobedience." The devil is a spirit and he has POWER, through *his spirit*, to influence humanity toward disobedience! In Chapter Nine, we will learn in more detail how Satan, through *his* spirit, sends

moods, feelings and attitudes of hostility into people's minds, bringing disobedience. The devil has enormous power of INFLUENCE, allowing him to send thoughts of deceit, anger, pride, hate, greed, envy, resentment and more, directly into people's thinking!

Satan, as this world's god, has seduced the masses of supposed Christianity into rejecting God's supreme purpose, involving obedience to Him—so that they can follow a permissive *false* Christ, so popularly worshipped and believed today, to a *false* salvation.

The Bigger Picture

Let's now look at the big picture. Now that we understand more of the human spirit, we must briefly continue examining God's overall purpose. We must look further at what He is doing with mankind.

Remember, human beings are able to acquire knowledge. Animals do not have this capability. And God has programmed into animals, through instinct, everything that they need to function effectively within their environment. There is no "spirit of animals" giving them mind power.

Humans receive the spirit in man from conception. It allows them, through use of the five senses, to acquire and retain knowledge.

Once again, people do not instinctively know all that they must know in order to operate successfully throughout their lives. They must acquire ever more knowledge as they grow older and as more demands are made upon them. Animals have no such need.

We have already discussed that all available knowledge falls into either *physical* knowledge (how to work with matter and physical things)—or *spiritual* knowledge (that which is necessary for people to develop personal relationships with God and man, and to achieve salvation).

All people recognize that the accumulation of useful knowledge is a lifelong process that continues throughout their lives. *The spirit in man makes this possible!*

But it is critical to recognize that the human spirit is not *the* man—it is *in* the man. There is a big difference! This spirit does not have mind power by itself. Neither does the brain. The *brain* hears through the ears and sees through the eyes. The human spirit does not do these things of and by itself. The brain does the thinking—with the spirit giving it the power of intellect. Remember, the spirit is *in* the man, giving the five *physical* senses the ability to work with

the brain for analysis and discernment of meaning and comprehension. Like electricity to a computer, the spirit *empowers* the mind to process information received through the five senses.

All knowledge is learned. Tiny babies are born with NONE—their minds are like blank sheets of paper waiting to be written on. In the process of growing up, they must *learn* to do everything. To function as adults requires much physical knowledge. Of course, adults recognize that no one can succeed in life without a certain amount of knowledge.

But herein lies a great problem. The *physical* knowledge that man has acquired has been insufficient for him to be able to solve the many great problems afflicting all the nations of the world. For instance, he is utterly incapable of learning how to be happy or to bring abundance and peace to earth. And no one has discovered how to rid the world of war, poverty or disease.

Why? Humanity is missing another key component!

The Missing Dimension

After God created Adam and Eve, He presented them with an all-important choice—a critical decision to take one of two paths. Notice: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the *tree of life* also in the midst of the garden, and the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*” (Gen. 2:7-9).

Genesis 3:1-8 contains the account of Adam and Eve’s fateful decision. They listened to the serpent and chose the wrong tree! This carried grave implications beyond what most could dream because, by not choosing the TREE OF LIFE, Adam and Eve cut themselves off from the Spirit of God. They were left incomplete, incapable of receiving, understanding or forming SPIRITUAL thoughts. They severed themselves from the vitally important MISSING DIMENSION to spiritual understanding of God’s purpose, the path to character-building and right solutions to humanity’s problems!

Here is what happened next: “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the *tree of life*, and eat, and *live*

forever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the *tree of life*” (vs. 22-24).

God denied Adam and Eve access to His presence and to His Spirit. While this was never His intention, it was the result of their choice.

God intended from the beginning to give Adam and Eve His Spirit. It would have joined with the spirit in man to form a newly-begotten spirit life in each of them—and in all mankind to follow.

Adam was given more than a brain—he received a MIND, containing the HUMAN SPIRIT. He had the power to choose—to decide for himself his own fate. He was not forced to follow, or be automatically led toward, any prescribed path. He had not been programmed or limited to instinctive thinking, as were dumb beasts.

When Adam rejected the Tree of Life, he rejected the opportunity to receive the Spirit of God. This would have opened his mind to the Plan of God—to why he had been created. We saw that his decision caused him and his wife, Eve, to be cast from the Garden. But their joint decision carried grave implications for all human beings who came from them—who could not then have access to the Tree of Life.

With this decision, Adam not only cut off himself and all mankind from access to God, but he also rejected the opportunity for eternal life—to “live forever” (Gen. 3:22).

Grasp what this means! Human beings are NOT FINISHED—they are incomplete! All knowledge that enters their minds is strictly *limited* to the physical and material. For his great sin of rejecting God and the Tree of Life, Adam was rejected *by God* and cast from the Garden, and humanity was cast out with him—now to be totally cut off from God until Christ’s Return!

This is absolutely remarkable understanding—unknown to all but a few today. And it was not understood until the twentieth century!

Some Few Will Never Yield

God’s purpose has never altered. He desires to offer eternal life to all who qualify for it. Now, almost everyone knows of the following verse: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten

Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Sadly, however, this towering passage is little more than a cliché without true meaning to hundreds of millions. But you have seen that there is an incredible purpose that God is working out in those He has called. Recall that we are clay and God is a potter with us as “the work of (His) hand” (Isa. 64:8). But Paul understood *how* God works in Christians. He also recognized that salvation (Rom. 6:23), and even faith to receive it, are free *gifts*. These cannot be earned. But this does not mean God is not clearly working (and requires good works) in human beings, as He *reproduces Himself*.

Most will simply not permit God to work with them. Some few will even permanently reject God, refusing to obey Him—refusing to allow Him to work with them as clay. They will trust in their human minds and reject the missing dimension of God’s Spirit, which would have led them to eternal life. They will choose to remain *incomplete—unfinished* in purpose and character.

The next verses describe their end. Malachi 4:3 states, “And you shall tread down the wicked; *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts.” The wicked will be destroyed forever. Matthew 10:28 demonstrated this clearly. Also notice Obadiah 16: “For as you have drunk upon My holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yes, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be *as though they had not been.*”

Woe to those who *knowingly* reject God’s offer to qualify for the kingdom of God!

In Christ’s Image

Paul wrote of those in whom God is working, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the IMAGE OF HIS SON, that He might be the *firstborn among many brethren*” (Rom. 8:29). As explained, God is expanding His Family, adding more children. Christ was first and all others must conform to His image—to *His* character and likeness.

God is making more “brethren” in a Family in which ALL will have the same character and spirit composition.

Knowing that God and Christ made man in their “image and likeness” establishes why the New Testament talks of being “con-

formed to the image of His Son.” The Old and New Testament scriptures match—they fit perfectly together in revealing God’s purpose.

God has never worked in animals. They are lacking in moral and spiritual faculty. They are made for the enjoyment and service of both mankind and the environment. But they cannot acquire new knowledge and they have never been offered eternal life. They are not part of God’s Plan of character-building and reproducing Himself. God has never worked in or through animals toward *any* spiritual purpose. He is at work in begotten, Spirit-led human beings.

Human reproduction represents the very same pattern that God Himself uses. The *human family* is a TYPE of the *Family* that God is building. Revelation 19:7-9 shows that marriage between men and women pictures the great Marriage of Christ to His bride, which will occur at His Return. This will be further explained in Chapter Seven.

We have learned the Bible teaches that God has a detailed Plan involving an actual birth into His kingdom for all those He has called. And the second birth does not occur in *this life*. We cannot be part of the Marriage to Christ in *this life*, but we can practice—rehearse!—through *human MARRIAGE* and *FAMILY*, God’s ultimate purpose.

Understand again! Each human being carries staggering potential, with capability far beyond brute beasts, and exceeding even the potential of God’s holy angels. Notice again: “Being made so much *better* than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?” (Heb. 1:4-5).

Changed at Resurrection

All matter is physical. You are made of matter—you are physical, of the dust of the ground. There is nothing permanent about your flesh. Without food, water and air, for even a short time, you will die. Likewise, no person can gain eternal life *apart from the Holy Spirit* present and working within him. Without this Spirit helping to change one, to give eternal life, none has hope! Without contact with God, His Spirit and His purpose, allowing for *spiritual* comprehension, all

those of Satan's world will live out their physical lives and die, with nothing to follow. But God *is* working with a *few* now!

Earlier we quoted Job. He understood that God's Spirit worked with his spirit to grant him understanding. He was well aware of God's Plan and purpose at work in his life. We saw that he asked, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my CHANGE come. You shall call, and I will answer You: You will have a desire to the work of Your hands" (14:14-15). Job knew that the resurrection awaited him—when he would be "changed." In the meantime, he had to "wait" in the grave until God called him.

Job possessed the Spirit of God and understood when and how God would resurrect and change him. He recognized that it would be the very Spirit of God in him that would make this *change* possible. Earlier, we saw that, in Romans 8, Paul had written, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken* your mortal bodies by *His Spirit that dwells in you*" (vs. 11).

Paul also wrote to the Corinthians about the coming change at the resurrection, when all will awaken from *sleep* with a new spirit body. Previously, we saw part of this passage. Here is the rest: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot INHERIT the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a MYSTERY; we shall not all SLEEP, but we shall all be CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:49-53).

This passage speaks of a mystery that Paul had to explain. It is certainly a mystery to the world that there is coming this change to spirit composition at the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns. Most suppose that they have an immortal soul that goes to heaven upon death. Yet, few seem to ask or care about how one could go from "mortal" to "immortal" (vs. 53-54), at the resurrection, if he *already has an immortal soul!* (Read our booklet *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?* to learn more.)

But God's character will have already been perfected in those He "quickens" at the resurrection, leaving them no longer able to sin (I John 3:9).

His Reward with Him

At His Return, Christ will bring the individual rewards of all those sons and daughters through whom He and the Father have worked. They will have qualified for great glory: “For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall REWARD EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS” (Matt. 16:27).

Comprehend this! Your works in *this life* have a direct bearing on your reward in the *next life*. That reward involves RULERSHIP. The initial phase of that rulership will last 1,000 years. Rulers sit on thrones: “And I saw THRONES, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and REIGNED with Christ *a thousand years*. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION” (Rev. 20:4-5).

But God’s Plan will not end with just those included in the First Resurrection. God intends to give all human beings an opportunity to receive His Spirit, build His character—to be finished and come to COMPLETION!

Continuing in Revelation, John described the continuation of God’s Plan to the time when all mankind will receive an opportunity for salvation. This period is called the “Great White Throne Judgment” and is described this way: “And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (20:11-13).

But those of God’s Church—the *one* Church that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18)—are being taught and led *now* in all the truths and ways of God. This “little flock” is now feeding and preparing those who will rule with Christ. Paul wrote the Ephesians de-

scribing the responsibility of Christ's true ministers: "...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:12-13).

Reuniting with the Human Spirit

The spirit in man neither changes nor resurrects the person. This comes from God's Spirit first working in the mind. We have seen that, at the resurrection, the spirit in man will UNITE with the Holy Spirit. We will be exactly the same, except made of spirit and therefore will no longer have human nature or the pulls of the flesh.

Think of the spirit in man in this way: It is like a cassette tape of *everything* we have ever learned or done—and it is the very mold of the mind for our coming spirit body, containing the memory, character and experiences of each human being. In a sense, like any cassette tape, it can be "played back." Yet, it cannot have or give life, or function by itself, because it must be connected to a physical brain—or a spirit mind at the resurrection.

Like one working with a computer, the spirit in man works *with* the brain to form the amazing HUMAN MIND!

Science will never discover this knowledge. What you have learned in just this chapter almost no one understands. But now you do!

Knowledge is exploding as never before. But this is happening amidst ever greater human suffering, unhappiness, discontent, violence, war and confusion. Why is there such ever worsening moral decline alongside astonishing materialistic progress? With weapons of mass destruction now threatening man's very survival, we ask: Why? And where do we go from here?

Why Humanity Could Never Solve Its Problems

The world is filled with problems—disease, pollution, poverty, ignorance, religious confusion, war, terrorism, crime, violence, hunger, immorality, slavery, oppression, political upheaval and much more. *Why?* With the passing of time come more problems, not less. *Why?* Also, existing problems grow collectively worse instead of better. *Why?* Why, at every turn, has man bungled and botched all efforts to solve his truly great problems?

At the same time, individually, people have never seemed more *incapable* of addressing and overcoming their personal problems. As with the world in general, the passing of time finds individuals and families drowning under an ever-greater sea of decadence and seemingly insurmountable difficulties. More and more seem completely incapable of managing their lives.

Yes, *why?*

Men have created many amazing technological inventions, but they cannot create solutions to their problems. Mankind has harnessed the power of computers to help process vast amounts of information, but human beings cannot correctly process their personal problems. Scientists have discovered much about the size, magnificence and precision of the universe, but they cannot discover the way to peace. Astronomers can find majestic, beautiful new galaxies throughout the universe, but they cannot find a way to preserve the beauty and majesty of earth. Scientists have also unleashed the power of the atom, but

they are powerless to unleash answers to life's greatest questions. Educators have taught millions how to earn a living, but not how to live.

The well-known presidential historian and columnist Peggy Noonan summarized the complex, jumbled course that has been man's history: "In the long ribbon of history, life has been one long stained and tangled mess, full of famine, horror, war and disease. We must have thought we had it better because man had improved. But man doesn't really 'improve,' does he? Man is man. Human nature is human nature; the impulse to destroy coexists with the desire to build and create and make better" ("America's Age of Uncertainty," *Knight Ridder*, Nov. 9, 2001).

Who could disagree?

State of the Present—and Future

Consider some of the terrible conditions on Earth today. Should events remain unchecked, they are predicted to grow far worse by the year 2050—if mankind survives for that long! The following statistics come from the United Nation's "The State of World Population" report, years 2001 and 2007. These are thorough reports that make for sobering reading.

The world population (over 7 billion) has more than tripled in the last seventy years. It has more than doubled since 1960 and is predicted to reach 9.34 billion by 2050. The forty-nine poorest, least-developed nations will actually triple to a population of nearly two billion. This worldwide population growth will bring staggering problems.

Just 2.5 percent of the earth's water is fresh. Only 20 percent of this (or 0.5 percent) is accessible ground or surface water. The current population consumes 54 percent of this available water. By 2025, water use is expected to rise by 50 percent in developing countries, and 18 percent in other areas. As the earth grows by 75 million additional people *per* year it requires an amount of water equivalent to the mighty Rhine River. Also, developing countries dump 90 to 95 percent of their untreated sewage and 70 percent of their untreated industrial waste into surface waters. Population growth insures that this problem will only grow worse. In addition, acid rain and chemical runoff from fertilizers and pesticides sufficiently ruin water quality, making it largely unusable.

Population growth continues to outpace food production. There are 850 million people who are chronically malnourished, and 2 bil-

lion who lack “food security.” Only fifteen crop species provide 90 percent of the world’s food, yet it is estimated that sixty thousand different plant species could reach extinction by just 2025! By that year, the projected 8 billion inhabitants of earth (estimated numbers vary) will likely require *twice* today’s food needs, coupled with greatly improved distribution, to completely eradicate hunger. But few experts see this as remotely possible.

Each day, 160,000 people move from rural areas to cities. This is happening fastest in under-developed countries. Enormous problems result from this: sanitation, overcrowding, access to modern health services and the ability of schools to absorb the increase of students.

Over half of all disease on Earth is sanitation-related. Each year, air pollution kills nearly 3 million people in developing countries alone, with poor sanitation killing another 12 million. Various forms of indoor air pollution (soot, dung, coal for cooking and heating, etc.) affect 2.5 billion people a year and kill 2.4 million. Changes in climate are altering the zones of risk for insect-borne diseases. New and more virulent diseases are appearing or reappearing. And many bacteria are proving to be drug-resistant because of the ongoing over-prescribing of antibiotics.

Some of the problems predicted for the near future include: Limited and diminishing arable land, deforestation, urbanization, shrinking size of family farms, degradation of the land, shortages and degradation of water, irrigation problems, waste, the extinction of certain types of crops, the greater intensity and frequency of severe weather, which causes flooding and seasonal loss of crops, and greenhouse gases and changes of climate. At the same time, according to The Nature Conservancy’s website, almost 1.6 acres of rainforest—often called “the lungs of the world” because these produce so much oxygen—are disappearing through logging *every second!*

Together, these problems spell untold calamity, and even catastrophe, for a mankind unprepared to solve these and many other problems.

While the world is suffering from “information overload,” none of this knowledge increase is truly addressing mankind’s growing number of complex, insoluble problems. With all of man’s creative ingenuity and intelligence, he cannot solve the most important problems—those that threaten his very existence on an earth he is systematically destroying.

Educators have duped generations into believing the evolutionary lie. This has caused countless millions to believe that mankind is continually evolving into a better and higher order of existence. Look around and you will see the fruits of this great deception. Man is not evolving upward—he is degenerating downward, into ever new lows of indulgence, decadence and immorality.

WHY?

The Two Trees

How did civilization get into the state of confusion, division, war, competition and disagreement that exists all over the earth today? God's original command to Adam was, "But of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*, you shall *not* eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely *die*" (Gen. 2:17).

In the next chapter (3:6), Eve, with Adam following, rebelled and ate of this wrong tree. Notice that this tree represented *knowledge* that was both "good and evil." In other words, the tree was not entirely evil—it contained a *mixture* of true and false knowledge! It is the same with the churches of this world. Some do have small amounts of true ("good") doctrinal "knowledge," mixed with much false ("evil") doctrinal "knowledge." But God has always told His true servants to avoid mixing truth with error. He warned Adam that eating of the wrong tree would result in death. It did.

The warning is the same for us today!

When I was first learning the truth in 1966, the man who taught me used an analogy that I had never considered before—but have never forgotten since: Think of a delicious cake laced with arsenic, cyanide, ricin or strychnine, while otherwise containing nothing but good and healthy ingredients. Eating the cake would always result in death!

The good ingredients would not be sufficient to overcome the poison hidden in the cake. Likewise, God's Church does not and cannot mix truth with error. As with the cake, the result for those who do is deadly!

A Great Unseen Law!

Everyone understands the law of gravity. All recognize that if they break this law, it could "break" them. If one accidentally drops a

brick on his foot, the result could be broken bones. If a skydiver jumps from an airplane, and the parachute fails to open, the result is certain death. This is easy to understand.

Here are some examples that are only a little less obvious, but are just as true. If a person is constantly sick, it is obvious that laws of health (proper diet, enough exercise or sufficient sleep, etc.) are being broken. Bad health has one or more *causes*. If a marriage ends in divorce, it can also be attributed to one or more *causes*: lack of communication, financial woes, death of a child, sexual problems, unhappiness on the job, etc. If someone is pulled over for drunk driving, it is easy to see the *cause*.

While most never identify cause and effect as an immutable LAW governing almost every action in life, they are at least generally aware that it is a principle at work in certain circumstances.

But *every* effect can be traced to one or more causes. Unwanted or illegitimate pregnancies, crime, drug addiction, bankruptcy and a thousand other effects, can all be linked to specific causes. Create your own list. You may find it to be almost endless.

The King James Version of the Bible teaches, "...the curse *causeless* shall not come." Two other translations of this verse are "...the *undeserved* curse will never hit its mark" (Jerusalem Bible), and "...the *baseless* curse never goes home" (Moffatt). This scripture is saying that every difficulty carries a reason—there is a CAUSE for every EFFECT!

Why can man not see this law at work when he looks at the world as a whole? Why is it that no one is looking for the cause of this world's ills and evils? Why are educators not teaching this greatest of all principles? As you look at the world around you, are you concerned with it? Do you ever wonder WHY it is filled with misery, unhappiness and discontent? And why has even the Christian religion ignored this important relationship between cause and effect?

The cause of all the world's troubles began in the Garden of Eden. As simple as this sounds, it is true. The world has lost sight of a decision made by Adam and Eve. They chose not to eat of the *Tree of Life*, choosing instead to eat of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Have you ever wondered what would have happened if those two people had chosen the Tree of Life? Think of how this would have changed the entire world! *Everything* would be different.

There would be no armies, wars, death, devastation or displacement of peoples. There would be no famine or hunger because there

would be plenty of food for everyone. There would be no doctors, because there would be no illness. All of the hospitals and clinics would never have existed. Neither would the prisons, jails, judges, courts and police forces that exist to punish lawbreakers.

Happiness, abundance, prosperity and peace would have been experienced worldwide. All people would get along—neighbors, families, individuals and nations. Can you imagine such a world?

When Adam and Eve made the wrong decision, it directly affected *you* and *me*! They brought untold effects upon humanity, because of their single wrong CAUSE—and this has not been understood prior to the 20th Century.

Let's further examine the truth of WHY the world is afflicted with unending problems.

The Carnal Mind

Before continuing, let's examine a big reason for why violating the law of cause and effect has beset the world with insoluble problems.

Paul records an amazing statement: "Because the carnal [physical] mind is *enmity against God*: for it is *not subject to the law of God*, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Other translations use the stronger phrase "is the ENEMY of God" in place of "is enmity against God."

For those who will believe it, this single passage offers startling insight into the working of the physical—"carnal"—mind of every human being. Cut off from God, the natural mind is God's enemy—it *hates* Him. Think of it! Ask yourself if any minister, religionist or theologian has ever explained *this* to you.

NO! The religious leaders of this world never refer to this. They either ignore this understanding entirely or do not recognize its great implications for mankind as a whole!

This verse plainly says that the natural mind does not want, and even hates, to yield to God and obey His Law. While most people profess that they "love God," the truth is that their minds despise His way and refuse to truly submit to Him—to His authority over their lives.

No wonder Jeremiah wrote, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: *it is not in man that walks to direct his steps*" (10:23). This is another incredible statement. When confronted with problems or important decisions, men simply DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO

DO! They are at a loss for *how* to correctly address and solve the challenges, difficulties and problems they face in their personal lives.

How then can they solve the far more complex problems engulfing civilization today? *They cannot*. Solutions born of human reasoning always generate *more* problems. We will learn why.

Groping for Peace

Nothing can be understood or accomplished without proper knowledge. Even something as simple as changing a tire requires “know how.” Without right knowledge, mankind stands completely powerless—absolutely helpless—before his problems. Because man has rejected the SOURCE of right knowledge, he is surrounded by terrible troubles.

Consider just one world problem that has defied all humanly-devised solutions throughout recorded history: Finding peace. Man has literally barred himself from the knowledge that would make this possible. Just look at the daily newspaper headlines. War seems to literally grip the planet in every part of the world.

This is because the governments of men simply do not work. They have *never* succeeded in finding permanent solutions to civilization’s problems. They lack the essential knowledge necessary to solve them. They do not have the answers to mankind’s greatest questions. Man does not, of himself, understand the *path* to peace—or, for that matter, the path to abundance, happiness, health and prosperity. The greatest thinkers, leaders, educators and scientists have failed miserably in their quest for peace on Earth. God has not yet revealed to mankind, as a whole, how to achieve the solution to war.

Is it any wonder God inspired the prophet Hosea to record, “My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*: because you have *rejected knowledge*, I will also *reject you*” (4:6)? Mankind could have known, understood and had access to far more important, vital knowledge about how to live, but chose to reject it. As a result, God rejected—CUT OFF—man from access to Him. And this cuts men off from the very solutions to the terrible, worsening problems that they now have.

Life or Death?

Your human existence is literally a matter of life or death. Jesus said, “...I am come that they might have LIFE, and that they might

have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Yet, Paul wrote, “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and “the wages of sin is DEATH” (Rom. 6:23). Remember, human beings do not *have* souls, they *are* souls (Gen. 2:7).

Man is not naturally headed toward eternal life, but rather toward DEATH!

Human beings live approximately 70 to 80 years, and in some parts of the world much less. A few manage to live longer than this, but eventually *all die*. Yet, it was never God’s original purpose that it be this way. God wants us to experience life for all eternity.

God intends that *all* human beings ultimately receive His Holy Spirit. He wants it to eventually enter *all* minds. Let’s learn further what role this SECOND spirit component plays in the process, and how it works with the spirit in man, described in Chapter Five. First review what Paul wrote: “The Spirit [the Holy Spirit] itself bears witness with our spirit [spirit in man], that we are the children of God: and if *children*, then heirs; *heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Christ*” (Rom. 8:16-17).

