

STATEMENT OF BELIEFS OF THE GLOBAL CHURCH OF GOD

FOREWORD

As I've mentioned in sermons and member letters, the Global Church of God is preparing a detailed statement of beliefs. Although it is not intended to be a definitive exposition of every doctrine the Church has ever taught on every aspect of Christianity, it will nevertheless be quite substantive.

We believe this to be one of the most important projects we have undertaken as a Church, and have already devoted much time and effort to its successful fulfillment. It took a number of months to write the original draft and many additional months to have the entire ministry study the document and submit edits and suggestions. The project has recently been given to our editors to shape it into the finished product. That process, too, will probably take several months to complete, since it will involve a number of drafts to be reviewed by the extended editorial team, including the Headquarters ministry. We are, of course, always careful to present accurate and nourishing spiritual food for God's flock. **But on this project—a definitive statement of our fundamental beliefs and doctrines—we are being even more mindful and diligent to dot every "i" and to cross every "t"!**

We realize that many of you are anxious to see the statement of beliefs, having received numerous inquiries about it already. It's uplifting to know that so many of our brethren yearn to prove every spiritual matter (1 Thess. 5:21)—a task for which the statement of beliefs will be an invaluable aid. We *all* need to be firmly and strongly rooted in our Christian beliefs so that we cannot be blown about by the winds of *false* doctrine—winds that have blown all too frequently these past many years!

To this end, then, we are making available our *current working version* of the Global Church of God statement of beliefs. It has already been made available to all of Global's ministry, and a number of edits have been adopted. There will be further edits, changes in organizational structure, and possible additions to, and deletions of, current material. Also, please be aware that since verification of scriptural citations is one of the last editing steps, there are bound to be a number of incorrect references at this stage of the project—especially considering the large number of verses cited. **But we do not anticipate any basic or fundamental change to be made that would alter our basic understanding of any doctrine or belief.**

So here is the statement of beliefs in its current form. It may look somewhat different when it has been finalized and printed, but should not differ in any fundamental comprehension of God's Truth and His revealed way of righteous living. May God bless you as you study and prove His glorious Truth!

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for the Council of Elders of the Global Church of God

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INTRODUCTION: The Global Church of God, with its world headquarters in San Diego, California, has members in many countries around the world. What is the mission of Christ's Church? *First*, Christ commissioned His Church to proclaim *His* true "gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark. 1:14)—unto "all nations" (16:15; Matt. 28:18-19). *Second*, He commanded His ministers to "feed the *flock* of God" (1 Peter 5:2; John 21:15-18). That *flock* represents His *sheep* that make up his true Church—the *Church of God!*

What is God's true Church? God's Church is a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led *spiritual organism* (Rom. 8:9-14; 1 Cor. 12:13)—*not* a corporate body. However, in this world it is necessary to have a corporate organization (that is duly registered and recognized by the "higher powers"—Rom. 13:1-7) in order to legally carry on any kind of organized work.

This Statement of Beliefs is neither complete nor exhaustive. However, the Global Church of God here expounds some of its major doctrines that, hopefully, will help others understand those teachings.

THE "WORD OF GOD"/THE "HOLY BIBLE" The Word of God is the only true basis of all church doctrine. Before examining the major doctrines of the Global Church of God, we need to realize that all of its doctrines are based on the Word of God. Only on the *foundation* of God's Word should any church base its doctrines! Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God"(Matt. 4:4). God calls His Word " the Holy Scriptures" (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15). The Bible alone has always been the *bedrock foundation* of the beliefs and practices of the "Church of God." God's written Word is the absolute, infallible *authority* in all matters pertaining to *doctrine* and *practice*. However His Word must be "rightly divided" to be properly understood (2 Tim. 2:15). Mere mortals are told that God's Word is not to be *privately interpreted* (2 Peter 1:20-21). We must let God interpret His own Word by comparing scripture with scripture to see how He interprets his own symbols, parables, etc.

The Scriptures were divinely inspired—"God-breathed [Gk. *theopneustos*]" (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Therefore, they comprise the "TRUTH." Nearly 2,000 years ago, Pilate asked Christ, "What is Truth?" (John 18:38). "Your WORD is truth" (John 17:17), said Jesus. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (8:32). God's written Word constitutes His "Truth" for mankind. All church beliefs and doctrines must be solidly based on God's Word—and nothing else!