We saw two spirits are described here. Did you see that God’s Spirit works “with” the human spirit to bring human beings to salvation as “joint-heirs with Christ”? It is this Spirit that Adam was offered and would have received had he eaten of the Tree of Life!

In I Corinthians 2, Paul had also said, “But the *natural man receives not* the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (vs. 14). This is an enormously important verse. It is simply not possible for human beings without God’s Spirit to understand *spiritual* knowledge—*spiritual* understanding. Such things can only seem “foolish” to a mind that *cannot* “spiritually discern.” No matter how intelligent or talented a person may be, without the Spirit of God, it can be said that they have a *spiritual I.Q.* of ZERO! None of the problems common to individuals or nations can be properly addressed and resolved without the involvement of the Holy Spirit at work in minds.

Even attempting to tell people that they lack this spiritual component is a useless exercise, if God is not opening their minds (John 6:44, 65). It will seem foolish to them, because even this information is “spiritually discerned.” And the more intelligent and self-reliant the person is, the more foolish it will probably seem to him to be told that his mind is incomplete.

If Adam had eaten of the Tree of Life, he would have received the Spirit of God. He would have learned the way of love—the “give” way—instead of the way of “get,” practiced by this world. Remember, the Bible teaches that “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10), and that “love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).

Romans 8:6 states, “For to be carnally [physically] minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is LIFE and PEACE.” If Adam had received the Spirit of God, he would have received life inherent within him. He would have been an “heir” with Christ as much as any true Christian today. He would have also known the *way* to peace.

All of this is truly special, extraordinary knowledge—unknown to all but a tiny scattered few on Earth today. It has simply not been understood until our time!

Who Holds Sway over Earth?

Let’s return momentarily to the garden. Satan was literally lying in wait there for “baby” Adam and Eve. They were created on the sixth day of the week, Friday, rested on the Sabbath, Saturday, and were probably seduced by Satan (Gen. 3:1-6) on Sunday—at the age of *two days old*.

Of course, no two-day-old child knows how to discern right from wrong. Adam and Eve just *thought* they were grown-up enough to make their own decisions. Like most children today, this couple chose not to listen to their Parent, God. Instead, they believed Satan’s lie that they would not “surely die.” And, cut off from God by sin (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25), mankind has believed the lies of the god of this world since Creation. Under the influence of Satan, he has practiced sin and disobedience to God’s commands for all this time. He has then tried to treat and correct all of the ill *effects* instead of treating the *cause*—breaking God’s commandments. Thus, God is patiently letting man learn bitter lessons. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, have to learn that their own ways do not work!

World’s Churches Deceived

God is reproducing Himself by putting a little OF HIMSELF into each person that He begets. Through repentance and baptism, one receives

the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), after having been called by God to inherit the promise of salvation (vs. 39).

Peter, the one speaking in Acts 2:16-17, referred to the prophet Joel foretelling a time when God would “pour out [His] Spirit upon all flesh” (2:28). That began with the birth of the New Testament Church on Pentecost in AD 31.

The churches of this world do not understand anything of the true path to salvation. They do not even realize what true salvation *is*. Only the Church that Christ leads (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) understands these points. Jesus did not come to save the world now. He has never been on the “soul-saving campaign” many have assumed.

The false Christianity of this world is blinded to God’s truth and plan. Instead of obeying God, millions have been deceived into accepting the *ideas* and *traditions* of men. Jesus said, “*In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *TRADITION of men*” (Mark 7:7-8).

We have seen that human nature is hostile to God. It hates the truth, law, government and way of God. It does not want to be ruled by anyone or anything. It wants the freedom to follow its own way—believe its own ideas, customs and traditions—without interference from God.

If one is interested in obeying God, it is *only* because he has been “drawn” (John 6:44) by God’s Spirit and called (Matt. 22:14) to understand His marvelous truth. His eyes are opened to his incredible human potential. As a result, he wants to live a completely different way of life.

Judgment is now on the Church, not on the world. Peter wrote to the Church, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God [the Church]” (I Pet. 4:17). Eventually, the entire world will learn the truth (Isa. 11:9), with all nations having access to the plan of salvation. But that time has not yet come for humanity at large. The focus of God’s plan of reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, overcoming, character development and receiving the gift of eternal life is focused entirely on the Church in this age! (To learn more about this topic, read our booklet *Just What Is Salvation?*)

Those called at this time must overcome the devil, the pull of this world and their human flesh, just as Christ did, in order to qualify to be part of the soon-coming kingdom of God—to be able to rule with Christ. We read earlier that they shall “rule” with Christ on His throne (in Jerusalem), when He calls all mankind to an opportunity for salva-

tion—when the devil will have been removed from his earthly throne and cast into a bottomless pit where he will be “bound...a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2-3).

Those called later—during the Millennium or the time of judgment for all the billions who have ever lived—will not have to overcome either the devil or the pulls of his world. No doubt, very few of these will rebel against God and reject salvation. Of course, some few will choose this, and we saw that they will be destroyed in a molten lake of fire (II Pet. 3:10-12). They will be turned to ashes (Mal. 4:3) because a just and merciful God will, quite literally, “put them out of their misery.” The Bible describes this as the “*second death*” (Rev. 20:6), because all human beings are “appointed” to die *once* as a result of Adam’s sin (Heb. 9:27; Gen. 2:17).

God’s Plan Revealed Through the Holy Days

God devised a means whereby His people would never forget or misunderstand the truth of His Master Plan to save mankind. Starting with ancient Israel, He ordained that SEVEN FESTIVALS, or annual Sabbaths, be kept each year as a kind of rehearsal of this overall purpose.

The *first* festival, which introduces Christ’s role as Savior and High Priest, is the PASSOVER. This is kept each year to commemorate His sacrifice and shed blood for the forgiveness of sins. Then comes the *second* festival, the seven DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, depicting the putting away of sin and the process of overcoming.

Next, the *third* festival, called the FEAST OF PENTECOST (“First-fruits” in the Old Testament), is kept fifty days (Pentecost means *count fifty*) after the wave sheaf is cut during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Acts 2:1 shows that the New Testament Church began on this day. The *entire* New Testament Church to the present, with a few from the Old Testament, comprise the firstfruits of God’s plan of salvation (Jms. 1:18).

In the early fall of the year come the last four festivals, each depicting additional important events in God’s Plan. The FEAST OF TRUMPETS is the *fourth* festival, and the central event that it pictures is the Second Coming of Christ. Next, the *fifth* festival is the DAY OF ATONEMENT and it pictures a time when the whole world will be “at one” with God and Christ because Satan will have been bound. And the *sixth* festival, the FEAST OF TABERNACLES (also lasting sev-

en days), pictures the last 1,000 years of God's Plan, when Christ and the resurrected saints will reign on the earth. It is during this time that the Tree of Life will be made available to all who seek and obey God.

Finally, the *seventh* festival is the LAST GREAT DAY. It pictures the Great White Throne Judgment, when the *Book of Life* (Rev. 20:12) will be opened to *all human beings who have ever lived*—from the time of Adam to the present, so that everyone will eventually receive an opportunity for salvation. (To learn more about these days, read our booklet *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*)

Armed with this overview of knowledge, Christians are not activists—politically, socially or spiritually—as so many professing Christians are taught, then thinking they can and should “fix the world.” They do not try to “bring the kingdom” through human effort. They know that only God can bring His kingdom to earth! If men could accomplish this, it would be the “kingdom of men” not the kingdom of God.

God's true servants live with the knowledge of how the true gospel of the kingdom of God spells the way to ultimate world peace, happiness, health and universal prosperity. They understand the certainty that the kingdom of God is coming to solve ALL the world's most difficult problems.

True Christians know what lies ahead for civilization—including both the short-term bad news and the long-term GOOD NEWS. They understand prophecy and do not take matters into their own hands, thereby effectively seeking to neutralize God's purpose, which is to show man that he is utterly *incapable* of governing himself or solving his problems without the Holy Spirit!

Danger of Extinction Cut Short

Unease and uncertainty are growing around the world. More and more now ask, “What's happening? Where is everything going?” Problems will grow so severe that we will soon reach the time described in Matthew 24:21-22. In this chapter, Christ was describing conditions just prior to His Return when He stated: “For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, *there should no flesh be saved* [left alive]: but for the elect's sake those days shall be *shortened*.”

How badly is man botching his efforts to solve his problems? So badly that, without intervention by Almighty God in the affairs of men, all human life on Earth would soon be erased—wiped out! Pollution, food and water shortages, disease and the use of weapons of mass destruction would bring mankind to extinction. Mercifully, God will not allow events to go that far. His great purpose and plan is working precisely on time toward a happy and peaceful end—a solving of all humanity's troubles!

But, for now, God's primary focus is on His Church—the true Church—on those He has called and infused with His Holy Spirit and special knowledge.

Where and Why God's True Church

Recall once again Christ's promise, "I will build *My Church*" (Matt. 16:18). No matter how men interpret it, this verse speaks of a single church! Christ continued, "and the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it." He promised that *His Church* could never be destroyed.

Over 2,000 different professing Christian church organizations have been "built" by men, just in the United States. Another is started every three days. Estimates place the number of professing Christians at about 2 billion. While church *attendance* seems to be increasing, it is not increasing as fast as the confusion surrounding the question of which is the *right* church.

While it has been said, "They can't all be *wrong*," it is more correct to say, "They cannot all be *right*." If Christ built His Church as He said, then it can be found somewhere on Earth today—and it is the only *right* Church. But we must ask: How do we find it—what do we look for—how do we identify it—how do we know it if we see it?

My mother required me to read many books when growing up. I spent many summers reading her assigned "book a week." I enjoyed most of them and am thankful she did this. On occasion, perhaps two or three times, I picked up the Bible and attempted to read it. But I never got far, because it made no sense to me. I simply could not understand the Bible.

Despite this lack of understanding, upon turning sixteen, I was “confirmed” into the church that I had been born into. I recall having to appear briefly before a panel of “deacons” to answer a couple very simple questions, which I no longer remember. I do recall making some kind of general affirmation about this denomination, but I also remember that I was not concerned in the least with whether or not I was in the right church, or if I was fulfilling the *Bible* definition of a Christian.

Neither of these questions remotely interested me. I did vaguely believe that God existed, but He was not *real* to me. I had certainly never attempted to build a personal relationship with Him or find His true Church. I did not pray or study His Word for guidance or doctrinal instruction. These concerns did not enter my mind until a year and a half later, in 1966, when I heard a voice on the radio that introduced me to Christ's statement in Matthew 16:18. I began to question where I could find this true Church. I immediately realized that it *had* to exist because, through just basic study beginning at that time, I came to understand Christ's promise that not only would it exist, but it could not be destroyed.

Traditions of Men

Recall Christ said, “*But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9). In Mark's parallel account of this statement, He continued, “*Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your OWN TRADITION*” (7:9).

The world's Christianity is filled with traditions. One of the largest is the traditional view of the New Testament Church. Most ministers, theologians and religionists typically define the church in this way: “All those who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior comprise the true Church.” This is often followed with the familiar statement, “There are many routes to heaven” or “There are many spokes on the wheel of salvation.” Though the Bible does not teach that heaven is the reward of the saved, the clear implication of these is that people can believe what they want, or be a part of any group that they choose, and still be Christians. While people may sincerely believe these traditional ideas, *they are sincerely wrong!*

My research led me to absolute PROOF of *where* the Church was that Jesus promised to build. I learned that this Church could be care-

fully traced through almost 2,000 years of New Testament history. I was absolutely shocked. I could not believe the Bible was so clear on a subject that confuses so many.

The Bible declares, “God is not the author of *confusion*, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints [the context shows this refers to all *congregations* of the true Church, not all *organizations* of men]” (I Cor. 14:33).

God’s Church (composed of *many congregations* of saints) was to reflect *peace*—not confusion. You do not need to be confused about the identity of the true Church. God inspired Paul to write, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). While this obviously refers to *scriptural* matters (not what kind of car to drive or house to buy), it does say that “ALL things,” not “*some* things,” should be *PROVEN!* Surely God would not exclude something of such magnitude—such vital importance—as the matter of where His true Church is found. And He would never emphatically tell people to prove things that *cannot be proven!*

The more I studied the other doctrines of the Bible, the more I learned the churches of this world were *wrong*—on virtually EVERYTHING! One plain scripture after another contradicted each *traditional* “Christian” idea I had been taught. I was amazed—actually stunned—at how easy it was to find direct, clear, undeniable proof that even the most popular traditions of the big denominations were not based on the Bible—*at all!*

Each time I studied a Bible doctrine—salvation, baptism, who and what God is, the gospel, death and hell, law and sin, grace, being born again, the Christian Sabbath, the true origin of supposed “Christian” holidays, where the modern-day tribes of ancient Israel are found today, the sequence of prophetic events preceding Christ’s Return and so much more—I gained *undeniable proof* of what the Bible *really* taught! I was excited and fascinated. I found that the churches of this world were almost invariably confused on *all* these and many other plain points of Bible teaching. I came to realize that there had to be a church that correctly believed and practiced *all* the doctrines of the Bible.

I learned that this Church existed, and that the proof *identifying* it and setting it apart from all the churches of recognized, mainstream Christianity was no different than the proof of any other biblical doctrine. I also learned that the scope of the proof—the sheer volume of facts—was vast, almost overwhelming in amount.

A Persecuted, Little Flock

When speaking to His disciples about the importance of seeking the kingdom of God, Christ said, “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). By no stretch can churches comprised of millions, let alone a total of two billion, be considered a “little flock.” So, Christ’s little Church would not be readily visible.

Christ understood that *His Church*—His *little flock*—would be persecuted and despised by the world. Just before His crucifixion, He warned, “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have *persecuted Me*, they will also *persecute you*” (John 15:20). In the previous verse, Jesus reminded His disciples that “I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world *hates you*.” Christ *was* persecuted, to the point of horrible crucifixion after a night of brutal torture. Therefore, the true Church could also expect to be persecuted—and hated! Those in it are not “of the world.” The world senses this and hates them for it (Rom. 8:7). Christ used Paul to record, “Yes, and *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (II Tim. 3:12). The word “all” means what it says!

Consider what we have just discussed. How many churches can you name that are small, persecuted, not of this world—and even hated because of it? Think about those you are familiar with. Do any fit this description?

Surely not many!

The Importance of the Name of the Church

The world’s churches have a host of different names, which are derived in various ways. These include the particular *doctrines* they teach, the names of the *men* who founded them, the humanly-devised type of *church government* that they espouse, their *location*, or their intended scope and size, such as *universal* or *catholic*, this latter to be thought of as all-encompassing.

On the night of His betrayal, Christ prayed for His Church. Here is what He said: “Holy Father, keep through *YOUR OWN NAME* those whom You have given Me, that they may be *one*, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them *IN YOUR NAME*...I have given

them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth” (John 17:11-12, 14-17).

There are twelve separate places where the New Testament records that the true Church *has* been kept in the name of the Father—*God*. Five refer to the entire Church, or body of Christ, as a whole. Another four speak of a specific local congregation, while using the same term “Church of God.” This may refer to the Church of God at Judea or Corinth, etc. Three other references speak collectively of all the individual local congregations combined. All these references use the term “Churches of God” (Acts 20:28; I Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; I Tim. 3:5, 15; I Thes. 2:14; II Thes. 1:4).

In the modern age, for corporate reasons, the Church may use an additional descriptive name to distinguish itself from other “Churches of God”—those merely *appropriating* God’s name, but not obeying His commandments, believing His true doctrines or doing His Work. Herbert W. Armstrong, the twentieth-century leader of the Church, chose the name Worldwide Church of God and before that, Radio Church of God. We have chosen the name *The Restored Church of God*.

Just as various mainstream denominations may have a few correct doctrines mixed with much error, some appropriate to themselves the name of God’s Church. This book will later explain why some *few* churches may even have a significant amount of truth, but choose to accept a variety of false doctrines. Only one church on the face of the earth has the correct name and teaches all the additional many true doctrines that the Bible teaches! We read how Christ prayed in John 17, “Sanctify them through Your TRUTH: Your word is TRUTH.” The Church that Christ uses, directs and guides is sanctified—set apart—by its belief of the *plain truth* of God’s Word!

To review, in addition to carrying the name “Church of God,” we have seen that the true Church has come out of the world, is small and persecuted, even to the point of being hated by it. This Church is then also set apart from the world by its BELIEFS and PRACTICES—which are in complete agreement with the truth of the Bible!

Unified Through God's Word

Men have their own differing definitions of what the Church actually *is*, but only the *Bible* definition—*God's* definition—matters. Read it for yourself. Paul wrote to Timothy the evangelist, "...that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the *house of God*, which is the *Church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of THE TRUTH" (I Tim. 3:15). In the end, no other definition, devised by men, is acceptable. This definition of the true Church *Christ* built will guide us throughout the remainder of this chapter. God's Church has and teaches "the truth."

We have discussed how this world's churches are in confusion, divided by endless disagreement over doctrine and practice. Amos 3:3 asks, "Can two *walk together*, except they be *agreed*?" The answer is NO!

This world's churches do not practice the principle of "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*" (Luke 4:4), exactly as written. Instead, since they follow the many differing traditions of men, endless disagreements separate, divide and create more and more churches of *men*. They generally do not "walk together," because they do not "agree"—either with each other or God!

God's Church is different. Many New Testament verses show that the Church that Christ built is *unified*—with all its members and congregations walking *together* in complete agreement with each other, and with God and Christ.

An important point, demonstrating the unity of the true Church, emerges from Christ's prayer in John 17, on the night of His betrayal. He prayed, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be *sanctified* [set apart] *through the truth*... That they *all* may be ONE; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be ONE *in Us*: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be ONE, *even as We are* ONE: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made *perfect in* ONE; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me" (vs. 19, 21-23).

These are powerful statements! Christ intended that His Church be unified—"one"—*no less than were He and His Father!* There is no room for disagreement in a Church that is *this* unified. These verses describe a perfect oneness through the truth—the *same* kind of one-

ness that the Father and Christ enjoy. It is *this* kind of unity that allows true Christians to be “in” them—be *in* Christ and the Father (vs. 21).

Even in the Old Testament, David was inspired to record, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in UNITY*” (Psa. 133:1).

We now must examine several New Testament passages to see if, in fact, this kind of wonderful unity was apparent *after* the New Testament Church actually formed. Did God’s true servants teach and administer *this* kind of agreement?

On the day of Pentecost, gathered in “one accord” (Acts 2:1), when the New Testament Church came into existence, 3,000 converts were baptized. They formed the very beginning of Christ’s building of His Church. The initial description given was “...and they *continued steadfastly* in the APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE and FELLOWSHIP” (vs. 42), “... *all that believed were together*” (vs. 44) and “...they, continuing daily with *one accord*...did eat their meat [food] with gladness and *single-ness of heart*” (vs. 46).

From these verses, we clearly see that the Church Christ built began in unity—agreement!—over doctrine, and together. Now verse 47: “And *the Lord added* to the Church daily such as should be saved.” In the Church the true Jesus Christ guides and directs, He is the One who adds to it, building it!

Paul Stressed Unity

Much can be learned by examining Paul’s instructions to various congregations he was overseeing.

The *Corinthian* congregation had many problems—including terrible division and disunity. Paul strongly admonished them to stop entertaining other doctrines and to quit playing favorites with ministers. Notice: “Now I beseech you, brethren...that you all speak the *same thing*, and that there be *no divisions* among you; but that you be *perfectly joined together* in the *same mind* and in the *same judgment*...Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas [Peter]; and I of Christ. *Is Christ divided?*” (I Cor. 1:10, 12-13).

Do not miss the intent of this passage. Paul was inspired to describe, in *five* different ways, how completely all of God’s people in every age should be unified and in agreement. And these verses cannot be “spiritualized away” by deceptive human reasoning.

Later, in the same letter to Corinth, Paul recorded that the Church had many separate members (brethren), yet was like various parts of a human body, in that these members were connected. Carefully study chapter 12. Verses 12 to 14 state, "For as the body is ONE, and has *many members*, and all the members of that ONE *body*, being many, are ONE *body*: so also is Christ. For by ONE *Spirit* are we all baptized into ONE *body*...For the body is not one member, but many."

The context uses the analogy of hands, feet, eyes, ears and the mouth to show how different parts of a human body are connected within the same person. Paul continues, "But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they *many members*, yet but ONE *body*" (vs. 18-20).

These verses also cannot be "spiritualized away" by human reasoning. They do not describe an amorphous, disconnected, "spiritual" supposed "body" of disagreeing people and organizations throughout professing "Christianity." Any foot, eye or ear that is taken from a human body *dies*! No severed body part can live for very long without blood supply and the connective tissue necessary to secure it to the body. God created the human body, so He obviously understands the analogy that He inspired. We will return to this momentarily.

For further proof of the meaning of *body*, consider two additional scriptures, written to two separate congregations under Paul's leadership.

Notice his statement to the *Colossian* congregation: "And He [Christ] is the head of *the body, the Church*" (1:18). The Bible definition of the *body of Christ* is the same as *the Church*! Paul admonished the Colossians to be "knit *together* in love, and...*the full assurance of understanding*," and "rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, *as you have been taught*" (2:2, 7). There is no misunderstanding the total unity Paul describes here. Brethren walk "together," assured of the right "understanding" that they "have been taught."

Now see his instruction to the *Ephesian* congregation. Speaking of what God placed under Christ's control, Paul wrote, "...and gave Him [Christ] to be the Head over all things to *the Church*, which is *His body*" (1:22-23). In chapter 4, Paul admonished the Ephesians to be "Endeavoring to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is ONE BODY [Church], and ONE *Spirit*, even as you are called in ONE *hope* of your calling; ONE *Lord*, ONE *faith*, ONE *baptism*, ONE *God and Father*" (3-6). Again, there must be no confusing the all-

encompassing unity and agreement that this passage requires of God's people. Recall how Christ prayed for *this* kind of oneness and unity.

A few verses later, Paul described the importance of a faithful ministry, actively working with and teaching Christ's Church. Carefully read and understand the following lengthy, important passage: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the *perfecting of the saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying of the body of Christ*: till we all come in the *unity of the faith*, and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the *fulness of Christ*: that we henceforth be *no more children*, *tossed to and fro*, and carried about with *every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the TRUTH *in love*, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the *whole body* fitly *joined together* and *compacted* by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (vs. 11-16).

The Church is Christ's Body and, as its Head, He governs, directs and builds it, adding to it daily. These verses describe it as being UNIFIED in both *doctrinal truth* and *love*. In phrase after phrase, this passage demonstrates that the entire Church ("whole body" and "every part") must be walking together in *complete* doctrinal agreement under Christ's authority. And He works through His *true* ministers to keep the Church from drifting into "every wind of [other] doctrine."

Now consider Paul's admonition to the *Philippian* congregation: "...stand fast in ONE *spirit*, with ONE *mind* striving *together* for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries" (1:27-28). And, "Fulfill you my joy, that you be *likeminded*, having the *same love*, being of ONE *accord*, of ONE *mind*" (2:2). These passages teach that complete unity in the Church is the only condition acceptable to God!

The local *Roman* congregation was experiencing a problem with false doctrines entering the Church. Notice how Paul instructed them to address this: "Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark* [take note of] them which cause DIVISIONS and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which *you have learned*; and AVOID THEM. For they...by good words and fair speeches *deceive* the hearts of the simple" (16:17-18).

Protecting Unity

This is strong language. But it demonstrates how important it is to God that His people not stray from the truth into manmade teachings and traditions.

Peter also taught the all-important need for Church unity and oneness. He wrote, "But you are *a* chosen generation, *a* royal priesthood, *an* holy nation, *a* peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:9). The four phrases in this verse are in the singular—meaning one, not several, of each term referenced. For instance, if a nation is split into several nations, no one would consider it to be a *single* nation—it would be multiple nations, not "a" nation. The same is true of God's Church.

There is but one!

Also, *Christ* Himself taught this on the matter of Church unity: "Every *kingdom* divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every *city* or *house* divided against itself *shall not stand* [survive]" (Matt. 12:25). Recall that Paul asked in I Corinthians 1:13, "Is Christ divided?" This is *CHRIST'S* answer. His instruction is even more fascinating when the reader considers that He is describing *Satan's* kingdom in this account! Jesus taught that even *the devil* is smart enough to know that his kingdom cannot be divided and survive! Surely, the great God of heaven and Jesus Christ are at least as intelligent as Satan the devil. Of course, they are infinitely *wiser*! They both understand that their Church also cannot be divided and expect to survive ("stand").

Warnings to the Church

After the original apostles died, the great, false universal church did come in and largely destroy the *visible* Church. Because of persecution, often including threats, imprisonment, torture and death, most people gave in and departed from the truth of God's Way and therefore from the true Church. This period is often called "The Lost Century." Yet, as Christ promised, His Church has always survived. It has never completely disappeared or been destroyed—though it *has* certainly remained a "little flock" that has kept His Word, and the Church that has always been kept in God's name.

Peter warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be *false teachers among you*, who privily shall bring in *damnable heresies*, even denying the Lord that bought them,

and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many shall follow their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” (II Pet. 2:1-3).

Before his death, Paul explicitly warned the Ephesian elders to understand what would happen after he was gone. Notice: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to *feed the Church of God*... For I know this, that after my departing shall *grievous wolves enter* in among you, *not sparing the flock*. Also of your own selves shall men arise, *speaking perverse things*, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30). History records that this is *exactly* what happened during (and after) The Lost Century.

We read that Christ promised that when false leaders, whom He refers to in John 10 as “thieves and robbers,” have been able to get into the Church, “the sheep *hear His [Christ’s] VOICE*: and *He calls His own sheep by name*, and *leads them out*.” His voice is plainly defined in Scripture as “the truth” (John 18:37).

He went on in John 10 to add, “He goes before them, and the *sheep follow Him*: for they *know His VOICE*. And *a stranger will they not follow*, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (vs. 3-5). Christ continues by describing certain ministers: “The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and *cares not for the sheep*” (vs. 13). This remarkable promise shows that Christ will never abandon His sheep and will always protect those who hear His voice and willingly follow Him when they are in danger of false doctrines!

God’s Church does not compromise on even one of His true doctrines. Just as Christ foretold, it is a small, hated and persecuted “little flock” that God has kept in His name. It is doing God’s Work—taking the true gospel of the kingdom of God to the world before this age ends. Its fruits are evidence of God’s blessings. It is growing and has members scattered in countries around the world. The fact that you are reading this book means that you have come in contact with it—just as I was privileged to come into contact with the true Church and learn the truth in 1966 for the first time.

The Church Is an Organized Body

God wants His sons to understand His purpose. He has given a basic analogy that is easy to grasp. He compares His one Church—His true

Church—to the human body. We just read that “For as the BODY IS ONE, and has *many members*, and all the members of that ONE BODY, being many, are ONE BODY: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY...” (I Cor. 12:12-13).

Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22-23 revealed that “body” means the *Church*. There is only one Church and, like the human body, all parts are connected. Head, eyes, ears, fingers, toes, arms and legs are different but *integrated* parts of the human body.

Notice, again, what Paul added in chapter 12: “Now YOU are the body of Christ, and *members in particular*. And God has set some in the Church, *first* apostles, *secondarily* prophets, *thirdly* teachers...” (vs. 27-28). The Church is organized, structured—it has God’s GOVERNMENT!

God-Plane Marriage and Family—the Church

Throughout the New Testament, God depicts Himself as a Father with many “children”—those of His Church. Christ continually referred to the other Person in the Godhead as “Father.” He understood that He was a “Son.” Now that Christ, no longer flesh (Rom. 1:1, 3), has been resurrected from the dead, He has become a divine Son (vs. 4; Heb. 1:8). Carefully read Romans 1:1-4 to see that Christ was, in fact, a descendant of David—a fleshly human—through His mother.

Christ had a human mother, Mary. He has a Spirit Father. (Of course, Joseph was not His actual father.)

Think for a moment! God sired Christ in the womb of a human woman. This is an extraordinary statement to understand. Grasp what it means: The God kind (the Father) reproduces like any *other* kind. God selected a virgin human (one made in “His form and likeness”) to bear His Son. Yet, this was not in any sense “improper,” because God was not reproducing *outside of* His own kind. Remember, God ordained that all animals and humans—all living things—reproduce after “his kind” (Gen. 1:25). The Father’s (spirit) begetting of Christ in a (physical) human defies any other explanation.

After His death and Resurrection, and return to being Spirit, Christ became the “firstborn [Son] from the dead” (Col. 1:18). He experienced a *second birth* into the Family of God—by a Resurrection. Romans 1:4 says that Christ was “the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead.” *This* is what made Christ a Son. And it represents how human beings are saved.

Many verses show that Christ is God. He is a divine Son, a member of the divine God Family. Hebrews 1:8 makes this clear. There, the Father refers to His Son—Christ—as God. Notice: “Your throne, O God [Christ], is forever and ever.” Grasp these verses. Christ is a born Son by resurrection from the dead.

Let’s tie this understanding directly to the Church.

Christ to Marry Church

What is the final destiny of the Church? Exactly what happens immediately after the resurrection of the dead? The answer is staggering. But first we must define exactly who and what the members of the Church *are*.

Return to Romans 8 and now read verse 9: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*.” To be a Christian, one must have the Spirit of God. It is that simple.

Recall that I Corinthians 12:13 revealed that all members of the Church are “baptized into one body.” Baptized means *immersed, put into*. Therefore, a Christian is put into God’s Church by receiving the Holy Spirit. This Spirit makes him a *begotten* son. Those without God’s Spirit, regardless of their church affiliation or denomination, are “none of His.”

We have seen that all of the Spirit-begotten become “heirs” of salvation (Rom. 8:17).

But there is more important knowledge to understand. It is tied directly to the purpose for human marriage and family. The way a husband loves, works with and leads his wife is intended to be a reflection of Christ’s leadership over His Church. The New Testament actually identifies the Church as Christ’s affianced BRIDE. Many verses reveal this.

First, notice the following parallel between Christ and His Church, and human husbands and their wives: “For the husband is the head of the wife, *even as* Christ is the head of the Church... That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:23, 27).

The Bible reveals that the converted HUSBAND’S *relationship* with his wife is a parallel of CHRIST’S *relationship* to the Church! Christ works with His Church the way husbands are to work with

their wives. He intends to “present it [the Church] to Himself,” in a marriage ceremony, with all spots, wrinkles and blemishes gone. But this wedding is only attainable for those learning the lessons of *this* life—those who gain experience through suffering and building character *now*!

After Christ returns and re-establishes the government of God (Rev. 19:11-16), He becomes Ruler and Governor over all nations on Earth, with His Church. Notice: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and *He shall reign* forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

But this is not all. Immediately, upon His Return, here is what Christ does: “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude... saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the MARRIAGE of the Lamb is come, and His WIFE *has made herself ready*. And to her was granted that she should be *arrayed in fine linen*, clean and white: for the fine linen is the *righteousness of saints*. And He says unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the MARRIAGE SUPPER of the Lamb...” (Rev. 19:6-9).

Of course, the Lamb of God has always been Jesus Christ (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6).

Now fully comprehend this awesome knowledge: Christ is God. He is of the “God kind.” Just as God and Christ could not reproduce outside their kind (Gen. 1:24-26), anymore than any animal could reproduce with any other kind, Christ could not marry outside the *God kind* either.

At His Return, in one of the most awesome events in all history, Christ will MARRY HIS CHURCH! This is the plain truth from God's Word—and you have just seen it!

Christ Married Ancient Israel

The Old Covenant agreement between Christ and ancient Israel was actually a *marriage agreement*, or *covenant*.

In Jeremiah 3:14, God said to Israel, “I am *married* unto you.” Though He did later divorce her (3:8) for unfaithfulness, the marriage remained binding until Christ's death.

Christ's marriage to, and divorce from, ancient Israel followed Old Testament law—see Ezekiel 16:38 and Deuteronomy 24:1.

Now understand again that ancient Israel was actually the Old Testament Church. Many places in the Old Testament refer to her as the “*congregation* of Israel.” Acts 7:38 refers to Israel as the “*church* in the wilderness.” These terms mean the same thing. The word “church,” in Acts 7:38, and “church,” described in Matthew 16:18, are the same in the Greek.

The New Testament is different, in that it involves *spiritual* promises, having to do with GRACE, not merely RACE. However, Gentiles (those of other races) were permitted to become part of ancient Israel, but only on the condition that they kept the laws, statutes and judgments that governed the country.

The Church—Spiritual Israel

All marriages end when either spouse dies. In the case of ancient Israel, her marriage ended—was no longer binding—because Christ, through His sacrifice, *died*. After His Resurrection, Christ was now free—eligible—to remarry.

The New Testament Church today is still Israel—only she is spiritual, not physical, in nature. She is also not confined to a particular *race* of people.

Here is what Paul wrote to the Ephesian congregation, which was almost entirely Gentile: “Wherefore remember, that you being *in time past* Gentiles in the flesh...that at that time *you were* without Christ, being *aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel...but now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ...Now therefore you are *no more strangers and foreigners*, but FELLOWCITIZENS with the saints, and of the HOUSEHOLD OF GOD” (2:11-13, 19).

Christ’s sacrifice was for the whole world (John 3:16). This includes Gentiles, who are the vast, predominant number of people on Earth. Most physical Israelites are, at this time, and with the world, cut off from God by sin. They are not *yet* included in *spiritual* Israel—the Church.

The Gentile Galatians also understood that they were included within spiritual Israel. Notice: “And if you be Christ’s, then are you [the Gentile Galatians] Abraham’s seed [Israel], and HEIRS according to the promise” (3:29). The Galatians were part of spiritual Israel by grace, not race. Romans 11, particularly verses 25-26, explains this in greater detail.

We have seen that the entire Church (all those converted over the past 6,000 years) is to marry Christ at His Return and the establishing of the kingdom of God. Matthew 22 shows this: “The kingdom of heaven [kingdom of God] is like unto a certain *king*, which made a MARRIAGE for his *son*” (vs. 2). God is the “King” and Christ is the “Son” in this parable.

Matthew 25 also describes this coming marriage: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven [of God] be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the BRIDEGROOM...And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the BRIDEGROOM comes; go you out to meet Him...And while they went to buy, the BRIDEGROOM came; and *they that were ready* went in with Him to the MARRIAGE: and the door was shut” (vs. 1, 6, 10).

The door “was shut” because some will be *kept out!* There will be many today who will be terribly disappointed because their ignorance of God's Plan will (temporarily for some, permanently for others) exclude them from being part of the bride.

The state of marriage in the world today is in confusion. Many choose to live together prior to marriage, or are rejecting this God-ordained institution altogether. Others are pursuing same-sex marriage, or other “alternative lifestyles.” All these completely miss the divinely revealed supreme purpose of marriage—what it is intended to picture! (Read our booklet *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?* to learn more.)

Certainly, *no one* who REJECTS the great transcendent meaning and overarching purpose of marriage will ever be permitted to be part of the bride that marries Christ. That would mock God's purpose and reward rebellion!

Christ Built His Church

God calls His Church, His future Bride, “a building” that is “fitly framed together” (Eph. 2:21). Christ is literally “building a building” consisting of “lively [living] stones” (I Pet. 2:5). Psalm 127:1 declares, “Except the LORD *build the house*, they labor in vain that build it.” (We saw that I Timothy 3:15 calls God's Church “the *house* of God.”) Christ is continuing His building of the Church today, and you have come in contact with it.

We saw that the true Church is depicted as a type of Jerusalem and as the Mother of all the brethren in the Church (Gal. 4:26; Heb.

12:22-23). Like any Mother, she cares for and feeds her children. We have seen that the true Church is also pictured as a bride prophesied to marry Jesus Christ at His Return (Rev. 19:7-9). She is described as, at that time, having “made herself ready” for this wonderful and glorious event!

Will you be one who strives to “make *yourself* ready”?

Finally, we have not yet addressed the actual meaning of the Greek word translated “Church” in the New Testament. This needs clarification. Most have supposed it means a building or an organization, when it means neither. The word “church” is *ekklesia*, meaning “a calling out,” especially as a religious congregation. Christians are indeed called *out* of this world—its ways—its customs—its practices—its traditions—its false knowledge—and *into* the true Church, and fellowship with God and Christ (I John 1:3). Take time to savor this marvelous understanding.

God thunders this to all people everywhere: “Wherefore COME OUT from among them, and be you separate...and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:17-18).

May God help you to come out of the Babylon of this world (Rev. 18:4), that you may QUALIFY to rule with the all-powerful, living Christ in the wonderful, utopian new world that lies ahead!

Some few are choosing to come out of the world. They are willing to seek God with all their hearts. These are those called of God *at this time*. Let’s understand.

Are Most Lost?

Most professing Christians have been taught that God is trying to save the world *now*. This thinking goes something like this: God and the devil are at war over the fate of mankind. This is seen as a desperate struggle between good and evil—God and Satan. We saw that Revelation 12:9 states that Satan has deceived the whole world—and the picture of how God will eventually save all mankind is his greatest deception. Of course, this picture serves Satan, because he would love to have the world think that he is more powerful than God.

Let’s put this another way: Is today the only opportunity for all human beings to choose or to reject Christianity? Must all people “decide now” to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior? Is this what the Bible teaches? The answer is an emphatic NO! If it were *yes*, then

God is failing miserably in His battle with the devil for control over the fate of all men. In other words, God is “calling” all of mankind, but most are NOT ANSWERING!

Consider! In 1920, when my father was born, there were about 2 billion people on Earth. There are now about over 7 billion—and more every day. Approximately 2.2 billion, or one-third, believe—to one degree or another—in the name of Jesus Christ. This represents a total that includes every conceivable brand of the well over 2,000 *different forms* of professing Christianity. Approximately another one-third of mankind has *heard* of Christ but has not accepted Him and does not *claim* to follow Him. Finally, the last one-third of all people on Earth know nothing about Christ. Many in India, Africa, Japan, China and parts of South America and Southeast Asia have never even heard of Him. Are they condemned to be lost, having never had an opportunity to understand what they missed or why—having no opportunity to be “called”?

When speaking of Christ's name, the Bible plainly says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other name under heaven* given among men, whereby we must be *saved*” (Acts 4:12). Further, Romans 10:13 states that men must call on *this name* to be saved. Understand! It is obvious that all who have not yielded to the God of the Bible and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior are certainly *not* saved! Countless billions have died in this condition. Most have assumed that the only other option for these is that they were lost to salvation and that God long ago planned this for the vast majority who have ever lived.

Most Not Called

Again, if the war is to almost feverishly “win souls for Christ,” as most supposed Christian ministers depict it, then the devil *is* much stronger, and much more effective, in his effort than God is. This is the only other possibility—unless there is a third category containing the vast majority of people. But it must be a category that has not been recognized. There is!—God is simply not calling the masses of humanity today.

The truth is that God is carefully calling a select number out of the deceived masses to understand His Plan and the true doctrines of the Bible. But we have seen He *is* calling a select few!

The very definition of what is the New Testament Church forces an examination of the subject of being “called.” This chapter—and

the book—would not be complete without a closer look at what it means to be “called.”

Many naturally wonder if they are being called by God. How can one know? Are *feelings* sufficient on such a vital matter? What *is* a calling? What does God’s Word say? You need to know.

Called and Chosen of God

The Bible does plainly speak of those who have been called by God. Notice what Paul said to the Thessalonian brethren: “Faithful is He [God] that *calls* you...” (I Thes. 5:24). As a warning to the Galatian congregation, who were losing sight of the true gospel, he said this: “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that *called* you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (1:6), and later added, “This persuasion comes not of Him that *calls* you” (5:7-8). To the Corinthian congregation he wrote, “For you see your *calling* brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are *called*” (I Cor. 1:26).

Christ Himself spoke on many occasions about the Christian calling. You may be familiar with His statement, “For many are *called*, but few are chosen,” found in both Matthew 22:14 and 20:16. Later, adding meaning to the second part of this phrase, He explained this to His disciples: “You have not chosen Me but I have *chosen* you” (John 15:16), and then “But I have *chosen* you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (vs. 19).

When placed together, these passages explain that God is calling a few people—actually a *very* few—out of the world for His supreme purpose. Those who respond to His calling are then “chosen,” going on to repentance, baptism and conversion.

What About You?

Over time, many find themselves learning things that they have never heard before. They discover that there is a correct (a true) understanding of the Bible’s doctrines, and there is a wrong one. They come to recognize that they have been brought into contact with extraordinary understanding, unknown to all around them. They notice that the Bible makes sense—that it is not as hard to understand as they had previously thought. Then, feeling a growing need to *act* on what they are learning, many wonder, “Am *I* being called by God?”

Sometimes this question takes the form of “Am I undergoing ‘conversion’?” or “Should I get baptized?” or even “Have I come in contact with God’s true Church?” At best, most are unsure of how to *answer* these basic questions, and many have absolutely no idea whatsoever how to even properly *address* them.

Let’s make plain, from God’s Word, how to know if God is calling you. It can be made simple, virtually impossible to misunderstand. After all, this question is one of the most important you will ever face. Properly understanding its answer is of PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE to your life!

I first began learning God’s truth when I was 17 years old. Before God called me, I had not known a single one of the true doctrines of the Bible. The calling process for me began when I heard the voice of a man named Herbert W. Armstrong, being broadcast from Pasadena, California. This was 1966, and it was immediately evident to me that I was hearing things from this man that I had NEVER heard before—and with plain scriptural PROOFS to back them up. I remember being astonished at how clear the Bible became—and how exciting it was to study. Prior to this—throughout the time I attended the well-known, respected denomination of my youth—I had always found the Bible boring and hard to understand.

People of all ages and backgrounds puzzle over just what a “calling” is. Many reduce it to little more than a particular *feeling* that comes over them, which they attribute to God. Millions in the world feel “called”—in some cases to the “church,” in other cases to the “ministry,” or “missionary work,” in still other cases to work with children, and in yet others to serve in the medical profession or even in the military. Ignorant of what God says, so many people are left to rely on mere *feelings*, assuming that their lives—and the paths they choose—are divinely inspired. They attribute this “inspiration” to being called of God. Sadly, most never learn that these “callings” have nothing to do with following the true God of the Bible.

A true calling from God is much more than a kind of abstract *feeling* that human reasoning is only to happy to conclude is “from God”!

Defining a True Calling

In John’s gospel account, we saw Jesus stated, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw* him...” (6:44). Nine-

teen verses later, He repeated to His audience, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were *given* unto him of My Father” (vs. 65). In the next verse, John records that “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.”

Many who heard Christ’s statements simply could not understand that God has to “draw” people and that a calling is something that is “given” to them. While many today appear to understand that they must in some fashion be called, they do not seek to understand—from the Bible!—how to know for certain that it is God who is calling—drawing—giving to—them whatever it is they are to receive.

Let’s consider a few scriptures that make plain what it is Christians are “given” when they are called. We must clear up all possible confusion.

In Matthew, Christ’s disciples asked, “Why speak you unto them [the multitudes who heard Him] in parables?” (13:10). His answer summarizes how and with what God calls: “He answered and said unto them, Because it is *given* unto you to *know the mysteries of the kingdom* of heaven [or kingdom of God], but to them it is *not given*” (vs. 11). The next several verses amplify what He meant, explaining how many in the world can hear the truths of God (the “mysteries of the kingdom”) but not grasp them. Since the overwhelming majority of mankind are not being drawn by the power of God’s Spirit, they have not been given the ability to comprehend God’s Word.

How does this apply to you? The answer directly explains how to know if God is calling you: A calling, in the simplest terms, is understanding the truths of God when you see, read or hear them.

Ask yourself: “Do I understand Bible teachings and truths when I hear them? Do the scriptures about the gospel of the kingdom of God; the plan of salvation and the purpose of human existence; climactic, soon-coming prophesied events; God’s warning message to His people; His Law—including the Sabbath command—the Holy Days; tithing; clean and unclean meats; the one true Church; and many other teachings make sense to me?”

When you read or hear these things in books such as this one, do they have meaning to you? Are you grasping them? Are they PLAIN to your understanding? Do you see them as SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE others do not have? Do you feel tempted to pinch yourself in disbelief that you could be shown things of which the masses have no idea?

If the answers to these questions are “yes,” then God *is* calling—“drawing”—you! The mysteries of the kingdom of God *are* being given to YOU!

Responsible for Knowledge Given

Babies are born knowing nothing. They do not know even the basics of right and wrong. They have to be taught virtually *everything*. Similarly, the world does not know the things of God—*spiritual* right from *spiritual* wrong. But with the knowledge of these things comes the responsibility to act on *them*.

Two Bible passages demonstrate that God holds people accountable for what they understand. Notice James 4:17: “Therefore to him that KNOWS TO DO GOOD, and does it not, to him it is sin.” Now read Hebrews 10:26: “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.”

Let's understand. Each time you learn more of God's truth (what is “good”), and it makes sense to you—you at least generally understand it—you are being *given* extraordinary spiritual *knowledge* for which God holds you accountable. You have seen in a previous chapter why others not drawn by God's Spirit have no chance—none!—to understand what they read. But you must ask if you are understanding what you are learning.

Comprehending—grasping the meaning of—knowledge is central to the calling process. Further, seeing that you are being given special knowledge makes understanding how God calls one much more serious than most have believed. Recognize that God will only call each human being once. Therefore, you are responsible *now* for the knowledge that you are being given. If one does *not* act on what he is learning, God will take that understanding away (Rom. 2:13; Psa. 111:10), and such a person is in a grave spiritual condition.

The Greatest Freedom

God's truth is most exciting to understand. It is the path to all the wonderful, good things in life—things God wants you to have. It is also the path to the greatest *freedom* that there is! Christ told certain Jews professing to believe on Him: “If you continue in My word [the truth – John 17:17], then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall

know the truth, and THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE” (John 8:31-32). You must be willing to “continue” in your studies of God’s Word, learning ever more of His truth, which Christ explains will “set you free” from a world cut off from God and held captive by Satan. Even *this* understanding is precious knowledge.

Your associates in the world probably understand none of these things. Neither do your relatives. Without God’s calling, they have no possible way of enjoying *now* what is being offered to YOU—if you are understanding *and* acting upon God’s truth.

It is also vital that you make certain in your mind the things you are learning. You should find yourself wanting to PROVE the doctrines of God. Paul also told the Thessalonians to “PROVE all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). If you know God is calling you, take time to *prove* that He exists. Then prove that the Bible is truly His inspired Word for mankind.

Finally, *prove* the identity of God’s Church. Remove all doubt, leaving no room for confusion. We saw there are many counterfeit churches—many spiritual “look-alikes” in the world. Do not be fooled by any of them. Since Christ promised, “I will build *My* Church,” determine to know for certain if you have come in contact with it.

At the same time you are proving these things, pray fervently about what you are learning. When you are unclear on a matter, remember that Christ taught, “*Ask*, and it shall be given you; *seek*, and you shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7).

John 14:17 explains how those coming toward conversion begin to find that they can see clearly the things of God. Notice what Christ said when speaking to His disciples about the Holy Spirit they were soon to receive: “Even the Spirit of truth; [which] the world cannot receive, because it sees [it] not, neither knows [it]: but you know [it]; for [it] dwells *with* you, and shall be *in* you.”

At this point, the disciples were much like many today—perhaps like you, too. They were seeing many spiritual truths in part, but did not yet *fully* grasp the enormous importance of learning God’s Plan and way of life. Through the Holy Spirit working *with* them, God was revealing certain things that they would only understand in a greater way once it was *in* them, beginning at conversion. Ultimately, to fully understand all the things of God—all the mysteries of the kingdom of God—one must be begotten of the Holy Spirit. This occurs when it enters directly into the mind! Lacking baptism and the

vital receiving of God's Spirit, it is completely impossible for *anyone* to truly understand even a single biblical truth!