As inspired by God in its original manuscripts (*none* of which are now extant), the Scriptures were perfect and infallible. The Old Testament was written in *Hebrew*—except a few passages, that were written in *Aramaic*. The original New Testament Scriptures were written in *Greek*, with the possible exception of the books of Matthew and Hebrews. Many thousands of ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts give us a complete and accurate record of God's Word for humanity. Even though no single *manuscript* or *translation* is wholly accurate, nevertheless, the real Truth can be ascertained from virtually every known translation of the Bible. The Global Church of God uses the New King James Version (NKJV) as its standard translation, but sometimes uses other versions for clarification or elucidation, where another translation has rendered a passage of Scripture more accurately, or more understandable.

THE "GODHEAD"—WHO AND WHAT IS GOD? "God is *spirit*" (John 4:24)! God is eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent! God is *Creator* of the universe (Gen. 1:1), and by virtue of that fact, He is also its supreme *Ruler* (Ps. 103:18-19). As the Almighty, All-wise God, He is the supreme *Judge* of mankind (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 96:10-13; Acts 10:42; Heb. 12:23). And He is also mankind's *Savior* (John 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 4:14). Even though "there is only one God" (1 Cor. 8:4; Deut. 6:4), that God is a *divine Family*, comprised of more than one person (Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:19; 3:15; Heb. 2:10-11).

The *Trinity* doctrine (which holds that the "Godhead" is comprised of *three persons*) is unscriptural. Trinitarians believe the Bible reveals a *triune God*: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Word of God mentions the "Godhead" three times (Acts 17:29 KJV; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9). However, the Bible reveals that the *GODHEAD* is a *divine Family*, that at present is only comprised of *two persons*—"the *Father* and the *Son*" (1 John 2:22; 2 John 9). The Holy Spirit is definitely *not* a person. (Read our booklet titled, [The God You Can Know](#).)

Though the angels are called "sons of God" (Job. 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), they are *not* God's "begotten" sons, as was Jesus (Heb. 1:5), and as are all of God's divinely begotten *human* children (1 Peter 1:3, 23; 1 John 3:1-9). Since the angels are merely His *created sons*, they are therefore not worthy of "worship" (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). God forbids any human to worship any other human (cf. Acts 10:25-26); but when we—who are now only God's *begotten* children—are fully *born* of the Spirit, and are glorified with *immortality*, then God says, "I will make them [humans] come and worship before your feet" (Rev. 3:9).

The Father Clearly, the Father is the supreme Person in the Godhead. Even Jesus Christ acknowledged that His Father was "greater" than He (John 10:29; 14:28). As Father of His great family, *Hebegets* us through His Spirit (James 1:17-18; 1 John 5:1).

The *Father* was *not* generally known in Old Testament times. Jesus specifically said He came to "declare" the Father [Gk. *exegeomai*, meaning "to make known," or "reveal"] (John 1:18; 17:24-26). A thorough study of the New Testament shows that Christ constantly looked to and honored His Father, saying that everything He said and did came from His Father (12:49-50). In fact, Christ mentioned His father over 100 times in the Gospel of John. Further, Jesus taught us to pray to our heavenly Father: "Our *Father* in heaven, hallowed be *Your* name. *Your* kingdom come. *Your* will be done... For *Yours* is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:9-13).

In nearly all of His epistles, Paul refers first to the Father, then mentions the Son (Rom. 1:7). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort..." (2 Cor. 1:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:3 and Gal. 1:3). The Apostles Peter and James also gave precedence to the Father in their epistles (2 Peter 1:2; James 1:1).

The Son, Jesus Christ (the long-awaited "Messiah") The Father created all things through His Chief Executive Officer, *Jesus Christ*. This means that *both* the Father and Son were *Co-Creators* of the universe. Jesus is the only person to have been *begotten* as a human being by God the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). As the Father's "only begotten Son" (1 John 4:9), Christ was the only human who had a divine, rather than a human, Father. Jesus Christ was begotten by the Father in the womb of His mother Mary (Matt. 1:20; John 1:14). All humans, except Jesus, have had both a human father and mother.