Remember. Satan is a MASTER DECEIVER. He has proliferated many forms of false religion all over the earth. He counterfeits the truth in endless ways, and God's calling process is no exception.

Be certain of whether you are being called at this time. You must decide whether you grasp the truths of this book—whether you are being given your opportunity for salvation now!

Understanding Conversion

To be called out of the world—Babylon—leads directly to the subject of *conversion*—REAL CONVERSION!

What is *true* conversion? Is it merely “professing Christ as Lord and Savior”? How and when is one converted? Is it *sudden*—*immediate*? Or a gradual process, lasting a lifetime?

So many struggle with problems, weaknesses and sins. Does God expect *overcoming*—*growth*? What does this mean? How is it done? What role does the *Holy Spirit* play? And what about *faith* and *repentance*?

Many *assume* that they must be *perfect*. Others judge God's way by the conduct of Christians. Can one sin and remain a Christian? What about forgiveness?

Millions seek answers to these questions, yet settle for a false conversion. In the next chapter, the subject of Christian conversion is finally made *plain*!

What Is True Conversion?

When is a person converted? I have known many who doubted their conversion because they had never been taught the meaning of *true* conversion. When under fire—under pressure—they lacked the confidence to know they could effectively address their problems. They were not sure that they even had the *power* to overcome them.

Since the devil—the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33)—deceives the whole world, he also seeks to confuse professing Christians about this most important subject. In fact, because so much is at stake in this understanding, he pulls out all stops. The thing he hates most is even a single human being turning to God.

So few ask, “Just what *is* a real Christian?” Is he one who “attends Church”—“professes Jesus”—“knows Christ”—has been “baptized”? Is there a single verse to which we can turn that gives the Bible definition of a real Christian—that eliminates *all* confusion?

Remember, Paul wrote, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). A Christian, then, is one who has the Holy Spirit leading him. But is having God’s Spirit absolutely essential to being a Christian? By this point, in context, Paul had already said, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*” (vs. 9)!

Strong words! One either has the Spirit of God, and *is* a Christian, or does *not* have it and is *not* a Christian—is “none of His.” All those who are truly converted have the Holy Spirit in them.

But what does this mean? Is receiving God’s Spirit all there is to Christianity and conversion—or is there more?

Receiving Power

Christ taught the apostles for forty days after His Resurrection (Acts 1:3). He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem until they would receive the Holy Spirit ten days later, on the Feast of Pentecost. The disciples asked Him if He was about to establish His kingdom on Earth. Just before ascending to heaven, He said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...but *you shall receive POWER, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you*” (vs. 7-8). These were His last words before disappearing.

Like the apostles waiting for power through the Holy Spirit, most people today wait for some kind of additional strength upon conversion. Tell a teenager that he will be given the keys to the family car and he will have no difficulty understanding that he is about to receive *real* power. The first time I was handed the keys to my father’s car, I understood exactly what it meant. It is no different with a potential Christian waiting to receive God’s Spirit at repentance and baptism.

Paul wrote Timothy, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of *power*, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). Since Christians have the Spirit of God, very real power has come into their lives. Of course, the verse also says that a Christian demonstrates *love*—or the *give* way of life—and that his conduct reflects a *sound mind*.

The fact that God’s Spirit imparts sound-mindedness is evidence that God wants Christians to understand their calling—their conversion—God’s *PURPOSE* for them. God wants His people to be *sound* in the right way. Of course, this *must* include understanding all the basic aspects of true conversion.

When Is the Holy Spirit Given?

How does one actually *receive* God’s Spirit? And how can he know for certain that it has been given? Since this moment constitutes con-

version, at what point can the would-be Christian be assured that God has given His Spirit? Since not having God's Spirit precludes one from being a true Christian, surely God would not leave His servants in doubt as to whether they have it—exactly *when* they receive it—and how!

The book of Acts states, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (2:38).

Receiving God's Spirit comes upon real repentance and a correct baptism. With this also comes the remission of sin, or forgiveness. So there is a specific *moment* when conversion begins. There is a *definite time* when the Holy Spirit enters the mind and one becomes a true Christian—and God has begotten a new son. However, there is much more to understand.

We must ask, is salvation now *finished* in the Christian? Is he or she now “saved”? Is the newly begotten child of God suddenly *perfect*, unable to ever sin or go wrong, because he thinks he has *now* been saved?

Real Christian conversion is a GRADUAL process of *growing* and *overcoming*—of *changing* and *developing*. But how? And at the end of the process, what does the “finished” Christian look like? And what does this have to do with the goal of a Christian—with what he is striving for as his final reward for having *been* a Christian?

God's Purpose for Christians

We have seen that, throughout His ministry, Christ proclaimed the gospel of the *kingdom of God*—and that hidden within this message is the understanding of the AWESOME POTENTIAL for the one who truly yields to God. Wherever Christ went, He spoke about the coming kingdom—or GOVERNMENT—of God. While most of His parables were centered on this message, few that heard them understood their meaning. And when He spoke these parables, He always included how true Christians were *qualifying* to become part of that government!

Matthew 13 contains a half dozen “kingdom” parables. This chapter begins with the parable of the “Sower and the Seed,” depicting one throwing seed into various locations and kinds of soil. In some cases, the parable described how the seed grew and flourished in the person who received it. In other cases, it either died quickly

after starting to grow, or took no root at all. Others who received the seed grew in character “thirty, sixty or one hundred fold” on the way to the kingdom.

This is followed by the parable of the “Wheat and Tares.” This parable discusses “fruit” that appears in Christians’ lives prior to the time God gathers them into His “barn.” The fruit, good or bad, represents Christian growth, or lack of growth. The barn is a type of the kingdom.

The third parable depicts the kingdom beginning as a tiny “grain of mustard seed” that grows into a great tree. This is followed by the parable of leaven, depicting God’s kingdom as leaven spreading until it has permeated the dough (the earth, and all nations) that contains it. The fifth compares the kingdom to “hidden treasure” found in a field. The finder sells all that he has to buy this field.

The sixth parable describes the kingdom as the “pearl of great price,” which a person buys after selling all that he has to raise sufficient money for the purchase. The seventh and final parable of this one chapter describes the kingdom as a “net” gathering all kinds of fish. The “good” fish are kept—the “bad” are thrown away. Jesus explains that the good fish are those who enter the kingdom. The bad represent those burned (vs. 50) and destroyed in a “furnace of fire” (the lake of fire).

In each of these parables, the message is the same. Some (not all!) are willing to pay the price to be a Christian. They are willing to spiritually grow and develop character so that they may later inherit the eternal reward of becoming born (no longer merely begotten) Sons of God—in the GOD FAMILY—ruling with Him in the kingdom of God.

There are many other New Testament parables. Much of Christ’s teaching was through the use of these stories about common, well-known things. They were intended to carry deep lessons about a Christian’s calling, for those whose *minds have been opened* by God to understand them.

Recall Christ’s words, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him” (John 6:44, 65). It must be repeated for emphasis that the first step to conversion is a calling. Without it, *you* simply cannot understand God’s truth, only possible through the power of His Spirit at work with you. So, the process of coming to true Christian conversion begins with a calling or drawing *by the Father*.

The parables of the talents, penny, marriage supper, ten virgins, sheep and goats, unjust judge, fig tree, lost sheep, lost coin, prodigal son, unjust steward, Lazarus and the rich man, the good Samaritan and others, all involve or depict a Christian entering the coming kingdom, or governing Family, of God at Christ's Second Coming. Space could be taken to more closely examine each parable and demonstrate this. Though some are very short, and others quite long, the purpose of most of Christ's parables is essentially the same. For those who follow Peter's instruction to "grow in grace, and in... knowledge" (II Pet. 3:18), rulership in the government of God under Christ is attainable.

The Coming Kingdom of God

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, "But seek you *first* the kingdom of God, *and* His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). A Christian must always strive toward these two inseparable goals. Notice that the **FIRST** priority is seeking the kingdom of God. But he must also develop His (God's) righteousness—His divine *character*. Most of this sermon is an emphasis on CHARACTER-BUILDING through obedience to God's Law.

John recorded Christ's words: "In My Father's house are *many mansions* [offices]...I go to *prepare a place* for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (14:2-3).

This bears examination.

First, there are many "offices" in God's "house" (kingdom). *Second*, Christ is preparing these positions before He "comes again." *Third*, Christians are not going where He is to be with Him—in heaven or anywhere else—because Jesus said, "I will *come again*." (By now, you realize that heaven has never been the reward of the saved.) The Christian is offered an inheritance of *rulership* over the earth (Matt. 5:5).

One chapter later (15:1-2), Christ continues, "I am the true Vine...every branch in Me that *bears not fruit* He takes away: and every branch that *bears fruit*, He purges it, that it may *bring forth more fruit*." In verse 5, He says again, "*bring forth much fruit*," and, in verse 8, "Herein is My Father glorified, that you *bear much fruit*." Finally, He says, "I have chosen you...that you should go and *bring forth fruit*" (vs. 16).

This is all-important! A Christian is to bear fruit in his life! Verse 8 goes on to explain that by doing this, “so shall you be My disciples.” Christ identifies you as one of His disciples (and God’s begotten sons) by whether or not you bear fruit in this life!

We have learned that the book of Revelation records several places where Christ, through John, offers the kingdom to those who overcome. Let’s review: “And he that *overcomes*, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I *give power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron” (2:26-27), and “to him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne*” (3:21).

When coupled with Revelation 5:10, it is clear that the resurrected saints become both “kings and priests” who “reign on the earth” with Christ, but only if they are *overcomers* in this life.

This knowledge is truly special—and precious. The world does not know about God’s coming kingdom. The “god of this world” has been able to completely delude an unsuspecting and unwitting mankind.

But Christians recognize that they are in daily training for RULERSHIP. They are no longer blinded to God’s purpose. Therefore, it is critical that they understand their “training regimen.”

Faith and Repentance

We have explained that God gives His Spirit at baptism, which takes place after repentance. But how is repentance achieved? Does one just declare, by simple assertion, “I have repented”? Is this all there is to it? The answer is an emphatic NO! It is *not* that simple.

Repentance is a GIFT from God just as much as is one’s initial calling. When speaking of Gentiles coming to conversion, Acts 11:18 states, “Then has God also to the Gentiles *granted repentance* unto life.”

II Timothy 2:25 speaks of circumstances where “God...will *give...repentance* to the acknowledging of the truth.” Finally, Romans 2:4 explains that it is God’s “goodness” that “leads to repentance.” People do not “work up” repentance in order to *require* God to give them His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

People *must* seek God and *ask* for the gift of repentance. It is not automatic and should never be treated as such. But God grants repentance to all those who seek it with their whole heart, as David did in

Psalm 51. (Possibly take a moment to read this entire, moving, eye-opening psalm.)

But exactly what does one repent of? Recall that the Bible says, “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). What *is* sin?

Again, I John 3:4 states, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” This refers to the Law of God.

Remember, the normal, fleshly or carnal mind is hostile to the Law of God (Rom. 8:7). People do not naturally obey God. Human nature *disobeys—breaks—*God’s Law, and does so naturally! (We will learn much more about human nature in the next chapter.) A Christian keeps His Law. He does not just hear it or talk about it: “For not the *hearers* of the law are just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be *justified*” (Rom. 2:13).

Therefore, God will only give His Spirit to one that He has conquered—one who is willing to obey Him (Acts 5:32).

The world depicts God’s Law as harsh and burdensome. But John wrote, “For this is the *love of God*, that we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). (Also Romans 13:10.) God’s Law is holy, just, good and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14) and it is through God’s Spirit that one is *able* to obey God and thereby practice the love of God. Romans 5:5 stated, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy Spirit.*”

A repentant mind has turned from its own way. It wants to follow God. It is yielded to God—yielded to His government, His authority in its life. Such a mind strives to copy Jesus Christ and produce the “*fruits of the Spirit.*” Remember, Christ talked about “bearing much *fruit.*” He later inspired Paul to LIST the “*fruits of the Spirit*”—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (self-control)—in Galatians 5:22-23. These become evident in the conduct of the Spirit-led—the converted—person.

The repentant mind has turned from the selfish “get” way of life, to the way of “give.” A Christian’s entire thinking becomes transformed—CHANGED completely—to a whole new way of looking at life.

The Christian lives by faith (Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4). But the faith *of Christ* (Rev. 14:12), not human faith, is what makes it possible for a person to obey God. Yet, the person must demonstrate an initial faith that Christ has forgiven him at baptism (Acts 2:38). It is at this

moment that a Christian's prior slate of conduct has been wiped completely clean. It has become as white as snow—cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). This first *human* faith is then replaced by CHRIST's faith in the now converted person (Rom. 1:17). We have seen that faith is one of the fruits of God's Spirit, which has entered into the Christian's mind at begettal—at conversion and baptism.

Do not misunderstand! God does not *owe* you His Spirit because you have exercised faith and repented. It is a gift (Acts 2:38), as is repentance itself. The Holy Spirit is not something that you can *earn* by your works, anymore than *salvation* can be earned by works (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Bible teaches that “repentance is toward God” and that “faith is toward...Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Conversion is a personal private matter between the Father and Christ, and each individual. If God is truly calling you, make certain of your calling (II Pet. 1:10). It is most precious!

This is the only way to approach the marvelous gift you are being given!

True Conversion Explained

The power that comes with God's Spirit helps a person grow and overcome. Literally, this power is Christ living His life in the Christian. Without His help, the new convert gets nowhere—fast! When Christ said, “bring forth much fruit” (John 15:5), He followed it with “For without Me you can do *nothing*.” Human power—human energy—only helps a person overcome in physical areas. *Spiritual* problems cannot be conquered through physical, mental or emotional effort.

Remember that Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. The branches must be *connected* to the Vine, and this happens through God's Spirit working in a mind.

When speaking of this, Christ said, “out of his belly shall *flow rivers of living water*. (But this spoke He of *the Spirit*, which they that believe on Him shall receive...)” (John 7:38-39). As it performs good works, God's Spirit flows “out of” the Christian. Therefore, it *must* be replenished, or it will be depleted and disappear completely. This is why Christ said, “If you...know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the

Holy Spirit *to them that ask Him?*” (Luke 11:13). God’s people regularly ask, in prayer, for more of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote, “I can do all things through *Christ* which *strengthens me*” (Phil. 4:13), and “my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the *power of HIS might*” (Eph. 6:10). Christ also said, “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). Even Jesus acknowledged that, while in the flesh, He “could of [His] own self do nothing” (John 5:30). With God’s Spirit actively working and growing in you, this can be true of you!

But truly deep conversion does not occur overnight. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were “babes [babies] in Christ” (I Cor. 3:1). He described how they required “milk,” instead of “meat,” for food. The brand new Christian is much like an infant. By analogy, he first learns to roll over, then crawl, before walking (and even then, at first, in an unsteady, toddling fashion). Only later does he finally learn to run (spiritually).

Paul understood this. He compared conversion to running a race (I Cor. 9:24). Of course, though not right away, the runner must eventually develop speed, because Paul says, “run, that you may obtain [win].”

Such is the Christian way of life. Slow, steady growth, through daily practice, produces progress in the life of the person who is copying Christ. The new Christian sincerely strives, from the heart, to be different—to turn around and go the other way—the WAY OF GOD—for the rest of his life!

Not the Easy Way

But is the Christian’s path easy? Is becoming Christ-like in character the proverbial “cakewalk”? Definitely not!

Let’s return to the Sermon on the Mount for Christ’s own answer. He said, “Enter you in at the *strait* [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and *few* there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). It has always been only the *very few* who are willing to pay the price to live this difficult way of life.

Remember, Christians “run.” Running takes effort—it is HARD WORK! Runners grow fatigued after expending a lot of energy. Watch people in a long-distance race as they near the finish line. They are

tired, worn out—beat! Running is never easy. And sometimes, like a cross-country or marathon participant, the runner has to go up and down hills, over broken ground.

Paul himself said, “I *press* toward the *mark* for the *prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Just before this, he said that he had learned to “*forget* those things which are *behind*” and to “*reach forth*” to the great goal that was ahead of him (vs. 13). If a runner has pressed himself throughout a long race, he is totally spent at the end. Yet, if he gives up, he has no chance of winning, and all of his practice and effort in preparation for victory is wasted! So, no matter how tired the runner becomes, he remembers, “with God all things are possible.”

Paul also spoke of Christianity as “wrestling” (Eph. 6:12). Anyone who has wrestled knows it is very strenuous—sometimes to the point of nausea and vomiting. He also compared it to fighting. Notice I Timothy 6:12: “*Fight* the good *fight* of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” Also, II Corinthians 10:4 states, “For the weapons of our *warfare* are not carnal [physical], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds [Greek: *castles*].”

Nothing about war is pleasant or easy. It is dangerous and usually results in many casualties—some wounded, others killed. This is why Paul cautions Christians to “war a GOOD warfare” (I Tim. 1:18). Christ is called the “CAPTAIN of our salvation” in Hebrews 2:10. The inexperienced or untrained soldier can easily become a casualty of war if he does not submit to authority and follow his captain’s orders!

Resisting Three Enemies

Christians are at war on three different fronts. They must be vigilant—not neglecting potential danger from any of THREE enemies who regularly confront them. It takes *humility* for a Christian to acknowledge, to himself and to God, that *any* one of these adversaries is capable of overwhelming him.

Let’s take a brief look at them.

Ephesians 6 goes on to describe six pieces of *armor* that Christians use in spiritual warfare. Carefully read verses 12-17. They contain a strong warning not to forget that we are wrestling against “*wicked spirits* in high places.”

First, the devil and his fallen angels want to defeat and destroy every son of God in-the-making. If you are begotten of God, you are

a son of God, carrying enormous potential for rulership. The devil hates the prospect that you can receive what he has never been offered—membership in God’s Family. He lies in wait, like a “lion seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8). But he cannot defeat the “vigilant” and those who “resist” him (vs. 9)! A Christian must continually beware of and resist Satan’s attitudes creeping into his mind.

Second, I John 5:19 states, “the whole world lies in wickedness.” That is a very strong indictment of mankind. Yet there it is in your Bible! The Christian must also resist the pull of this world, with all its glitter, excitement, attractiveness and *temptations*. We have seen that this is not the *true* God’s world. This world’s god has fashioned it as he wants it. The true God is not the author of the confusion, ignorance and misery that permeate all of the many cultures and societies of Satan’s world.

There are many temptations, enticements, traps and pitfalls into which the servant of God can easily fall if he is not close to God and living by every word of the Bible (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). Paul instructed the Ephesian elders that God’s “Word...is able to *build you up*, and to give you an *inheritance* [salvation—eternal life]” (Acts 20:32). Study it daily!

Third, studying God’s Word will help you overcome the pulls of your flesh. After Paul said, “For to be *carnally minded is death*; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,” he added, “they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God” (Rom. 8:6, 8). A Christian is still made of flesh, but is no longer “in the flesh,” because he has God’s Spirit leading him.

Left unchecked, human nature consists of vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy, resentment, hatred, anger, pride, rebellion, foolishness, stubbornness, deceit and hostility toward God. The one who is walking God’s path is striving to curb and *withhold* himself wherever God’s Word instructs. And he strives to *exercise* himself in all matters where God instructs. When God gives instruction to do something, he strives to do it! When God gives instruction *not* to do something, he strives *not* to do it!

While learning to *always* follow this pattern takes a lifetime, building God’s character is the purpose for which every human being was born. His job is to “put on” the character of God and Christ, and to “put off” the fleshly pulls of human nature (Col. 3:8-13). Though this is not easy, the reward is great.

Only through regular prayer, Bible study, meditation and even occasional fasting (going without food and water for a period of time), will the child of God be able to overcome the three foes that lie in wait for him every day of his life! Therefore, begin right away to get into the habit of regular prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting. These four tools of Christian growth will work closely with the fifth tool to come later—exercising God’s Spirit that will be in you.

Paul’s Struggle

The Bible is filled with stories of God’s greatest servants battling to overcome sin. In nearly every case, they had to learn difficult and sometimes very painful lessons. When examined collectively, Moses, Noah, David, Samuel, Peter and many others are seen to have fought every kind of problem known to man.

Paul represents a classic example of how one of God’s greatest servants fought to overcome sin. At the end of his life, he was able to say that he had “fought the good fight,” and that he had “run his course” knowing that a “crown” awaited him. But this did not happen without much wrestling, pressing, running, fighting and warring against his human nature.

Carefully read Romans 7:14-23. It will educate and encourage you that you are not alone on your path to overcoming *Satan*, *society* and *self*—all of which lead to SIN!

Paul said, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal [physical, made of flesh], sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, *that do I not*; but what I hate, *that do I*” (vs. 14-15). He continued, “for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would [do] I do not: but the evil which I would not [do], that I do” (vs. 18-19).

It was as though whatever Paul did or did not want to do, his human nature, his flesh, caused him to do exactly the opposite! Why?

God inspired him to record the answer for us: “I find then a *law*, that, when I would [try to] do good, evil is present with me... But I see *another law* in my members, *warring* against the *law of my mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin*” (vs. 21, 23).

Paul went on to add that only through the power of Christ’s Mind in him was he able to overcome and obtain final victory in keeping the Law of God, instead of obeying the very real “law” of sin. Only in this

way could Paul later say that he had “fought the good fight” and had “run his course” to victory.

Make no mistake. *Christianity is all-out war!* But it is a war that the Christian should expect to WIN!—as long as he continues to draw close to God to obtain strength for overcoming.

God looks on the intent of your heart. It is your overall desire and motivation that is important to Him. He wants to know if, after you sin, you are sorry for it and are always determined to strive to do better. He understands the temptations that beset us even better than we do. He watches to see if we will be sober and vigilant as we root sin out of our lives—and whether we will continually press on!

Setting the Goal

If the truth is becoming clear—really PLAIN—to you, set the goal of repentance, baptism, and the receiving of God’s Holy Spirit—the beginning of TRUE CONVERSION!

While you are preparing for conversion, focus on examining all the wrong habits and attitudes that you can. There are certain *physical* changes you can make before baptism. Understand. Conversion is entirely about changing, growing, overcoming—and developing the *character of God*.

Take each step carefully. Follow the timing that is right for you. Yet, do not unnecessarily delay, merely because you have not asked fervently or often enough for the “gift” of repentance (II Tim. 2:25; Acts 11:18). Be careful that you do not follow the pattern of the world, falling into waiting for a magical *feeling* that “now is the time.”

During this period, take time to study all of my materials dealing with faith, conversion, baptism, your human potential, and the proofs of God’s existence, of His Word and of His Church.

Much—actually everything—is at stake for you if God is calling you now!

God’s Perfect Character

The all-powerful, great God, who made the heavens and the earth, also made you. The physical universe was merely created to *reflect* the glory of God, and to be a beautiful gift for mankind to see and enjoy.

You were created for an infinitely greater purpose. You were created to become like God in every aspect of your life. Remember, God is *reproducing Himself* in people—BUILDING SPIRITUAL CHARACTER in them!

Rarely anymore do people even talk about, or concern themselves with, the development of character—once called “virtue.” It seems that so few today understand much about it. Only through God’s revealed Word is the right definition of character described and understood.

You saw that character is understanding—knowing—right from wrong and *doing* what is right instead of what is wrong! Remember, God *reveals* what is right—HOW TO LIVE. But righteous character is built through the power of free moral agency—*deciding* to DO what is right. Character *chooses* to do what is right instead of *choosing* to do what is wrong. It does not concern itself with what OTHERS say or do. It only concerns itself with what GOD says to do!

God is love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. It is outgoing, outflowing concern for others, putting them first—ahead of the interests of self.

Constantly remind yourself that to build the very character of God is the reason you were born!

Paul said that God’s Spirit reflects a “sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). Even on the human level, few people today any longer have much “common sense.” It seems harder than ever to remain balanced and stable, as pressures and stresses surrounding people cause them to do more things that are *unsound*, strange and increasingly bizarre. God’s Spirit will lead you into stable, steady, sound ways of thinking (Phil. 4:8). It will help you see the things going on around you, and react to them in a godly manner. It will settle your understanding and lead you to make wise, right and *sound* decisions in your everyday life.

Apply yourself! Push yourself to grow and overcome. Do not expect it to be easy, like “falling off a log.” Grow in knowledge. Once converted, recognize that you have been “chosen to be a soldier” and must sometimes “endure hardness,” as Paul wrote Timothy (II Tim. 2:3-4). Breaking all your old habits will take time. After all, you have practiced—and, in a sense, even *refined*—them over a lifetime. Your habits have become part of you. They are “second nature.” However, remember that they are *not* the “divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4)—and far from it—that enters with the receiving of God’s Spirit at baptism and conversion.

If you are an adult, it took you fifteen to twenty years just to grow to a certain height. *Christianity is no different!* That is a long time. And it probably included many “growing pains.” You probably fell and skinned your knee or bloodied your nose many times before you reached adulthood. *Christianity is no different!* Do not become discouraged and quit growing, any more than a child should become discouraged and “quit life” simply because he may have fallen down or skinned a knee. When your child falls, you tell him to get up, because it is part of life. *Christianity is no different!*

Little children always want to grow up faster than life’s timetable allows. Though childhood is wonderful in so many ways, it seems that most young people cannot wait for adulthood. *Christianity is no different!* But full, mature Christian adulthood only comes after a long period of PRACTICING the right way of life.

But What If One Sins?

We have established that all human beings sin. Should the newly-begotten Christian expect this to continue after baptism? Is perfection achieved overnight by a certain “profession of faith” or by the act of repentance and baptism?

It is not! There is one lengthy passage of scripture that is very helpful on the subject of forgiveness and related matters.

The following verses bear much instruction—but only after first reading all of them. Notice: “...and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ...that your joy may be full. This then is the message...that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. *If* we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but *if* we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. *If* we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. *If* we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *If* we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And *if* any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins” (I John 1:3-2:2).

There is much important instruction here. Open your Bible and let’s examine it verse by verse.

Verse 3: John, the last living apostle in the Bible, speaking on behalf of all the apostles (“we”), explains that a Christian’s true fellowship is on the spiritual plane with Christ and the Father. It is only through them that Christians can have real, true fellowship with one another, within God’s Church.

Verse 4: John’s purpose was to show people the source of real, permanent fullness of joy.

Verse 5: The true God represents light—He “*is* light”—and there is nothing dark about what He does or who He is. The person fellowshiping with the true God of the Bible wants to come to the light and come out of all the darkness of this world.

Verse 6: This is the first of six verses beginning with the word “if.” The use of this word always indicates conditions—in this case, those involving free moral agency. Many people claim to “know” God, to fellowship with Him, but they neither know nor practice His TRUTH in their lives. He says this makes them plain *liars* (2:4).

Verse 7: Christ’s blood continues to cleanse all the sins—the errors, mistakes, weaknesses and flaws—of the person who is striving to walk in God’s truth—and in fellowship with other true Christians. Though they usually do not intend to, Christians slip and have to get back on track.

Verse 8: This verse is very important. Christians need to acknowledge that they sin. It has been my experience that self-deceit (Jer. 17:9) is the single biggest reason most people do not grow and overcome as they should. *Self-deceit*—lying to *yourself*—is still deceit. And there is no place for the truth to dwell in such a person!

Verses 9-10: Verse 9 is not speaking about the unconverted, carnal-minded, person. For the one who acknowledges and confesses his sins, these verses are self-evident. Jesus Christ is there to wash—to CLEAN UP!—the true Christian when he has momentarily strayed from the light of living by God’s Word and Law. A Christian must *learn* to overcome. Like learning to play the piano or painting a beautiful picture, this does not happen overnight.

Chapter 2, Verses 1-2: John uses the endearing term, “My little children,” because that is how God looks at His begotten sons and daughters. We are all *little children* in His sight. He knows He needs to watch over us like human parents watch over their own small children. Though it is God’s intention that we not sin, when we do, Christ stands before the Father as our “Advocate.” As our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), Jesus literally “roots” for His younger brothers and sisters

in the presence of the Father. He understands what it is like to battle with and overcome sin, and He offers strength and forgiveness to those who acknowledge that they need both.

The next four verses in I John 2 describe the obedient Christian as one who keeps God's Law and strives to walk and live the same life that Jesus did (vs. 6). He is one who "keeps His [God's] word," striving not to compromise. He always seeks to do what is right.

When you stumble, and sometimes fall down, remember the words of David in Psalm 37:23-24: "The steps of a good man are ordered [established] by the LORD... Though he *fall*, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD *upholds him with His hand*." Like a parent lifting or steadying a child, God regularly picks up and "upholds" His children. Let this wonderful promise of God encourage you when you feel discouraged because you have fallen short in the Christian walk.

What about Death?

Remember, the goal of a Christian is to become like Christ and the Father—to become perfect as God is perfect (Matt. 5:48). What if a person dies before perfection has been achieved? Did such a person fail? Is one lost because he or she did not become *completely perfect* in this life?

No human being will ever become absolutely perfect while still in the flesh. He should always continue to *seek* to be—*strive* to be—like Christ throughout his life.

Perfection is a goal that carries with it a way of life that is to govern one's every thought, action and word. God looks on the heart, the intention of a person who is yielded to him. As long as he is spiritually growing and overcoming—and led by the Holy Spirit—he remains a converted, begotten son of God. Death changes nothing, since God is in charge of a Christian's life. Upon a Christian's death, he merely becomes "asleep in Christ." He is awaiting the resurrection of all saints into the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50-55; I Thes. 4:13-18).

The Unpardonable Sin

So many worry that they may have committed "the unpardonable sin." I have counseled scores of people who were racked with fear

and anxiety because they were concerned, or even sometimes felt “certain,” that they were guilty of this unforgivable sin. After counseling with them, it was always clear that they were not. But it often took much counsel and explanation to reassure them that they had not committed the unpardonable sin.

I have often had to explain that the *very act of being concerned* is its own proof that one has not gone far enough to be guilty of this sin. The unpardonable sin involves willful, deliberate, premeditated sin based on a clear and *final* decision to commit *any* kind of sin and to remain in it. The key—the core—attitude is willful. Yes, many do sin *willingly*—but that is far different from sinning *willfully*.

Every time people sin, they are, of course, *willing* to do what they did. But they were usually overcome by some kind of temptation or circumstance that allowed them to slip. They were soon very sorry for what they had done. While this does not ever lessen the seriousness of sin, if one is sorry about his actions and wants to change—wants to repent and to be forgiven—and this is accompanied by the determination to do better the next time, then he is far from having committed the unpardonable sin.

God is merciful and even eager to forgive you—upon heartfelt repentance! He says that He wants you, and *all* those whom He calls, to succeed (II Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:4). While Satan *tempts* people, hoping for failure, God periodically *tests* His servants, hoping—even expecting—for them to succeed. Remember, God does not ever want *anyone* to fail!

So, if you are *concerned* that you have committed the unpardonable sin, then you still *care* and, therefore, have *not* committed it! If you have not willfully, deliberately, turned from Christ, then you have *not* committed the unpardonable sin! If you have yielded to temptation, and broken one or more of God’s laws, acknowledge and confess it to God. You may still repent, change and continue on the path to eternal life in the kingdom of God!

Do not give up! Do not quit! King Solomon wrote, “If you *faint* in the day of adversity, *your strength is small*” (Prov. 24:10), and, “For a just man *falls* seven [here, the Hebrew word means *many*] times, and *rises up again*: but the wicked shall fall into mischief” (vs. 16). Do not ever “draw back” (Heb. 10:38-39).

Twice, Christ said, “But he that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13; 10:22). A Christian is *not* auto-

matically *saved* at baptism and conversion. If you fall down, get up—seek God, repent and go on! God will continue to uphold you if you continue to ENDURE!

Knowing Your Opponent

All are familiar with what is commonly called human nature. The Bible has much to say about it. The one who is going to overcome temptation and sin must understand that he has to address and defeat human nature to be successful!

But *what* is HUMAN NATURE? *Why* does it exist? *Where* did it come from? Did God create it? *Why* is it so selfish and evil? Few have understood this subject. Next, we will study the truth of *why* people think and act as they do.

The Origin of Human Nature

Human troubles and evils are prophesied to grow far worse in this age. Appalling violence, terrorism and war are escalating as unbridled human nature hurtles further out of control. After a recent school shooting where many lay slaughtered, a parent remarked, “I don’t understand this world anymore.”

You *can* understand both this world and the *cause* of its troubles. Understanding human nature is the key.

All human beings possess human nature. The selfishness, rottenness, violence and terrible evils that spring from human nature have plagued the world for thousands of years. Recall that John said, “The *whole world* lies in *wickedness*” (I John 5:19). The cause of this condition lies directly at the feet of evil human nature.

Every “expert” has a different opinion about *what* human nature is and *where* it comes from. Yet, none understand the answers to these questions or the question of *why* human nature exists. This is because they reject the SOURCE to understanding the answers to *all* of life’s greatest questions.

Consider the paradox! Think of all the wonderful things the human MIND is capable of producing. As we have discussed, its ingenuity and inventiveness are practically limitless. Yet it cannot solve the most basic of life’s great problems—poverty, ignorance, immorality, crime, war and misery.

All of these problems—and many more—are by-products of unbridled human nature!

No “Better Nature”

Many theologians and religionists teach that all humans are endowed with a “better nature” hiding inside, waiting to be “tapped” and used. This is not true. The Bible says no such thing! Yet, millions subscribe to it.

This teaching comes from the long-held pagan doctrine of the *duality* of body and soul. It states that all people have a pure, pristine soul locked in an evil body that serves as a prison house until death, when the soul is freed. This idea is an attempt to explain the root of human nature without examining the truth of what God says.

No “Original Sin”

Millions more believe the unbiblical doctrine of “original sin.” While Adam and Eve certainly *did* sin, the Bible teaches nothing about any “*original* sin” committed by them, which is passed on, generation by generation, to every person. The term is found nowhere in scripture and is a fiction—a myth!—of men.

Recall Romans 3:23 stated, “For *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Every human being has sinned on his own account! All are responsible for and guilty of their *own* sins—not those of Adam and Eve or anyone else!

The sin of Adam and Eve did bring the following consequences: (1) It cut mankind off from the Tree of Life and (2) brought the death penalty on all human beings (Gen. 2:17; Heb. 9:27; Rom. 6:23).

What Christ Taught

In Mark 7, Christ addressed those who thought they could be “defiled” by dirt that they might ingest through eating food with unwashed hands. The Pharisees went to great extremes, washing their hands over and over to avoid being “defiled,” and they asked Christ why His disciples did not do the same. Of course, Christ knew that accidentally ingesting a little bit of dirt on unwashed hands does not spiritually defile anyone.

His answer explained what DOES defile human beings: “And He said, That which *comes out* of the man, that defiles the man. For *from within, out of the heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things *come from within*, and defile the man” (vs. 20-23).

First, accept that Christ made the statement—and that it has to be true! This, in itself, is a staggering revelation. But we saw that Jeremiah added more: “The HEART is *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Of course, most do *not* understand this about themselves, though they often readily see it in others. Further, we saw that Paul, under God’s inspiration, recorded, “The *carnal* [natural] mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7).

These are truly incredible statements about the mind of *every* human being. But how did this torrent of evil thoughts, which pours from all people, come to exist in them in the first place? How did it get there?

Does God infuse human nature into tiny babies at birth? Does an all-wise, all-powerful, loving God take innocent little children and turn them toward terrible evil from the moment they are born? And, if God does not put this nature there, then where *does* it come from? Again, what is its origin?

Human Nature in Adam at Creation?

Let’s ask: Was Adam given human nature by God from the moment he was created? Genesis 1:26-27 records man’s creation by God. Verse 28 then states, “And God *blessed* them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply...”

If God had instilled evil, selfish, sinful human nature into Adam and Eve at the moment of their creation, it could hardly be described as “blessing” them. If this were the case, it would be better described as “cursing” them!

Now read verse 31: “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was *very good*.” Think about what this scripture is saying. In one sense, it is a stunning statement about human nature. Human nature is *not* “very good”—it is VERY EVIL! Yet, God called His creation “very good”!

One other Old Testament passage offers insight into God's final product at the end of the Creation week. Solomon wrote this in Ecclesiastes 7:29: "...this only have I found, that God has made man *upright*; but they have sought out many inventions." God created men in an "upright" condition, but men ("they") turned to various "inventions" of human nature.

If God "blessed" Adam and Eve, said that what He had done in making them was "very good," and originally created them "upright," then deceit (Jer. 17:9), hostility toward God's Law, hate, selfishness, pride, vanity, lust and all the other evils of human nature (Mark 7:20-23) could not yet have been present. There is no evidence of rebellion against God or His Way in this account. Therefore, it describes Adam and Eve prior to their encounter with Satan.

The Arch Broadcaster

Paul wrote the Ephesian Church about the life that God had called them out of when He revealed His truth to them. Chapter 2, verse 2, mentioned earlier, references the power of the devil and his influence upon the world: "Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the POWER of the air*, the *spirit* that now works in the *children of disobedience*."

This is an amazing passage. The phrase "children of disobedience" is also found in Ephesians 5:6 and Colossians 3:6. Let's examine how these references relate to the phrase, "prince of the power of the air."

Notice verse 2 states that Satan's "*spirit...works* in the children of disobedience." Do you see this? Do you grasp it? Satan has the *power* to use the "air" to broadcast, through his *spirit*, an attitude of disobedience! He sends moods, feelings and attitudes of hostility into people's minds. These "work" within people's hearts and minds, bringing disobedience. This "air power" gives the devil great INFLUENCE, allowing him to send thoughts of confusion, deceit, anger, pride, hate, foolishness, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy, rebellion and much more directly into people's thinking!

Think of it this way. The devil owns a most powerful radio station, broadcasting 24 hours a day. We have learned that this mighty "station" reaches and deceives the entire world! Yet, his incredible cunning has been so seductive that he has even been able to convince most that he *does not exist!*

The devil is immensely more powerful than most realize. Remember, only one who has enormous power to influence—as a virtual “god” (and Satan *is* this world’s god)—could blind and deceive on a scale so staggering. As a result, he has produced a world *filled* with disobedience—lawlessness!

Before the invention of the radio, Satan’s power, as arch broadcaster and prince of the power of the air, could not be as easily understood. But now you can comprehend!

We can now better understand the “children of disobedience.” Like Christians with the Holy Spirit, these people are also inspired and guided by a spirit—that of this world’s god. Satan broadcasts a *spirit* of rebellion against God’s Law—*disobedience*—through attitudes—into humanity. Ephesians 2:2 is plain. But a deceived world knows nothing of this understanding!

If you listen to the radio, you usually pick a station that plays what you want to hear. Today, people “surf” radio or television stations. Eventually, something interests them, and they stop and listen to a station of their choosing. In every case, stations are selected by choice. People have control over what they hear or watch.

It is not the same with Satan’s station. The world—and you—do not *decide* to tune into the devil’s broadcast. And no one ever sets out to be deceived. But every human being on Earth is automatically tuned to Satan’s wavelength! His wickedness, hostility, rebellion, deceit and selfishness are continuously “on the air.”

Therefore, it is really SATAN’S NATURE that is being incorrectly labeled as HUMAN NATURE. In fact, once it is injected into people, Satan’s nature becomes *natural* to them. It becomes *their* nature—now, *human* nature.

Though you cannot see it anymore than you can see radio waves or television signals, the air around you is literally charged and “crackles” with the power and energy of Satan’s broadcast.

It is absolutely critical to see how this spirit works in people. It is the single greatest key to understanding exactly how Satan can deceive and manipulate over *six and a half billion people*.

Recall how God was able to communicate with Cyrus through (by “stirring up”) his *spirit*. Satan does the same thing. Just as God can lead a human being toward a right purpose, Satan’s spirit influences people toward hate, anger, selfishness, violence, competition, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, murder and deceit.

Of course, when Satan injects his attitudes into an unsuspecting mankind, it has no idea that he is doing it. The devil does not announce his intentions in advance or speak aloud in an audible voice.

Murder, Lies and Destruction

Just as God the Father has children, the god of this world is also a father with his own children! Consider this proof:

On one occasion, Paul addressed a sorcerer named Bar-jesus, who was trying to hinder Paul's preaching and ministry. Paul directly labeled this man: "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *you child of the devil*, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10).

Besides identifying him as a "child of the devil," Paul teaches that the devil's children are enemies of "all *righteousness*" and "the ways of God." *This is what being children of the devil means!*

But what is righteousness? Psalm 119:172 defines it: "All Your [God's] COMMANDMENTS ARE RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Satan's children hate, and are enemies of, the laws of God—His commandments! Remember, they are identified as "children of *disobedience*."

Revelation 9:11 describes Satan as "a destroyer." The Hebrew word referenced there, *Abaddon*, means "Satan." The Greek word used there, *Apollyon*, means "a destroyer." This understanding sets the stage for the next scripture.

A fascinating confrontation between Christ and people who professed to "believe on Him" occurred in John 8:30-31. You should read the entire account, but here is a summary. Those who had professed belief in Christ actually sought to kill Him just *moments later* (vs. 37)! Christ said, "But you seek to KILL Me, because My *word* has no place in you." He further added, "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you *the truth*" (vs. 40). Many *say* they want to hear the truth—but not if it means being told that they are wrong, particularly about cherished ideas.

This story comes to a remarkable climax in verses 43-44. Christ asked, "Why do you not understand My speech?" He answers His own question with, "...because you *cannot* hear My word." What could possibly cause people standing right beside Christ to "not hear His word"?

Verse 44 answers, “You are of *your father the devil*, and the lusts of *your father* you will do. He was a *murderer* from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a *liar*, and the *father* of it.” Christ plainly said, “You are not of God” (vs. 47), and these devil-inspired religious leaders immediately accused *Him* of “having a demon” (vs. 48)! Many today who *profess* to “believe on Christ” are no different than those described here.

This account is a powerful, instructive statement. Make yourself see this. The devil is a *father* who murders, lies and destroys. As the author of killing, deceit and destruction, *he broadcasts these attitudes to his children around the world!*

The Devil Holds Sway over Earth

Make no mistake! The world is *filled* with the children of the devil. It has been observed that children are basically much like their parents. Therefore, Satan’s children lie, hate, murder and destroy. Look at the world. It should now be crystal clear WHY confusion, war, ignorance, poverty, disease and misery abound among the nations. The fruits of human nature—*Satan’s* nature—are evident everywhere there are human beings.

Notice how Paul described the “last days” preceding Christ’s Return: “This know also, that in the *last days* perilous [dangerous] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a *form of godliness*, but denying the POWER thereof: from such turn away” (II Tim. 3:1-5).

While the world is filled with religion—has “a *form* of godliness”—it neither teaches the truth nor is the religion of God! It denies the power of the true God, as the world unwittingly worships a different being who palms himself off as the God of the Bible.

In review, the devil is also called the “god of this world,” the “prince of this world,” “prince of the power of the air,” and one who we saw “weakens the nations” and “deceives the whole world.” All these should have taken on new meaning.

Adam's Fateful Choice

But how did the devil gain access to mankind? What opened the door to his influence—to his broadcast?

Though covered earlier, but from a different perspective, the well known but little understood account of the Garden of Eden holds the key:

“Now the serpent [Satan] was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. *And the eyes of them both were opened*, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:1-7).

Even more than we have already seen, this account represents an astonishing—and truly far-reaching—decision. Instead of following God's instruction, Adam took of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” He thought that he knew better than God. He took *to himself* the right to decide between what was right (good) and what was wrong (evil). He thought that he could trust his own physical senses. In this way, this decision did “open his eyes” (vs. 7)—but not to the things of God, which come only by receiving God's Spirit (I Cor. 2:9-10). Certainly, it was not God's Spirit that entered Adam and Eve at this moment. Rather, the spirit of rebellion entered their minds for the first time. The evil spirit of Satan's influence was injected into their minds at that moment as the very first appearance of “human nature.” *This* is how their “eyes were opened.”

Adam's decision precluded at that moment any opportunity to acquire true *spiritual* knowledge from God. Thus, his understanding remained limited to what he could learn through the five physical

senses—and left him open to Satan’s broadcast. Human nature came into being for the first time!

With this decision, Adam completely cut himself and mankind off from access to God. This *other* tree has been guiding the thinking of the men and nations ever since Adam’s fateful choice. We must understand what this means for you and me. For his sin of rejecting God and the Tree of Life, Adam was rejected by God and cast from the garden. And mankind was cast out with him into Satan’s world!

Satan lied to Eve, who led Adam into sin with her. He got them to reject—disbelieve!—what God had taught them in Genesis 2:16-17. The devil’s deceit brought these two adult children to believe that they no longer needed to listen to their Parent. Human nature entered. Being thrust from the garden, they were forced to fend for themselves. Having rejected God’s perfect Law (Rom. 7:12, 14) and rule—His GOVERNMENT over all creation—as guides in their lives, and having yielded to Satan and his way of sin (II Tim. 2:25-26), they were on their own.

Because of sin, they no longer had access to God’s blessings, guidance, protection or the gift of His Holy Spirit, which would have come by eating of the Tree of Life.

Human Nature Is Not Inherited

Grasp this! Human nature did not come from God, but rather directly from Satan the devil.

But human nature is not *inherited*—it is *acquired*! Adam’s children and all succeeding generations did not “pass it on” at conception. A parent who loses an eye, hand or leg does not produce children with one eye, one hand or one leg. When God used one of Adam’s ribs to create Eve, it did not mean all men ever after lack one rib. The Bible refers to their son Abel as “righteous Abel.” Their disobedience did not prevent his obedience.

Adam and Eve were adult “babies.” Just like babies born today, they were pure at the time of their creation (“birth”) but were quickly exposed to a “broadcast” they were not able to resist. They were created on the sixth day of the week (Friday), rested on the Sabbath (Saturday), and were probably seduced by Satan (Gen. 3:1-6) the next day (Sunday)—at the age of two days old! Thus, again, Satan was *waiting* for unsuspecting and still innocent Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve CHOSE not to listen to their Parent, God, but instead CHOSE to believe Satan's lie that they would not "surely die." In so doing, they rejected the rule of the government of God in their lives. Again, if Adam had obeyed God's instruction, he could have qualified to replace Satan and *restore* the GOVERNMENT of God on Earth.

Let's examine one important New Testament instruction and example of how human nature is acquired, not inherited. Paul shed important light in the following warning that he issued to the Corinthian Church: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, *as the serpent beguiled Eve* through his SUBTLETY, *so your minds should be corrupted* from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:2-3).

Paul was writing to people who lived 4,000 years after Adam and Eve. He recognized that the devil was still alive and active. The Corinthians were adults capable of being deceived (beguiled) in the same way as Eve. Paul warned them to be on guard that they not return to following the ways of human nature. Just as Eve's nature was not evil and hostile to God before she was deceived, neither was the nature of the converted Corinthians.

Once one is called and converted, having received the Spirit of God, he has put off the old human nature of his past life. Paul also added in Ephesians 2:3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *BY NATURE* the children of wrath, even as others." These verses follow and are part of the scripture identifying Satan as the "prince of the power of the air."

The following is the same passage from the Phillips translation of the New Testament. This particular translation accurately describes how all people have *acquired* human nature from Satan: "You drifted along on the stream of this world's ideas of living, and obeyed its UNSEEN RULER [Satan is the "unseen ruler" of this world—II Cor. 4:4—who is still operating in those who do not respond to the truth of God]... We all lived like that in the past, and followed the *impulses* and *imaginings* of our EVIL NATURE... like everyone else."

How true! Most people simply drift along in life following whatever feelings ("impulses") and ideas ("imaginings") strike them from moment to moment. All of Ephesians 1 is Paul's accounting to those brethren of their earlier calling into God's way of life. Take time to read it, possibly using the Moffatt translation. The Ephesians

had come out of the course of this world and were no longer “by nature” the children of wrath, and were no longer yielding to the “prince of the power of the air.” They had begun to actively “dis-acquire” human nature by yielding to God instead of the impulses, pulls, feelings and temptations of Satan’s wavelength.

It would be grossly unfair of God to inject newborn babies with human nature, and then place them under His “wrath” for having it. Do you see this point? Human nature is *acquired*, with this acquired nature leading to disobedience to God—and THIS puts people under the wrath of God!