The divine Person who was later born as *Jesus*, the "son of God" (John 1:34, 49), had walked and talked with the patriarchs and prophets during Old Testament times (Gen. 18; 32:24-30; Ex. 33:11-23; Joshua 5:13-15). He was, in fact, that divine Personage called Melchisedec (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-24), who was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life..." (v. 3). As the pre-incarnate Jesus, He was called "LORD"—Heb. *YHWH* or *YHVH*, often spelled *Yahweh*, meaning "Eternal." That Great Being was later "made flesh" and dwelt among humans (John 1:1-14).

Some believe Christ didn't exist until *after* He was born of Mary. They *mistakenly* think Jesus was/is a "created" Being—believing that He was the "*first* of the creation of God." The *King James Version* of the Bible says Christ is "The Faithful and True Witness, **the BEGINNING of the creation of God**" (Rev. 3:14). But other translations render the meaning of this verse more accurately, showing that Christ was "the **BEGINNER** [Originator] of God's creation" (*Ferrar Fenton* and *The Modern Language Bible* translations). Numerous versions render this verse as follows: Christ is "... the **ORIGIN** of God's creation" (*Moffatt, The Good News Bible, NRSV* and *Goodspeed*). *The New American Bible* says Jesus is "the **SOURCE** of God's Creation." *The Living Bible* states that Jesus is "the **PRIMEVAL SOURCE** of God's creation." *The New English Bible* says, Christ is "the **PRIME SOURCE** of all God's creation." Finally, *Cassirer's* translation speaks of Him as "the **ULTIMATE SOURCE** of God's creation." Christ is "the **BEGINNER**," not the "**BEGINNING**" of God's creation!

Further, God's Word reveals that the Father created all things by or through Jesus **Christ, whom humans might today call His Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things... and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by* whom are all things..." (1 Cor. 8:6 KJV). The divine "mystery... has been hidden in God [the Father], who created all things *through* Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9). The KJV says the Father "created all things *by* Jesus Christ" (See also Col. 1:16 and Heb. 1:2).

One of Christ's O.T. names was **YAHWEH**, translated as "**THE ETERNAL**" by James Moffatt and other translations, and as "**THE EVER-LIVING [ONE]**" by Ferrar Fenton. **YAHWEH** means **the One who WAS, who IS, and who IS TO COME!** Yahweh has therefore always existed. Clearly, *Yahweh* (the LORD) was the One who walked and talked with the O.T. patriarchs and prophets—the very same Person who later "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:56-58).

Jesus was *begotten* by His heavenly father—was *conceived* and nurtured for about nine months in the womb of His earthly mother Mary, the wife of Joseph (Matt. 1:16-25). Christ was, therefore, both *human* and *divine*—**IMMANUEL**, "God with us" (v. 23). As the

"Lamb of God" (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6), the *sinless* Jesus was slain on behalf of the sins of all mankind, thereby becoming our substitute sacrifice (John 3:16; Is. 53:1-12). "Christ... did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22; 2 Co. 5:21; Heb. 4:15). But His *death* on the cross doesn't save us. Rather, it is His *life*—as our Living Savior—by which we receive eternal life. "Having now been *justified* [or "reconciled," v. 10] by His blood.... **We shall be saved by HIS LIFE**" (Rom. 5:8-10, 19).

The Holy Spirit (Gk. *Hagion Pneuma*) God's Holy Spirit is *not* a person; neither is it called a *person* anywhere in either the Old or New Testaments. Some translations of John 14:26 and 15:26 refer to "the Holy Spirit" (Gk. *to Pneuma to Hagion*) as "He," rather than rendering it by the English pronoun "It." The Spirit of God is the *mind, life* and *power* of the Great God. By it,

He imparts to us His mind, life and power. The Holy Spirit is inherent in the divine Beings known as Father and Son, and emanates from them, filling the entire universe (Jer. 23:24; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7). If God's Spirit were a Person, then Christ would have been begotten by *it*, rather than by the Father, according to Matthew 1:18-20.