Converted Christians Not Immune

Let’s return to the Christian. The fact that one has repented, been baptized and received God’s Spirit (Acts 2:38) does not negate or automatically block Satan’s ability to attack, tempt, seek to influence, and probe for weaknesses.

Accept this fact! You have been practicing Satan’s way for your entire life. You have probably become *very good* at it. Believe me, as you strive to overcome and resist the pulls at work within you, you will find that Satan’s influence, in the form of human nature, is, like your habits, truly “second nature” to you—more than you now know! Overcoming will not be easy or happen overnight. It is a life-long struggle against an attitude and way of life that the Christian has rejected and turned from.

Remember, the devil appeared in the form of a serpent and successfully SEDUCED Eve *through temptation* (Gen. 3:1-6). Verse 1 reveals *how* he tempts people into disobedience and sin. It says, “Now the serpent was more *subtle* than any beast of the field...” Satan deceived Eve by tempting her with the beauty of the tree from which God had forbidden her to eat.

Temptation never comes from God. James 1:13-15 states, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, *neither tempts He any man*: but every man is tempted, when he is *drawn away of his own lust*, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.”

Temptation *always* originates from “the tempter,” working on the lusts of people. The devil recognizes where human nature is vulnerable, where people can be “enticed” so that “sin is conceived.”

Ephesians 6:11 warns of the “*wiles* of the devil,” while Revelation 2:24 warns of the “*depths* of Satan”! II Corinthians 2:11 warns not to be “ignorant of his *devices*.” Christians are constantly on guard for his schemes.

James taught, “SUBMIT yourselves therefore to God. *Resist* the devil, and he will *flee* from you” (4:7).

Christ Overcame and Qualified to Replace Satan

Resisting the temptation of the devil was central to Christ’s having overcome sin. Let’s examine this account again, but this time in more detail.

It is found in Matthew 4, and begins in verse 1: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit...to be *tempted* of the devil.” The devil repeatedly *tempted* Christ: “The devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the *kingdoms of the world*, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and *worship me*” (vs. 8-9). Notice that Christ rebuked Satan (vs. 10) and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” At this point, the final temptation in this account ended and the devil departed. Christ had successfully resisted!

Comprehend this crucial passage! This account describes the *temptation* of Christ. What the devil offered Him was designed to *tempt* Him. If both Christ and the devil knew that the kingdoms of this world were *not* the devil’s to give, *then where was the temptation?* The offer would have carried no weight—it would have been hollow—if nations and empires were *not* the devil’s to offer.

For Christ to *overcome* the temptation there had to BE a temptation! Ultimately, Christ succeeded where Adam and Eve had failed. Christ passed a very real test! He overcame the world, the devil and His flesh, in conquering sin and qualifying to pay the ransom price (His life) for man’s deliverance.

Grasp this truly vital point. Only by overcoming the devil did Christ qualify to *restore* the *government* of God to this earth at His Second Coming!

After successfully resisting the temptation in Matthew 4, Christ began to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. Recall Mark’s account: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Gali-

lee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, *The time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel” (1:1, 14-15).

The “time that was fulfilled” was that of Christ’s SUPER VICTORY in His struggle to overcome Satan and his world. This victory literally authorized Christ to announce the return of God’s government, almost 2,000 years later, under His leadership. His installation into future office was now official.

In the meantime, God must call a *few*—a very few—to be prepared at the *inauguration* of that government for rulership in the kingdom of God with Christ. These few must also overcome, as Christ did, to *qualify* for rulership—and Satan *hates* all who are qualifying to replace him!

Overcoming Not Easy

Let’s momentarily return to the subject of character development through overcoming.

Like any muscle of the body, character is built by pushing against resistance. Successfully facing that resistance strengthens the muscle (in this case, the mind). We have repeatedly seen that building character means *choosing* to do what is right instead of *choosing* to do what is wrong. Character does not concern itself with what OTHERS say or do. It only concerns itself with what GOD says to do!

Never forget that the Christian must resist Satan, who is active at every turn. But it is not through human strength or effort alone that this can be achieved.

Earlier, we referenced Satan’s wiles, and that Paul recorded, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole *armor of God*, that you may be able to stand against the *wiles of the devil*. For we *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the *RULERS of the darkness of this world*, against *spiritual wickedness* [Greek: wicked spirits] in high places” (Eph. 6:10-12).

This scripture contains much to consider. Christians must forcefully “wrestle” against the power of the devil and his demons—“wicked spirits”—on a day-to-day basis. They must constantly struggle against feelings of offense, hostility, envy, anger and many other attitudes.

Many New Testament scriptures describe the extent to which human nature, unchecked by overcoming, has complete dominance over every aspect of people's lives. And the fruits of human nature are evident all over the world. Carefully consider and think about the following four extensive passages. Reflect on the evidence of them in *your* life, and recognize that they represent a list of things you probably need to overcome.

Paul wrote the Galatians, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest [obvious], which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God" (5:19-21).

Overcoming—eliminating these patterns of conduct and thinking—is directly tied to salvation and ruling in the kingdom of God!

Now consider what Paul wrote the Romans: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind [void of judgment], to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (1:28-32).

This powerful list of wrong attitudes and conduct summarizes the condition of all humanity.

Paul also wrote to the Romans of an entire world under the influence and sway of the devil. Notice this: "There is *NONE* righteous, no, not one: there is *NONE* that understands, there is *NONE* that seeks after God. They are *ALL* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable; there is *NONE* that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways" (3:10-16).

No wonder John commanded true Christians of all ages in the following direct way: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the *lust of the flesh*, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:15-16).

The three phrases in italics identically match what Eve loved about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:6). Take a moment to re-read the verse. It will be clear *why* John wrote as he did, 4,000 years later, about the world that Adam and Eve chose and indirectly helped build.

To the Overcomer

All humanity is completely deceived, and drifting along, unaware of God’s purpose, which is to restore His government to earth, eventually to rule all nations. Only the *tiniest few*, called now, understand this coming restoration.

While all who are of this world are primarily devoted to acquiring goods and enjoying pleasures, this is not the goal—the attitude—of the one who seeks God and is a true Christian. He is striving to remain in constant harmony with God’s supreme, over-arching purpose for his life.

Important understanding must be introduced here. It sets up scriptures that we will study momentarily.

The Bible teaches, in Revelation 2 and 3, that God has worked with His Church through seven separate and successive eras, or phases. In these two chapters, Christ describes each era. With one exception, the first five are described as having their own unique set of doctrinal and spiritual problems that eventually led to their downfall. Each time this happened, God raised up a new leader to establish the next era.

While certain attitudes dominate each era, understand that some of the attitudes Christ describes are found in all of them. Therefore, they have application to the whole Church in a general way. While we have referenced several upcoming passages, they take on new meaning now. Let’s review.

In His message to THYATIRA, the fourth era, Christ instructs, “And he that OVERCOMES, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them* with a rod

of iron..." (Rev. 2:26-27). This is an obvious picture of the re-establishing of God's government over all the nations of the earth. Christians will receive REAL POWER TO RULE.

The instruction to LAODICEA, the final era, adds more understanding: "To him that OVERCOMES will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (3:21).

One more verse in Revelation summarizes the previous two: "And has made us unto our God KINGS and PRIESTS: and we shall reign on the earth" (5:10).

Kings and priests are *teachers*. All those called of God are in training to become *teachers* in God's kingdom. This is why Christ's great commission to His Church throughout all ages is, "Go you therefore, and *teach all nations*" (Matt. 28:19).

God's Church does this today. You now are being taught the marvelous truth of God in this book!

Only a relative handful of people were called in the Old Testament, with apparently just three—Abel, Enoch and Noah—called prior to the Flood. After the Flood came the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and the prophets, along with David and Lot. God used each of these men for a special purpose or commission. But all of them were *trained* and had to OVERCOME Satan, the temptations of his world and the pulls of the flesh. Like these great servants, Christians OVERCOME their problems, weaknesses, sins and wrong attitudes, rather than being overcome and defeated *by* them. They endure no matter what!

Christ said, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD" (John 16:33). Christ had overcome both the world and the god of it. Recall that He said, "EVEN AS I ALSO OVERCAME, and am set down with My Father in His throne." You must not miss this point. It was Christ's OVERCOMING that qualified Him to rule. Just as He qualified to replace Satan, so must we!

Such enormous power to rule could never be given to people who are unprepared—who have not QUALIFIED to properly use it. God is not about to hand great AUTHORITY to people who might rebel and revert to the ways of Satan. He knows that He cannot ever again have another "Lucifer-turned-Satan" cause destruction and chaos, this time carrying some of God's own power. We have seen that it will be impossible for any in the ruling government of God to sin (I John 3:9).

Satan to Be Bound

When Christ returns, Satan, as the deposed ruler over earth, will be removed. No leader could ever succeed a disqualified leader, and permit that man to *remain* in a position of co-rulership with him. The disqualified leader would second-guess and undermine all that the new leader plans to change and implement. Since all *human* governments understand this, of course, God does also. He knows that Satan has to be *removed* from his position of influence.

Notice: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and *bound him a thousand years*, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and *shut him up*, and set a *seal* upon him, that he *should deceive the nations no more*, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Rev. 20:1-3).

This verse contains more crucial understanding about God’s future plan for all mankind. Soon now, Satan will be bound (imprisoned) and rendered unable to deceive all the inhabitants of earth. The temptations of this world and human nature, caused by Satan, will disappear—though there will still be certain pulls of the flesh that all will have to overcome (Rom. 7:18, 21-23).

When Satan is bound, peace will literally begin to “break out” all over the world. The saints will be ruling with Christ from Jerusalem—having restored the government of God in His kingdom, administered by the Family of God. God’s “holy, just, perfect and spiritual” Law (Rom. 7:12, 14) will be enforced among all nations.

But Satan’s imprisonment will last 1,000 years, and then he will briefly reappear. Now read: “And when the thousand years are expired, *Satan shall be loosed out of his prison*, and shall go out to *deceive the nations* which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog [a type of the masses of humanity], to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” (Rev. 20:7-8).

Understand! The world will have known complete peace for 1,000 years, having not been exposed to Satan’s broadcast. But his release brings the *immediate* return of human nature.

Satan is an *invisible spirit*, meaning he can keep his presence unknown. Therefore, even with 1,000 years of continual prior warn-

ings, many will ignore the danger from Satan's broadcast and be overcome by it. Notice how his re-entrance "deceives the nations"—AGAIN! Revelation 20:9 describes these newly deceived millions attempting to come against Jerusalem and all of the saints who are there. The violence, hostility, anger and hate of human nature shall have re-entered: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city [Jerusalem]: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

Those who choose Satan's way, whether knowingly or through a careless lack of vigilance, ultimately come to a terrible end.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Verse 10 describes Satan then being "cast into a lake of fire" and once again removed from any possibility of injecting his nature and deceiving the nations. Verses 11-13 describe the wonderful period after the Millennium—The Great White Throne Judgment—when all who have lived from the time of Adam to Christ's Second Coming will be given an opportunity for salvation. Most will eventually receive salvation—eternal life—because the influence of Satan will have been permanently removed from the earth. They will not have to overcome either his influence or the pulls and enticements of his world.

Christ Restores God's Government

When Christ returns to earth He will be crowned as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). At that time, He will open eternal life and salvation to the whole world, now still cut off from God, blinded and led by Satan's nature.

Those of all nations will sit before Christ. Some will have qualified to rule and some will not. Notice: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit *upon the throne of His glory*: and before Him shall be gathered *all nations*: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his *sheep* from the *goats*: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, **INHERIT THE KINGDOM** prepared for you [all those who have overcome] from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:31-34).

The GOVERNMENT OF GOD will soon be restored to earth, and all who have prepared themselves *will* “inherit the kingdom.” Only the *overcomers*, those who successfully submitted to God and resisted Satan throughout their lives, shall take part in this glorious future: “He that OVERCOMES shall *inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:7-8).

Will you be one who INHERITS ALL THINGS?

This introduces the age-old question of “Is there life after death?”—and, if so, when does it come?

What Happens After Death?

Is *this* life all that there is? Many religions profess to know what happens at death. Yet they do not agree. Why such confusion about the AFTERLIFE? Why such mystery—such disagreement?

This question of life after death has perplexed mankind throughout the ages. Remember, thousands of years ago, Job asked, “*If a man die, shall he live again?*” (14:14). This question remains today.

Most professing Christians believe that they possess an immortal soul. They have been taught that the dead go to either heaven or hell. Most ministers, evangelists and religionists freely speak of “when we all get to heaven.” They declare this to be the Bible’s teaching. But is this true?

We must not assume. Remember once again, Jesus said, “in VAIN do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*” (Mark 7:7-8). Men have their own *ideas*, invariably based on Bible assumptions. If the Bible is the Word of God, we must examine what it actually says, not what *people* say it says. Be willing to set aside cherished traditions and replace them with clear Scripture.

Then be willing to believe God, not men.

Before answering the question “Is there life *after* death?,” let’s examine what happens at the precise *moment of* death. When Job

asked, “shall he live again?”, what did he mean “again”? If the dead are really permanently alive anyway, how can they live AGAIN?

We must understand!

The Wages of Sin

If you hold a job, you receive regular paychecks. They represent wages paid to you for work done. What about God? Does He ever pay wages? Romans 6:23 stated, “For the *wages* of sin is *death*; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here, eternal life is contrasted to DEATH—PERISHING! The wages of sin is *death*, not life. We will see that this understanding is not compatible with eternal torture in hell.

There is no mystery about the meaning of wages that an *employer* pays an employee for his work. Why should there be confusion over the meaning of wages *God* pays a sinner for his works? He pays the wicked a paycheck of *death*—not life in a place of torment. The Bible says what it means and means what it says.

Let’s return to John 3:16 and reconsider it in another context! Sadly, this most familiar and often-quoted verse is understood by almost no one. Notice: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.” Millions quote this verse but ignore one of its most obvious points.

Reread it. Notice that it exactly mirrors Romans 6:23! This time, eternal life is contrasted to PERISHING—DEATH.

The Greek word translated *perish* is *apollumi* and it means, “to *destroy* fully, to *die*, lose, perish.” There is no doubt what these words mean. “Perishable” items, such as fruits and vegetables, are those that rot—until they are “fully destroyed” or “lost.” This is not hard to understand when we are talking about anything other than a human being. Those who receive salvation are promised that they “should not *perish*” but “have *everlasting life*”! If hell is a place of eternal torture, then the people suffering there have eternal LIFE. But the verse says, “should not *perish*,” not “should not suffer eternal *life* in torment.”

How does the word *perish* relate to the popular teaching about hell? Why did God inspire John to use this word if this is not what He really intended?

Souls to Be Destroyed

The idea of an ever-burning hell is inseparable from the idea that all human beings have *immortal souls*. Is this what God says? Again, the answer is an emphatic NO!

It is important to review a moment as an introduction to vital understanding. Genesis 2:7 showed that man *is* a soul and does not *have* one. God told Adam and Eve they would “die” if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Ezekiel said (twice) that “the soul that sins, it shall die.” Matthew said that God can destroy both soul and body in hell (10:28).

We saw what the prophet Malachi wrote about the final state of the wicked who have been destroyed in hell: “For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, *shall be stubble*: and the day that comes shall *burn them up*, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts” (4:1-3). Obadiah 16 amplified this with “...and they shall be as though they *had not been*.”

The dead will be so completely “dead and gone” that it will be as though they had never existed. Surely, if they were roasting in hell forever with millions of others, and other millions “in heaven” witnessing it, this verse could hardly apply.

Are the Dead Conscious?

What about the precise moment of death? Exactly what happens when one dies?

Human minds are differentiated from animal brains by intelligent thought. Presumably, if the dead are *not* dead, but are really still alive, then they must be capable of some kind of intelligent *thought*. They must at least be *conscious* of their surroundings. Let’s consider a series of scriptures.

First, notice Psalm 146:3-4: “Put not your trust...in the son of man...his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day

his thoughts perish.” When people die, their thoughts end immediately—“in that very day.” That is what your Bible says.

This verse is also not compatible with the idea that the dead are either alive in heaven or consciously suffering in a place of torment. We could suppose that, if they were enjoying salvation, they would certainly *know* that they were! We could also suppose that if they were suffering, they would *know* that they were. Could the tormented somehow be unaware that they were suffering?

Ask yourself: What would be the point of their suffering, or of their enjoyment of salvation, if they could not *know* of it? Death (actually life?!) in hell would have to be as though they were in a coma—completely unaware of what is going on around them—while their sensory nervous system is feeling the excruciatingly painful sensation of burning. How would this work?

Use the following analogy. Before someone undergoes major surgery, he is anesthetized—rendered *unconscious*—so that he will *not* experience pain. Medical doctors understand this—why don’t theologians and religionists? Why do they deny the plain statements of the Bible?

Some willingly ignore the message of scripture. They allege that only “mortal” thoughts perish, in the sense that the dead leave this earthly realm and experience some mysterious, different, new kind of “thought.” Of course, this is ridiculous, and the Bible does not say it, but we ought to at least examine the idea.

Let’s now consider an even more direct verse: “For the living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not anything...*” (Ecc. 9:5).

An honest reader cannot misunderstand this! Anything means *anything*!

Solomon also recorded, “For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: *as the one dies, so dies the other*; yes, they have all one breath; so that *a man has no pre-eminence above a beast...*All go unto one place; *all* are of the dust, and *all* turn to dust again” (Ecc. 3:19-20).

Now consider Psalm 115:17: “The dead praise not the LORD, neither *any* that go down *into silence*.” Death means “silence.” This certainly does not square with the popular concepts of millions of the dead wailing and screaming in agony—or immediately receiving eternal life in heaven or anywhere else with millions of others supposedly conversing, singing, playing harps and praising God. Neither scene could possibly be described as SILENCE!

Psalm 6:5 further explains that the dead do not experience conscious memory. Notice: “For in death there is *no remembrance of You*: in the grave who shall give You thanks?” Could anyone seriously suggest that the dead, suffering in hell, could experience the normal range of human memories, *but not be aware of God*—not be able to “remember” Him? Would God put people in “hell” and then leave them there to suffer, forever wondering *how* it was that they got there—WHO it was that put them there—because they have no “remembrance” of anything related to GOD? We could ask: But how many even know of this passage?

Applying the same question to those who received salvation is even more ridiculous. Could people somehow “roll around heaven all day” and be *unaware* that they were in the presence of God or of even who He was?

No! When people die, they are DEAD!

So far, we have not explained *everything* about life after death, but we know that further *life* does not immediately occur *at death*! We have established that when a person dies, he is dead! But then what happens?

The Resurrection of the Dead

The first rule of Bible study is to *always* let the Bible interpret the Bible. Keep the truths that it contains simple and the hollow—and invariably shallow and silly—ideas of men will fall like a house of cards.

Here is why the dead have no knowledge or remembrance of God.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL that are *in the graves* shall hear His voice, and *shall come forth*; they that have done good, unto the *resurrection* of life; and they that have done evil, unto the *resurrection* of damnation [Greek: *judgment*]” (John 5:28-29).

Christ understood that most would find this astonishing. That is why He told the disciples to “*Marvel not* at this”—He understood that most people *would* marvel at the thought that everyone who has ever lived is now “in the grave,” awaiting the resurrection! You should not marvel at the words of Christ either. *Accept them!* He said that “all” are in the grave, not “some.”

There are no conscious thoughts and no remembrance of God after death because everyone who has ever died is now awaiting one

of the resurrections Christ referred to. *All people* will be resurrected, either to eternal life or to judgment. This is what God's Word says.

No wonder David said, "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, *when I AWAKE*, with Your likeness" (Psa. 17:15). He understood that the resurrection was an awakening back to life.

We saw that, like David, Job also looked forward to the resurrection of life. But this time notice the verses surrounding his earlier-referenced question: "O that you would *hide me in the grave*, that you would keep me *secret*, until your *wrath* be past [the coming Day of the Lord, or Day of God's Wrath], that you would appoint me a set time, and *remember me!* If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I *wait*, till my *change* come. You shall call, and I will answer You" (14:13-15).

Job did not ask that God would only hide his *body* in the grave. He asked God to "hide *me...keep me...appoint me...remember me.*" He also recognized that God would keep him "secret." Ask yourself how this fits with being in heaven or hell. If so, God would be pretty poor at keeping secrets and the rest of the verse would make no sense. And why would God need to "remember" Job if he were scheduled to go straight to heaven at death, or if salvation was to occur immediately at death? Both (God and Job) knew he would await the resurrection for thousands of years.

Now look at Job's question—"if a man die, shall he *live again?*" If Job was going to still be alive at death, how could he "live *again?*" Job knew that he would be "waiting...in the grave" for his resurrection at an "appointed time," when he would be "changed." He knew that *living* again was equivalent to being *born* again.

But what did it mean that he would be *changed?*

We saw that Paul wrote of the "change" that awaits all true Christians. Read again I Corinthians 15:51-52, 54: "Behold, I show you *a mystery*; we shall not all *sleep*, but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump...the dead shall be raised...and this *mortal shall have put on immortality*, THEN [not yet] shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *DEATH IS swallowed up* in victory." I repeat, it is certainly an almost complete mystery to the world that there is coming an awakening and a change at the resurrection.

And again, we must also ask, how can one go from "mortal" to "immortal" if he *already has an immortal soul?* This idea is also a

mystery—but, unlike the mysteries of God, it is one of the “mysteries” devised by men that cannot be understood or solved, because it makes no sense.

Do you see the silly logic of men when they ignore plain scriptures?

Just as Job understood that he would be “changed,” and David understood that he would “awake,” Paul understood that Christians will be “changed”—will awaken from “sleep”—once the resurrection has come. At the resurrection, people will literally awaken *from death*.

Ask yourself: How can people be resurrected if they are already alive as immortal souls? Only the dead, like Christ from the tomb, need to be brought back to life. That is the purpose of a resurrection. Do not be fooled by deceivers who say, “The resurrection only applies to the body, since the soul has remained alive!” You have already seen numerous scriptures disproving that fallacy.

Upon the most basic examination, the ideas of intelligent men are often exposed as outright foolishness. Men invented the popular concept of hell as a means of scaring people into following the false religions that they have created. The true God would never roast people for all eternity—not allowing them to burn up, to mercifully end their suffering. This is what a *monster* would do. But then, humanly-devised, fictional gods will “do” and “teach” whatever their human “designers” have decided for them.

Billions have lived and died without ever knowing the name of Jesus Christ and without ever having had an opportunity for salvation. If the unsaved, upon death, go directly to *hell*, then over half the people who have ever lived are still alive *there*!

Since no human has ever returned from the dead to offer a first-hand report—of course, silly stories and fabrications in tabloids abound—we must either choose to believe the ideas of men or search the scriptures for what God reveals about this subject.

Three Resurrections

Remember that “all that are in the grave” will eventually be resurrected. Actually, the Bible teaches that God’s plan includes **THREE** separate resurrections. Revelation 20 describes each. We have already discussed the **FIRST** resurrection. Verse 4 explains that the saints shall reign on Earth with Christ for 1,000 years after Satan has

been bound (vs. 1-2). We will further discuss the first resurrection later, but verse 5 explains that “the *rest* of the dead lived not again *until* the thousand years were finished.”

At the end of the 1,000 years will come the SECOND resurrection. This will include the billions of people, from the time of Adam, who never had an opportunity to know the truth. Now continue in Revelation 20 with what we read earlier: “And I saw a *great white throne*, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw *the dead*, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged...according to their works” (vs. 11-12).

The book of Ezekiel contains a fascinating chapter describing, in vision, a valley of dry bones. Nearly every Sunday school child sings about the bones described in this vision, yet with no understanding. Take time to read the 37th chapter in its entirety. It depicts the millions who have been part of the physical nation of ancient and modern Israel (all 12 tribes, not just the Jews) being given the opportunity for the spiritual salvation that God never offered them in the Old Testament.

Verse 11 describes them as “without hope.” Ezekiel was instructed to speak to this vast pile of disconnected dry bones. Notice: “Thus says...GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (vs. 12). Here, millions are described as being resurrected from their “graves.” It is obvious that the resurrection that this is describing is *physical*, back to a flesh-and-blood existence. Notice what happens next.

Ezekiel continued to speak to the bones: “Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones...I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live” (vs. 5-6). Verses 13-14 add, “And you *shall* know [not yet] that I am the LORD, when I have *opened your graves*, O My people, and brought you up *out of your graves*. And shall *put My Spirit in you*, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land...”

When will Israel *know* what has happened? At the resurrection! Only then will Israel “know” that God has taken them from the grave. They are part of the billions who will come up in the second resurrection. This is the period referred to as the Great White Throne

Judgment (Rev. 20:11), and it is the time when all human beings will be shown the truth. God will “put [His] Spirit in [them].” Most people will grow, overcome and qualify to receive salvation and join all those who preceded them in the first resurrection.

On a side note, I have counseled several people who were considering suicide. All who are tempted to take this easy way out, thinking that it will end all their suffering and sorrows, should consider the following: When people die, they do not know anything. There is no awareness of the passing of time, whether of days or centuries. In effect, they will reawaken *immediately*—having no awareness of the passing of time—and find that they still have all of their old troubles, and have *added* to themselves the guilt of self-murder! Suicide, then, does not make things better. It makes them much worse, and, in a sense, immediately so!

There is one final, or THIRD, resurrection. We referred to it when we read Malachi 4:1-3 and Obadiah 16. Revelation 20:14-15 describes those who are resurrected and shown what they missed out on in God’s kingdom, before being cast into a vast lake of fire: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

II Peter 3:10-12 also describes the time when the wicked are burned up and fulfill Malachi 4, becoming “ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous.”

The Resurrection Chapter

I Corinthians 15 has been called the “Resurrection Chapter.” We have already quoted it, but let’s further examine this chapter. Though it speaks primarily about the first resurrection, it is a summary of God’s three-resurrection plan.

Verse 26 states, “The last ENEMY that shall be destroyed is *death*.” At funerals, worldly ministers often depict death as “an old friend” one meets at the end of “life’s highway.” Haven’t you often heard this or a similar phrase on these occasions? The Bible calls death an ENEMY!—and there is nothing “friendly” about enemies!

Verses 22-23 state, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall ALL be *made alive* [through a resurrection]. But *every man* in his *own order*...” Note two points. First, *every* person will have a chance for salvation. Second, each person’s opportunity will come “in his own

order.” We have seen that all parts of God’s plan are not fulfilled in *one* resurrection.

Verse 23 continues into 24: “Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ’s *at His Coming*. Then comes the end...” Christ was the beginning—“the firstfruits”—of the first resurrection, which will include all saints. But, “then comes the end” references the rest of God’s wonderful Master Plan, which will continue as the kingdom of God is established on Earth at Christ’s Return.

That time lies just ahead.

Entering the Kingdom

The Bible teaches that God’s kingdom rules *over* the people and nations of the earth. The nations are no more part of the kingdom than the average citizen of any country is part of the government that rules over him. One must ENTER the kingdom to be in it. As distinct from those who are governed by it, we must ask, who is actually *in* the kingdom? (Chapter Eleven will explain this more thoroughly.)

Recall that Paul stated, “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom* of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a *mystery...*” (I Cor. 15:50-51). Certainly, as previously mentioned, this is a mystery to almost everyone—that flesh-and-blood human beings *cannot enter* the kingdom of God—that it is *only* at the resurrection that previously Spirit-begotten human beings are changed from flesh to spirit. We have seen that it is at this time—and only at this time—that true Christians are “born again.” If we are to just believe the plain truth of the Bible, *the kingdom of God cannot include flesh-and-blood people!*

Many counterfeits have supplanted the proper understanding of what the kingdom of God is.

An account in John 3, only briefly referenced in Chapter Two, is commonly misunderstood by people who believe that they can be “born again” in this life (while they are still flesh and blood) and, therefore, “see” the kingdom of God in this life (vs. 3).

In this account, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, approached Christ and acknowledged in verse 2, “Rabbi, *we know* that you are a teacher *come from God.*” He plainly admitted he knew who Christ was and who (God) had sent Him to earth. Notice that Nicodemus spoke for more than himself when he stated, “*we know.*” He was referring to

himself and the other Pharisees who recognized who and what Jesus Christ was. These leaders could not deny the power of God evident in the miracles Jesus was performing.

The religious leaders—the Pharisees—well understood that He was a “teacher come from God” with the truth. Yet, they still called Him a blasphemer, drunkard, heretic, seditionist, bastard, ignorant, demon-possessed, false prophet, friend of publicans and sinners, etc.—and crucified Him!

Christ told Nicodemus, “Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God” (vs. 3). He was explaining that only by the process of being born again can one actually “see” the kingdom. So, there is a *limitation* on who can see it. Anyone can see *physical* things. This is not true of the kingdom of God. Grasp these critical points that Christ made.

In verse 5, Christ says that unless one is “*born* of water and of the Spirit,” he “cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God.” Yes, the kingdom is something that can be “entered into”—but verse 6 explains Christ’s “born of water and of the Spirit” phrase. It states, “That which is born of the flesh IS flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit IS spirit.” We saw that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God—but *spirit can!*—and that to allow no room for misunderstanding, Christ compared spirit to wind.

Wind and spirit are *invisible*. Christ told Nicodemus, “The *wind* blows where it lists [does], and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is BORN OF THE SPIRIT” (vs. 8). Those born of spirit will be like wind—they will be INVISIBLE!

But *when* does this change from physical to spirit composition occur?

Recall I Corinthians 15:49 stated, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we *shall* [in the future—at the resurrection] also bear the image of the heavenly.” Verse 53 states, “For this corruptible [flesh is certainly corruptible] must put on incorruption [those born of God are spirit], and this mortal must put on immortality.” It is at this point that flesh is changed into spirit.

Even converted human beings are still composed of flesh—of the dust of the ground. God will change their flesh to spirit at the first resurrection. All those who enter the kingdom of God must be made of—*composed of*—SPIRIT! (To learn more about this topic, read our booklet *What Does “Born Again” Mean?*)

Let's examine this further. Matthew 22:30 states, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *but are as the angels of God.*" Hebrews 1:7 shows that angels are made of spirit. This is important to understand about our composition in the resurrection. But do not misunderstand and think that Christ was saying that the resurrected saints would actually *be* angels. He merely meant that they would be "as" the angels, in that neither angels nor the resurrected saints marry.

Becoming Spiritually Minded

Now we will turn our attention once again to the all-important understanding of receiving God's Spirit—and how one is led by it.

Recall Romans 8:6 one more time. It stated, "For to be carnally [physically] minded is DEATH; but to be *spiritually minded* is LIFE and peace." Anyone who has received the Spirit of God ultimately has life inherent within him. This means he has the *potential* of becoming an "inheritor" with Christ. Let's state again for emphasis: This is absolutely remarkable understanding—completely unknown to all but the scattered few on Earth today!

(A related inset must be added here. All "abortion rights" advocates should take note of exactly when God says life exists—that the *begotten* Christian, the one who is spiritually-minded, already has eternal life inherent within him. Like the fetus that can miscarry prior to birth, the Christian certainly can also "miscarry"—that is, fall away from the path to salvation and eternal life. But the plain Bible pattern is that life begins at the moment of physical begettal as surely as it begins at the moment—the instant—of *spiritual* begettal.)

Most people have been deluded into believing that they are Christians merely because they have "accepted Jesus" or "made a decision for Christ" or "given their heart to the Lord"—or some other similar profession of belief. They have been deceived into believing that if they join a church or pronounce themselves "born again," this makes them Christians. How utterly false and contrary to the plain words of the Bible!

A Christian is one LED BY the Spirit of God!

Actually, the Bible states that the entire world is now awaiting the first resurrection. It is then that the Sons of God will be revealed. Carefully notice:

“For the *earnest expectation* of the creature [Greek: creation] waits for the manifestation of the *sons of God*...Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be *delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the *children of God*. For we know that the *whole creation* groans and travails in pain together until now” (Rom. 8:19, 21-22). This verse shows that the creation awaits the “delivery” of the “Sons of God.” It is “groaning” and “travailing” (laboring) toward this delivery—this BIRTH—of the begotten Sons of God, born again at the resurrection and Christ’s Return.

The Church Feeds Her Children

Recall that Christ’s Church is called “Jerusalem above”—“the *mother* of us all” (Gal. 4:26). Hebrews 12:22-23 makes this clear: “But you are come unto...the *heavenly Jerusalem*...the general assembly and *church*...which are written in heaven.” It does not say that the Church is *in* heaven, but rather that those of the Church are “*written* in heaven.” This is because the dead in Christ are now awaiting the first resurrection.

As Mother, the Church feeds and cares for God’s people—her children. Peter instructed the ministry to “*feed the flock of God* which is among you, taking the oversight...willingly” (I Pet. 5:2). Recall that Paul made the Church’s role as Mother even clearer: “For the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto...the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Two additional verses in context here demonstrate that God’s “children,” like any other children, are supposed to “grow up.” Notice that the Church is also responsible for protecting God’s flock from false doctrine: “That we henceforth BE NO MORE CHILDREN, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*; but speaking the *truth* in love, may GROW UP into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (vs. 14-15).

It is the ministry’s duty to teach the Church the truth and to warn of the dangers of being deceived by false doctrine.

So, the begotten child of God grows in the womb of its Mother—the Church—like any other child grows during the nine-month gestation period. While in the womb of the Church, all begotten sons

are fed the necessary spiritual nutrients in order to grow sufficiently to be born into the kingdom as incorruptible Spirit Beings.

Christians must develop and mature spiritually while in the womb. Human fetuses begin at microscopic size and grow to the time of birth. The newly begotten Christian grows in the same way. He starts out 99.9% spiritually *immature* and slowly progresses to spiritual maturity—and BIRTH!

Christ the Firstborn—Among Many

When speaking of Christ, Romans 1:3-4 states, “Concerning *His Son* Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the *Son of God* with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*”

Most have heard that Jesus was the Son of God, but He was only “declared to be” the Son of God, in the fullest sense, “by the resurrection from the dead.” Of course, He was already the *begotten* Son of God prior to His birth into the kingdom at the time of His Resurrection.

This scripture shows that Christ was *physically born* of Mary, descending from David “according to the flesh,” and *spiritually born* a Son of God “according to the Spirit...by the resurrection of the dead.”

By returning to Romans 8, we can better understand *why*. Remember this about Christ’s birth: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN” (vs. 29).

Christ is merely the first “born again” Son of God. “Many brethren” (all those with God’s Spirit for 6,000 years) will join Him at His Return. This absolutely astonishing understanding is known to only the few called today (John 6:44, 65).

No Hope?

The world knows none of what you have read. It is bogged down in the suffocating morass of human problems and events. None can truly say that they know what tomorrow holds—while many others just hope that there will *be* a tomorrow, for themselves and for the world.

The misery, confusion, war, famine, disease, ignorance, poverty and lack of harmony—all on a global scale—leave many feeling

hopeless. Every human being needs hope—needs to be infused with a reason for being, or for even continuing, because of the oppressive circumstances that inevitably surround and define their lives.

All nations and peoples long for peace, happiness and prosperity. Leaders promise these things but never really deliver. Armies fight for them, but always fail in this ultimate objective. Millions pray for them, but their prayers go unanswered. World peace, happiness and prosperity for all remain more elusive than ever.

But the Bible says that these things will come—and *soon*. The next and final chapter explains how!

How World Peace, Happiness and Prosperity Will Come

War has been the primary means by which nations have settled disputes throughout history. It has been considered a natural state of equilibrium, while peace has been considered a period of recuperation from the previous campaign, in which preparations are being made for the next venture or conquest. A quote by Georges Clemenceau, the French statesman during World War I, accurately reflects this state of affairs: “I don’t know whether war is an interlude during peace, or peace is an interlude during war.”

General Douglas MacArthur eloquently stated mankind’s current dilemma: “We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater or more equitable system...Armageddon will be at our door” (April 19, 1951, speech to Congress).

One World Government?

As God began to call me into His truth, I had the opportunity to meet with my United States Congressman from Ohio. I had applied to attend the United States Naval Academy and all applicants were required to have a personal interview with their Congressman in the final stages prior to acceptance. At the end of the interview, he asked me if I wished to ask him any questions. Here was a highly respected, long-time member of Congress (a former Speaker of the House) giving me the opportunity to ask him any question on my mind.

I had only one.

I was learning about the soon-coming, world-ruling, supernatural government to be established at the Return of Jesus Christ. With this on my mind, I asked the Congressman his opinion of one world government, if it was in the hands of men. His answer was immediate and emphatic, “I do not believe it would work, but if I did, I would shout it from the housetops.” He went on to express various concerns.

This made a lasting impression. I have never forgotten my conversation with this congressman of over thirty years’ experience in the federal government.

Since that time, many have suggested that *one world government* is the only way to world peace and stability. But many questions arise. *Who* would bring it? *How* would it be phased in? *What laws* would it administer? How would they be *enforced*? Would sovereign nations relinquish their authority to it? Would it succeed, or would it eventually oppress and enslave all mankind? These questions always stop thinkers, planners, leaders and scientists in their tracks!

Therefore, world peace remains as elusive as ever. Seemingly everyone yearns for it, but no one knows how to obtain it. Why? Why cannot the experienced leaders and intelligent thinkers of our time find the way to peace? Why do people understand that the only solution that could bring peace is one world government yet, at the same time, acknowledge that this is utterly impossible if left in the hands of men? If men are not capable of governing their own individual lives, how could they govern the entire world?

WHY Men Cannot Find Peace

Mankind, in his rebellion against God, likes to present his own versions of civilization in the best possible light. In like manner, the false prophets of Israel, as Ezekiel prophesied of our time, are to declare, “Peace; and there was [is] no peace” (13:10). God shows that peace will be elusive to those who forsake His ways.

It has been said that all nations are either preparing for war, at war or recovering from war. History shows this—it has recorded nearly 15,000 wars. Ironically, many of these wars were fought “in search of peace.” But, the outcome of war usually involves a truce that always fails to yield permanent peace. This is because men cannot, and never will, find the way to peace *on their own*, without out-

side help. In reality, they have *no chance* to achieve world peace. Again, *why?*

As part of an extensive prophecy about conditions on Earth in our time, Isaiah answers this question: “The *WAY* of peace *they know not*; and there is *no judgment* in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes therein *shall not know peace*” (59:8). The solutions of men always lead to more wars, ruin, misery, death and destruction. Also, Paul wrote, quoting Isaiah, “And the way of peace have they **NOT KNOWN**” (Rom. 3:17).

How true!

The governments of men simply do not work. They have *never* succeeded in finding permanent solutions to what are, for them, insoluble problems. They do not have the answers to mankind’s greatest questions. Truly, their solutions do reflect “no judgment in their goings.” It has not been given to men to understand the path to peace—or, for that matter, the way to abundance, happiness, health and prosperity. No wonder the great thinkers, leaders, educators and scientists have failed miserably in their quest for peace on Earth! God has not yet *revealed* to the vast majority of mankind the solution to its unending wars, and world troubles.

A Question of Government

But when Christ spoke of the “kingdom,” what did He mean? The gospel of the kingdom of God has two separate aspects.

Many speak of salvation—the belief in an afterlife. Some have supposed that the gospel is exclusively about “receiving eternal life” or the popular idea of “going to heaven” upon death. Of course, by now, we have learned that the Bible has a tremendous amount to say about salvation. Actually, salvation is directly related to—is one aspect of—the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Most assume that God is trying to save the world now—that *today* is the *only* opportunity for salvation for all mankind. But because the masses have no idea *why* they were born—*why* they were put on Earth—they also do not understand why man cannot find peace, happiness, health and abundance on his own. The whole world has been deceived about salvation and the most important questions and answers of life.

The other aspect of the kingdom of God is **GOVERNMENT**. As seen, the word kingdom means *government*. When the kingdom of

God arrives, it will be a world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT. The Bible describes this government in great detail.

Message About Government

This chapter will explain the “government” aspect of the kingdom. Other chapters (with many other of my books) primarily address the “salvation” aspect.

Recall that prior to the birth of Jesus, an angel appeared to His mother, Mary. These verses describe this encounter and what she was told: “...the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto...Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favoured...You shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the *throne of His father David*: and He shall REIGN over the house of Jacob *forever*; and of His KINGDOM there shall be *no end*” (Luke 1:26-33).

We saw Jesus told Pilate, “My *kingdom* [government] is not of this world.” Pilate asked, “Are you a king then?” Christ responded, “You say that I am a king. *To this end was I born*, and for this cause came I into the world” (John 18:36-37). Jesus Christ was born to be a KING!

Here is what we saw Isaiah prophesied about Christ: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the GOVERNMENT shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Of the increase of His GOVERNMENT and PEACE there shall be no end, upon the *throne of David*, and upon HIS KINGDOM, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even *forever*” (9:6-7).

When Christ establishes God’s government on Earth, it will usher in peace for all nations!

All God’s Prophets Preached the Gospel

Earlier, we saw that Peter made an amazing statement of Bible history. He spoke of a time “...when the *times of refreshing* shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which

before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive *until* the times of *restitution* [restoration] *of all things...*" (Acts 3:19-21). Of course, heaven *has* received Christ "*until*" the restoration of all things. But this restitution has not yet happened—hence, the word "until."

In Chapter Two, we discussed that every one (it said "all") of God's true servants has preached that the time is coming when Christ will return and "all things" shall be "restored." Prior to Satan's rebellion, God's government was present on Earth.

For thousands of years, God's servants have foretold the details of its restoration to earth. You have already seen that all of the Old Testament prophets and others announced, in one fashion or another, the coming of the kingdom of God and the "restitution of all things." Here is an account in the *New Testament*, referencing just one of God's Old Testament spokesmen.

Recall that Jude's account records the preaching of Noah's great-grandfather Enoch. This is a direct account of what was spoken almost 4,500 years ago—even before the Flood. Consider the incredible SCOPE of more of this passage: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, *the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints*, to execute judgment upon *all*, and to convince all that are ungodly...of all their...deeds which they have... committed, and of all their hard speeches...sinners have spoken against Him" (vs. 14-15).

Get the clear meaning of this passage. The saints (all true Christians) are coming with Christ to judge the world—to judge "all" according to their conduct.

The Bible has much more to say about the kingdom of God than you have supposed. Once again, the truth is absolutely astonishing—even *shocking*—and you need not be ignorant of it.

Daniel Understood

Just as Enoch understood that the kingdom of God was a literal government that would one day rule over *real* people and *real* nations on Earth, so did the prophet Daniel. He held no illusion that the kingdom was merely some kind of "sentimental fluff" or "warm feeling" set up in the "hearts of men." Through a series of dreams and visions (1:17), God used him to explain much special understanding about *how* and when His kingdom would come to earth.

All that Daniel was shown was to be “*closed up and sealed till the time of the end*” (12:9). We are NOW in the time of the end—and there are many proofs of this. His message is for us, today! Daniel reported big—TREMENDOUS!—news that will affect you in your lifetime! Earlier, we saw that Daniel also understood and spoke the same gospel Jesus preached—and it is critical that we understand what he said.

Daniel recognized that he was simply a mouthpiece through whom GOD was revealing His Master Plan. In chapter two, he was speaking to the Chaldean (Babylonian) King Nebuchadnezzar about matters that had come to the king in a dream. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of a vast empire that he had ruled approximately six hundred years prior to the time of Christ.

The king’s court magicians were not able to reveal what God *could* reveal through His prophet Daniel. It was God’s purpose to reveal, through that worldly human king, that there is an Almighty living God who *rules the entire universe* and all *kings, governments and nations* on Earth are ultimately subject to Him. The humanly-wise King Nebuchadnezzar had no knowledge beyond the existence of other human kings and their many false gods. It was the *true* God’s intention to reveal the existence of *HIS* government and that it rules the entire universe. He also intended to make plain His SUPREME PURPOSE of bringing that government to the earth “in the latter days.”

Take time to carefully read Daniel 2:28-44. This astonishing and detailed prophecy reveals many things about God’s intention to restore His government to earth—including the time sequence in which this will happen.

The first several verses describe the image of a giant man. Verses 32-33 state, “This image’s head was of fine *gold*, his breast and his arms of *silver*, his belly and his thighs of *brass*, His legs of iron, his feet part of *iron and part of clay*.”

This is obviously an image of a man, but one constructed of four distinct parts. Verses 34-35 then describe a supernatural “*stone that smote the image [and] became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth*.” Note that verse 34 states that this stone “was cut out *without hands*,” because God, not men, had formed it.

The “stone” shattered the image and replaced it, going on to eventually encompass all nations—“the whole earth.” This can only be a description of the GOVERNMENT OF GOD coming to earth.

Daniel is merely announcing the same message of the gospel of the kingdom that Christ preached.

You do not need to believe me, because this is precisely what your Bible states. No one needs to “interpret” this series of verses for you.

Just notice verse 37. It plainly states, “*You*, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given *you* a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.” Verse 38 clarifies, “*You* are this head of gold.” Remember, we must always let the Bible interpret the Bible.

Verses 39-40 go on to describe *three successive kingdoms* that would follow the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon.

These verses show an historic succession of WORLD EMPIRES depicted by different metals of which the giant image (statue) was made. These were literal kingdoms: (1) The Chaldean-Babylonian Empire of gold, (2) the Medo-Persian Empire of silver, (3) the Greco-Macedonian Empire of brass, and (4) the Roman Empire, made of iron mixed with clay in its final appearance. The message from history is that these four kingdoms (empires) ruled, and the fourth kingdom will once more rule and influence the world until the kingdom of God is established on Earth.

God expressly reveals to us *now* that He is the one who establishes and removes—and establishes and removes, again and again—earthly governments (kingdoms).

Defining a Kingdom

Many ask, “But exactly what is the Bible definition of a *kingdom*?” Preachers and theologians have tried to spiritualize away the meaning, because they have not carefully examined *God’s* definition.

This is found at the end of verse 39, which refers to these kingdoms “which shall bear rule over all the earth.” This cannot be a reference to a nebulous idea about a kingdom in the “hearts of men.” There is also no way to make this definition fit any particular church or churches. It speaks of rulership by governments with authority over *literal* nations on Earth—and over *literal* people. Will you let someone tell you otherwise or will you believe the *Bible* definition of a kingdom? Remember, these kingdoms “bear rule over all the earth”!

Take note of two important aspects of the great metallic image described here. First, the metal *decreases* in VALUE as we descend

from the head to the legs and feet of the image. This means the quality of each succeeding kingdom/empire is *less* in value than the one preceding it. Second, the metal *increases* in STRENGTH as we descend the statue's body. In other words, the power and scope of each succeeding kingdom/empire is *greater* than the one preceding it.

Finally, notice that the two legs of iron represent a kingdom that is divided. The Roman Empire *was* indeed divided, with capitals at both Rome and Constantinople. The last ten toes of the feet are part of iron and part of clay. Iron does not and cannot mix with clay, so this is a picture of final instability. When the feet break apart, the entire man will collapse. Careful study must be made of three chapters in order to fully understand the succession of these four kingdoms and to see more clearly that the *ten toes* are actually *ten separate kings* who temporarily unite in the last days.

Compare Revelation 13 and 17 with Daniel 7. Together, they present a sobering and powerful prophecy about latter-day events—events that will affect *you and me in our lifetime!* Revelation 17:8 describes a “beast” that ascends out of a “bottomless pit” and is ridden by a “woman.” Verse 12 shows that this beast involves TEN KINGS who shall receive power and unite under a charismatic leader who will take the role of the “beast.” This will be the seventh, and last, short-lived resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire—arising RIGHT NOW in the heart of Europe.

A United States of Europe is coming and lies just ahead. It is vital that you understand what these prophecies mean!

Something incredible happens “in the days of these kings” (the ten toes, which depict the ten last kings of Revelation 17:12). Christ's arrival removes all doubt about exactly WHAT the kingdom of God is. Also, God tells us WHEN it will arrive—“in the days of these kings.” Daniel 2:44 states, “And in the days of these kings *shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people [God will never allow people to seize control], but *it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms*, and it shall stand forever.”

That's right! God—not men—will establish the final and greatest world-ruling empire of all time. And He tells us that He will never allow the opinions or efforts of men to intervene and disrupt it, for it will “stand forever.” This promise is SURE. It *will* happen—whether men believe it or not!

The Woman of Revelation 17

Comparing Daniel 7 with Revelation 13 and 17 reveals there are seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. Six have come and gone—and one remains that is now forming! It will last for about 3 1/2 years, during the terrible period that the Bible calls the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21-22) and the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:1-7). It is after this last resurrection that the kingdom of God will be established.

It is crucial to understand another important connection to the seven revivals (or resurrections) of the Roman system. Revelation 17 describes each revival as having “a *woman* sit[ting] upon [the] scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having *seven heads* and *ten horns*” (vs. 3). The seven heads are seven separate revivals, with a *ten-horn* final revival composed of ten kings.

Of the woman, verses 5-6 state that “...upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the *saints*, and with the blood of the *martyrs* of Jesus.” Verse 1 calls her a “great whore that sits upon *many waters*...” with verse 15 explaining that the “waters” are many “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

This is a graphic description of a very large and powerful *Gentile church* that is a modern-day descendant of the ancient system of Babylon. She is a “mother” of many “harlot” daughter churches. These daughters came out of her in protest because they disagreed with some few of her abominations. Understand. This is not a small church, but rather a “great” church ruling many “peoples” and “nations.” Verse 2 speaks of her “fornication” with the “kings of the earth.” And verse 18 speaks of the woman as “that *great city*, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

This is a very different woman than the one of Revelation 12, who is to marry Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:7; Matt. 25:1-10; Eph. 5:23) at His Return. This chapter describes the *true* Church of God that the powerful Gentile church has persecuted for 2,000 years (17:6). God will destroy this great whore and her harlot daughters by turning the beast she rides against her (17:16). But first she must “ride” the final resurrection of the Holy Roman (Babylonian system) Empire!

There is not much time left until this last revival appears—it is forming even now!—with the wonderful kingdom of God to appear soon after. All the governments of men—including that of every large and small country on Earth today—will be smashed and replaced by God’s coming SUPERGOVERNMENT.

We saw that Jesus Christ was born to be a King—to rule all nations of the earth *forever* with the help of other spirit-composed kings. Notice again: “And out of His [Christ’s] mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should *smite the nations*: and He shall *rule them* with a rod of iron...and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:15-16).

Soon, Revelation 11:15 will come to pass, and the whole world will see it: “The kingdoms of *this world* are become the kingdoms of *our Lord*, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.” Just as there is no doubt that countries today represent real, literal, physical kingdoms (nations with governments), there can be no doubt, from this verse, that God’s coming government is also real and literal, ruling over actual nations on Earth.

The Kingdom in the Hearts of Men?

Many choose to believe that the kingdom of God enters into people rather than people entering into the kingdom. We have seen that people must ignore the plain statements of Christ in order to draw this conclusion. They “spiritualize away” the coming very real kingdom of God in order to turn it into an ethereal feeling in the hearts of professing Christians. Deceivers say that to have the Spirit of God is to contain and experience the kingdom within you. Many centuries of outright deception have caused millions to believe nothing more than fiction—instead of the PLAIN TRUTH of the Bible.

Since Christ said the gospel was about the kingdom of God, and men do not know what the kingdom of God is, they have concluded that the kingdom may be a particular church denomination or Christianity collectively. Others reduce it to a “warm feeling” in the “hearts of people.” Still others believe that it is the “Millennium” or even the “British Empire.” Some have even concluded that the gospel of the kingdom of God is not for mankind today!

People need to wake up to the deception—the mass delusion—of a supposed Christianity that denies virtually all the PLAIN TRUTHS

of the Bible! God's plan for mankind is staggering—incomparable to anything human beings have devised to replace what He says. But the world ignores plain, clear, unmistakable scriptures found throughout the Bible about the kingdom of God, to replace the truth with a vastly inferior supposed “salvation” in heaven and a “kingdom” in men's hearts.

Since it is obvious to many that people *can* enter into the many modern-day countries of what was once the British Empire and that people *can* enter into a church, deceived religionists concocted the idea that the kingdom of God rests in the “hearts of men.”

I have often heard people express something similar to the following: “The kingdom of God can be established in the hearts of men if all Christians everywhere will just work together in love to bring about world peace and tolerance toward all.”

Where do they get this idea? Generally from a *mistranslation* of Luke 17:20-21! In this passage, Christ *appeared* to speak of the kingdom of God “within you.” We need to examine this *mistranslation*. If this verse actually does say that the kingdom of God is “within” people, then it contradicts all the other scriptures we have examined. And if the Bible contradicts itself in such obvious ways, we can throw it away, for it cannot be the Word of God.

The Kingdom in the Pharisees' Hearts?

Let's now examine Luke 17:20-21: “And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, *when* the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God comes not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo *here!* or, Lo *there!* For, behold, the kingdom of God is *within you.*”

If you do not understand anything else about this passage, get this one point straight! Christ was speaking to carnal-minded, lying, hypocritical Pharisees. Even by the most vague and ethereal idea that the kingdom of God is something in men's hearts, there is no way Christ could have been referring to it being in the hearts of these people! The Pharisees were self-righteous and unconverted. They sought to tempt and accuse Christ at every turn. It is utterly silly and even ludicrous to say that the kingdom of God was “within” *them*. Do not lose sight of the fact that, when Christ responded, it states, “He answered *them.*” He addressed “them”—the Pharisees. Understand that the Pharisees were not in the Church, and the Church of

God was certainly NOT in the Pharisees. Actually, the New Testament Church did not yet even exist.

Notice what Christ did NOT state in this verse. He did not say, “the kingdom of God will be set up in the hearts of men” or “in your hearts.” What He did say is, “the kingdom of God IS...” It is important that we understand Christ was not describing, in this one instance, the kingdom of God as something in the future, but rather He spoke of it in the *present tense*.

Why?

I have said that this is a misrendering of the original Greek. The actual Greek words that Luke used here are much better translated “in the midst of you” or “among you.” A number of other alternate translations read this way, and most Bibles with marginal references include these phrases.

The Revised Standard Version states, “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you,” and the Moffatt translation offers even more insight. He translates these two verses as “He answered them, ‘The REIGN of God is not coming as you hope to catch sight of it; no one will say, ‘Here it is’ or ‘There it is,’ for the REIGN of God *is now in your midst*.’”

Let’s ask, what—or who—could it have been that Christ was speaking of? What—or who—was it that was “in the midst” of the Pharisees? What—or who—was “among” them?

The Son of God—Jesus Christ Himself!—was standing in the middle of this group of Pharisees. Think of it this way: They were in the presence of a direct representative who will “reign” in the coming kingdom of God. It was *Jesus* who was standing “among” them. Clearly, Christ was speaking of the kingdom of God, *through Himself as its representative*, being right where they were standing.

Let’s understand! The Pharisees knew of the many Old Testament prophecies and scriptures describing God’s kingdom. They were well aware of the verses that we have studied from the book of Daniel, and other places. They would have understood why Peter would later say, “*all the holy prophets*” spoke of the “restitution of all things.” They were familiar with the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and many others. The Pharisees ignored the scriptures about Christ’s *First Coming* because they wanted to focus almost entirely on the many scriptures describing His *Second Coming*!

Obviously, the Pharisees did not believe the kingdom of God was a church. They certainly didn’t believe it was the British Empire—

which the world was not to see for many centuries. And they did not believe it was more emotional sentiment in men's hearts. They fully understood that it had to do with *government*—RULERSHIP!

The problem was that they did not understand WHEN the kingdom was to come or that its purpose was not merely to sweep away the Roman legions from Palestine. Had they understood Christ's *First Coming*, they would have better understood the "when" of His *Second Coming*—and *why* it had to come much later. So, they were hoping for a conquering Messiah who would aid them in their quest to reverse Roman rule by replacing the Romans with themselves, as masters over Rome.

Jesus explained the fallacy of their thinking. He made it clear that the coming of the kingdom was not a small, local event, merely limited to rulership over where the Jews lived in Palestine.

The Jews were looking for a physical government located in a single nation—their own! *This* is why Christ told them not to think of it as being "over *there*" or "right *here*."

Christ not only knew He was born to be a King, He recognized this meant that He was destined to be the *ultimate* King over His Kingdom. (Daniel 7:17-18 and 23 demonstrate that the words for *kingdom* and *king* are interchangeable in the Bible.)

By simply continuing to read more of the context in Luke 17, we are left with *no doubt* as to what Christ was referring to. Read verse 24, where, like Matthew 24:27, it refers to, "For as the *lightning*, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be *in His day*." Christ was describing a stunning, world-shaking event that would be as visible as lightning. But, notice the term "in His day," which shows that it is a yet future event. Take time to read Matthew 24:26-30 and how it describes the "day when Christ will be revealed."

By no stretch of the imagination did Christ say that the kingdom of God was in the unrighteous, carnal, hateful Pharisees—who continually plotted His death—any more than He was saying it was a church.

Christ had previously indicted the Pharisees with a terrible warning. No doubt, it had made them angry, and it led them to try to catch Him saying something that was incorrect about either the kingdom of God or any other matter. In Luke 13:28-29, He had warned them, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when *you* shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom

of God, and *you yourselves thrust out*. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”

Christ was plainly telling the Pharisees that they were not going to be in God’s kingdom. They would not be allowed to *enter* it, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would—though these men have not yet entered it (Heb. 11:13, 39-40).

Kingdom of God “at hand”?

Someone will surely quote Mark 1:15, where Jesus had preached that “the kingdom of God is *at hand*.” There, recall that He had also gone on to add, “Repent you, and believe the gospel.” So some have concluded that when people repent and believe the gospel, thus becoming part of the church, they simultaneously enter the kingdom of God, which was, sort of, waiting for them—it was “at hand.”

As with Luke 17:21, people read into a verse what they want it to say. Christ did not say the kingdom of God had been set up or established—or that it was a church. These are all “traditions of men” that people observe in place of God’s plain Word (Mark 7:7).

Luke 16:16 showed that from John the Baptist’s time, the kingdom of God had become something that was being “preached.” The kingdom had not arrived yet, but it was then being *preached*. Preaching the kingdom and having the opportunity to qualify to enter it certainly were then (and still are) “at hand.”

Saints Rule with Christ

Before returning to Luke, let’s examine more of what Daniel recorded about the kingdom of God.

Remember that Christ will come like lightning shining from the east to the west (Matt. 24:27) in a climactic event that no one could possibly miss. But will He come to rule the earth by Himself—or will there be others coming with Him? We could ask: When Christ establishes His world-ruling government, who else might be part of the structure that He establishes? If the governments of men require the efforts of many, who assist a supreme leader, is God’s government different? No!

Daniel 7:13 speaks of Christ coming in the “clouds of heaven.” Recall that, before His Return, God officially grants Him the author-

ity to rule the world He is returning to. The next verse states, “And there was GIVEN Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (vs. 14).

Again, we ask whether Christ rules alone, or are others to rule with Him? Exactly how does God intend to *manage* all of the peoples and nations of the earth?

Several more verses in Daniel 7 must be repeated because they are so critical to understand. Remember that the kingdom of God is prophesied to replace the four previously discussed world-ruling kingdoms, described in chapter 2. Now notice verses 17-18: “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But *the saints* of the Most High shall *take the kingdom*, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.”

Believe this verse for what it says! The ultimate calling of Christians is to join with Christ in order to share rulership in the kingdom of God over *all* nations and *all* peoples. Truly, Christ is “*King OF KINGS* and *Lord OF LORDS*.” These other kings and lords can be you or anyone who is willing to accept God’s terms for entering His kingdom.

Verses 19-20 shed additional light on what happens when the saints return with Christ. Their first responsibility is to replace what is called the “fourth beast,” which rules with the assistance of a “little horn.” This *little horn* is the RELIGIOUS KINGDOM that is the same as the woman who rides the beast of Revelation 17. This religious government (centered in Rome) has ruled over all of the previous resurrections, or revivals, of the Holy Roman Empire, since AD 554.

Now read verses 21-22: “I beheld, and *the same horn made war with the saints* [plainly the work of the Babylonish whore of Rev. 17:5-6], and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and *judgment was given to the saints* of the Most High; and the time came that *the saints possessed the kingdom*.”

Finally, Daniel’s long prophecy concludes with verse 27 further confirming the marvelous potential lying ahead for all the true saints of God. Notice: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, *shall be given to the people of the saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

What could be plainer? No wonder Christ stated, “And he that *overcomes*, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give

power over the nations: and he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27) and, a few verses later, added, “To him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne...*” (3:21).

The phrase “in My throne” is used because Christ knew His throne is on this earth, unlike the Father’s, which is in heaven. Luke 1:32 showed that Christ will sit in Jerusalem on David’s Throne. (Also see Revelation 5:10, 20:4, Matthew 5:5, Psalm 25:12-13 and 37:11.) There can be no doubt that when Christ Returns, the saints will rule with Him—ON EARTH!

Let’s now examine an extensive and very important parable that Christ spoke so that people would understand the coming of the kingdom of God and the Christian’s responsibility to QUALIFY in order to be part of it.

The Parable of the Pounds

Referenced earlier, Luke 19:11-27 contains a parable written to illustrate what is at stake when the kingdom of God comes. In it, Christ compared Himself to a Nobleman who went to a “far country” (a type of joining the Father in heaven) for nearly 2,000 years, until His Return. The disciples believed that the kingdom of God would “appear immediately,” and Christ wanted to illustrate that much time would pass before it did.

In this parable, Christ completely dispels any idea that the kingdom would *immediately* appear in the form of His Church. And, of course, He has not yet returned to this earth.

The “Nobleman” of the parable “called” his “ten servants” (a type of Christians being called out of this world by God) and instructed them to increase the worth of a “pound” (money) that He gave to each one of them for investment. The *pound* actually represented a kind of symbolic unit of basic spiritual worth or value. Remember that it was a parable, so Christ was not referring to any kind of literal money. He told His servants to “Occupy till I come”—or to “grow” the pound into more money. While the Nobleman was gone, several of the servants said, “We will not have this man to *reign* over us.” It is important to understand the intent of this statement.

These “citizens” understood that the Nobleman (Christ) was coming to “reign” on Earth. They wanted no part of this and rejected

His government (reign) over them—and thus their future part in it (vs. 27). In the parable, they understood that the kingdom of God would be a GOVERNMENT ruling over the earth. Remember, the parable had begun with the Nobleman (Christ) going to heaven to “receive for Himself a *kingdom* and to *return*.”

Upon the Nobleman’s return, He called each of the servants into His presence to receive a report of how each man had increased the pound that he had been given. Some had gained five pounds, others ten, etc., but one servant had buried his pound in the ground and produced nothing with it. Christ wanted an accounting of how “each man had *gained*” while He had been away.

The first servant had gained *ten* pounds and Christ explained his reward by saying, “you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you *authority over ten cities*” (vs. 17).

The servant who had gained *five* pounds was put “*over five cities*.” Because the second servant produced half as much, his reward was half as great. So, these men were given “authority”—they were put into positions of rulership “over cities.” Their reward was to “reign” with Christ (Jude 14) in His world-ruling kingdom. How obvious!—but only obvious for those who take the time to read the Bible!

The servant who buried his pound in a napkin had wasted a marvelous opportunity to qualify for rulership in the kingdom of God. It states, “And He [the Nobleman, Jesus] said to him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, *you wicked servant*.”

This servant had not grown. He had not produced anything with his life and thus had not qualified for rulership over cities in the kingdom of God. Christ gave the wicked servant’s reward to the one who had gained ten pounds—so that the latter had even more than his own reward. The cities that this man’s conduct had caused him to lose would have to be ruled by *someone*. Otherwise, they would become abandoned, with no ruler assigned authority over them.

Some brief history is needed to better understand the setting of this parable. Christ was a Jew who was preaching this parable in the land of *Judah* (Judea). Judah was merely one of twelve tribes in ancient Israel. Ten of those tribes had become lost in identity over 700 years earlier, because they had rebelled against Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. They had been taken into captivity by the ancient Assyrians and had later migrated into Northwestern Europe, becoming the democratic, primarily English-speaking peoples of the United States,

Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and certain other Western European nations. Only some of the tribes of Benjamin and Levi remained with the Jews, whose capital was Jerusalem.

When the Parable of the Pounds speaks of the Nobleman's citizens "hating Him," and states that they said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," it is a reference to the Jews. History plainly records that they rejected the authority of Jesus Christ. This is what John 1:11 means when it states that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The "ten servants" (those Christians called today) are then a reference, in type, to the lost TEN TRIBES of Israel. Christ offered *them* an opportunity to rule, because the Jews rejected His authority over them.

Sadly, some do not want the true Christ of the Bible to tell them what to do. They *do not* want Him to rule over their lives and conduct. But they *do* want salvation—with no strings attached!

No one will be given rulership before he has proven that he *can be ruled!* No one can be part of God's *world-ruling government* unless he has learned to submit to the *government of God* and to be ruled by God and Jesus Christ in this life. This is the all-important lesson of the parable of the pounds!

When Christ called His servants into account, He was showing that all people will one day stand and give an account before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10). Like the reward of the twelve apostles, who will be put over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:27-28), some will be given great AUTHORITY to rule over cities with Christ "in the throne of His glory."

WHEN Will the Kingdom Come?

All want to know *when* Christ will return. The disciples asked Him, "What shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3.)

The entirety of the next forty-eight verses in Matthew 24 is Christ's answer detailing many of the events, in sequence, that would precede His Coming. In verse 36, referring to the exact time of His Coming, He stated, "But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

Just a few weeks later, in Acts 1:6-7, prior to Christ's final ascension back into heaven, the disciples proved that they still did not either understand or really accept His previous explanation. So, they

asked Him again. Notice: "...they asked of Him, saying, Lord, will You *at this time* RESTORE again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons*, which the Father has put in His own power." Christ gave them the same answer as in Matthew—"it is *not for you to know* the times or the seasons."

It is important to note that the New Testament Church would be established just *ten days* after this encounter (2:1). Why would Christ answer, "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons" if the kingdom of God was going to be the Church, which was to be almost immediately established (on Pentecost)—only ten days later?

The same is true for us today. We cannot know exactly when Christ's kingdom will come, but we can know a close approximation—and this time is very near. In Luke 21:31, at the end of a long prophecy paralleling Matthew 24, Christ stated, "WHEN you see these things [key events] come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh [near] at hand." (To learn more about the end time, read our booklet *Are These the Last Days?*)

He *did* want them to know that "you shall receive POWER, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8), but *not* to know precisely when the kingdom would arrive. The same is true for all who are converted today. We cannot know exactly when Christ will return, but we *can* know that we will receive *power* now to grow and overcome—and to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God until He does.

God's Intervention or Cosmocide

We live in a dangerous age. World conditions grow increasingly worse. Nuclear World War III looms on the horizon. The military technology capable of wiping humanity off this earth now exists. The world's greatest minds realize that one world government is the only thing that can stop mankind from destroying itself. Yet these same leaders also understand that a unified world government is impossible as long as men lead it.

So man is faced with two options; either God intervenes to stop him from destroying himself, or he is annihilated.

The worst time the world has ever seen—the Great Tribulation—is soon to smash into an unsuspecting humanity. The outcome if God does not intervene—"except those days should be shortened"—is that "*there should no flesh be saved.*" God *will* mercifully

intervene and save mankind by sending Jesus Christ to set up His world-ruling government to bring peace to man. He will force humans to live in harmony with each other.

This government will not be led by men. The all-powerful, living *Jesus Christ* will usher it in. History records that government in the hands of men *fails every time!* Only by the power of God can this world-ruling government succeed in finally bringing world peace.

Men's Efforts Cannot Bring World Peace

True Christians are not activists seeking to “make this world a better place”—thereby bringing the kingdom of God to earth. They have their “*feet shod* with the preparation of the *gospel of peace*” (Eph. 6:15). They walk through life having their “feet” covered with the knowledge of how the true gospel spells the only way to final world peace. They understand with certainty that the kingdom of God—bringing “government *and* peace” (Isa. 9:6-7)—is coming. They know what lies ahead for this world.

They do not go off to serve and kill in the endless, futile wars of men and nations, or participate in the governmental affairs of men. Neither do they take matters into their own hands, and try to supposedly “spread the kingdom,” thereby attempting to neutralize God’s purpose, which is to show man that he is not capable of governing himself!

Instead, they actively participate in and support the most important Work on the face of the earth—the Work you have come in contact with!

They also recognize that God’s Plan to shake world events moves on His timetable. They know they must grow and overcome now, as though there is no tomorrow. Notice what Paul was inspired to write: “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a *thief in the night*. For when they [leaders and religionists] shall say, *Peace and safety*; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But *you, brethren, are not in darkness*, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (I Thes. 5:2-4).

All who understand the truths of this book need never again be in the dark about God’s Plan or their awesome potential role within it.

Citing Isaiah 52:7, Paul also recorded, “How beautiful are *the feet* of them that preach the *gospel of peace*, and bring glad tidings

[the good news of the gospel] of good things” (Rom. 10:15). In verse 16, he went on to cite another passage from Isaiah: “But they have not all *obeyed* the gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, *who has believed our report?*” (53:1).

Of course, most people will *not* believe “God’s report” of what lies ahead for civilization. They will *not* believe that they are unable to bring world peace through human effort. Many will shout “Peace, peace; *when there is no peace*” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11, 14-15), and most will continue eagerly believing their false predictions, even in the face of abject failure.

The professing Christians of this world will continue desperately striving to bring about the kingdom of God and world peace through human effort. Deceived religious leaders will tell them that this is their “Christian duty.” Many will see this as the sole mission of their church. Millions are looking for happiness, abundance, peace and security around every corner—but will be terribly disappointed in the *short term*. This is because world conditions, leading into a final devastating period of worldwide calamity, will get far worse before they ultimately get better.

City of Peace, Finally

But in the end, the world will NOT be disappointed! Good news lies ahead.

The capital city of the modern-day Jewish nation of Israel is Jerusalem. Though this city has known nothing but war throughout its history, its name literally means “CITY OF PEACE.” It carries this name because Christ—the PRINCE OF PEACE—will return there to establish His kingdom. The Prince of Peace will *rule* from the City of Peace. Beginning in this single city, peace will quickly spread around the world. Eventually, it *WILL* “break out” everywhere!

Final, true world peace, happiness, abundance and prosperity will come in your lifetime. It is as certain as the Word of God!

“Thy Kingdom Come”

Most people are familiar with what is called “The Lord’s Prayer.” Many can recite it without effort, having practiced it without understanding that it is simply a *model* or *guideline* for how to pray. I learned it at age four. It begins, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hal-

lowed be Your Name. *Your kingdom come.* Your will be done in earth...” (Matt. 6:9-10). This short prayer continues for three more verses. But, of the millions who know and use it, how many actually think about the phrase “Thy *kingdom* come”—or God’s “will [His Master Plan] being done on earth”? For 2,000 years, many may have basically sought to follow Christ’s instruction, praying, “Thy kingdom come” without ever really pondering the staggering meaning behind this small phrase.

Have you?

Only a few verses later, in the same chapter, Jesus instructed, “But seek you *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (vs. 33). Christians must be continually seeking the kingdom of God *FIRST*—above everything else—in their lives! How can they do this if they do not know *what* it is—or *when* it will come—or how it affects their own salvation?

But now YOU do!

Will you pray, “Your kingdom come”? Will you make “*your* calling and election sure” (II Pet. 1:10)? Will you overcome as Christ did? Will you grow, qualify, and develop in spiritual character—gain more pounds than when you started, so God will get a “return” on His investment in you? Or will you bury your pound, and with it your opportunity to rule over all nations in God’s kingdom—to teach *others* the right way of life?

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AP

The Restored Church of God

1000 Ambassador Drive
Wadsworth, OH 44281
USA

P.O. Box 4064
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266

Fax: (330) 334-6513

E-mail: info@rcg.org

Web: rcg.org