It was by that same Spirit that God created the universe, and all creatures, both physical and spiritual (Gen. 1:1-2; Rev. 4:11). By that Spirit Christ maintains the universe (Heb. 1:2-3). That same Spirit is given to all who repent of their sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38-39). And through the power of God's Spirit all believers will eventually be resurrected and changed from mortal to immortal beings (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-55). (For proof that God's Spirit is not a person, read our brochure, [The God You Can Know.](#))

THE ANGELS Since angels were created *before* men, we must first consider the biblical teaching in regard to the angels. What or who are the "angels"? They are "spirit" beings (Heb. 1:7); and they serve as God's *messengers* to humans (v. 14). Apparently, they were created *before* the physical universe and the earth were brought into existence (Job 38:1-7).

The Holy Angels Those angels who steadfastly *obeyed* their Creator are now known as "holy angels" (Matt. 25:31). As God's messengers, they serve Him in various capacities, both in heaven and on earth (Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10). The Bible only mentions two of the holy angels by name: *Michael* (Dan. 12:1, Rev. 12:7, Jude 9), and *Gabriel* (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19).

God tells humans *not* to worship angels: "Let no man defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and *worship of angels*, intruding into those things which he has not seen..." (Col. 2:18). The Apostle John says, "And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant.... Worship God'" (Rev. 22:8-9; cf. 19:10). Paul says, "Do you not know that *we* ["the saints" v. 2] shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3).

The Evil Angels (Satan and his demons) The Bible reveals that God did *not* create "Satan" (Heb. "adversary") *or* the "evil angels." Rather, when God created the angelic hosts, they were perfect, sinless spirit beings. One of those angels was created as a very handsome, incredibly intelligent being named *Hillel* (Lat. *Lucifer*), who *became* God's enemy when he rebelled against his Maker (Is. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19; Jude 6; Luke 10:18), and led one third of the angels in rebellion against their Creator (Rev. 12:3-4, 7-9). Lucifer had once been one of the powerful "covering" *cherubim* (Ezek. 28:14; Ex. 25:20), who had served at the very throne of God in heaven (Ezek. 28:16). When Lucifer rebelled against God, his name was changed to *Satan*, "Adversary."

Sometime after their creation, God put myriads of His angels on this earth, which He then assigned to them as their home (Jude 6). One-third of the angels followed the former Lucifer in his rebellion against his Creator (John 8:44; Rev. 12:3-4). Because of their terrible sin, they were cast back to this earth (Ezek. 28; Is. 14; Luke 10:18), and, ever since, have remained confined in a condition of "darkness" in *TARTARUS*, according to 2 Peter 2: 4. Satan sinned *before* God put Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-14; John 8:44). The Bible also reveals that "the DEVIL [has] his angels" who follow him (Matt. 25:41). *Devil* (Gk. *diabolos*) means "accuser" or "slanderer." He and "his angels" will eventually be flung into the "lake of fire" (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). Those angels who rebelled against the government of God are called: *evil* spirits (Luke 7:21), *familiar* spirits (Lev. 19:31; 1 Sam. 28:3, 9 KJV), *unclean* spirits (Matt.

10:1), *wicked* spirits (12:45), *demons* (Ps. 106:37; 1 Tim. 4:1; James 2:19, Lev. 17:7; Matt. 8:30-32).

The New Testament often speaks of people who were *demon possessed*—whose minds or wills had been completely taken over by a demon. Christ and His apostles frequently cast demons out of those possessed (Mark 5:1-16; 16:17; Matt. 8:16; 10:8; Acts 16:16-18). Modern psychology reveals that there are, even today, many instances where "multiple personalities" possess certain people afflicted with various mental and emotional problems. However, many types of mental illnesses have nothing to do with demon possession.

MAN'S ORIGIN AND INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL The ancient question, "What is man?" (Ps. 8:4), still demands an answer. God created humans out of the "dust of the earth" (Gen. 2:7). He made them *mortal*, subject to *death* (2:7-9, 15-17). "The soul who sins shall *die*" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). We are also told that "the wages [end product] of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23). Man has the potential to receive *immortality*, either in the first or second resurrection.

Furthermore, we are informed that of all the *humans* born on this earth, *only* "Jesus Christ... the King of kings and Lord of lords... [now has] *immortality*" (1 Tim. 6:15-16). Therefore, all humans must "seek for glory, honor, and *immortality*"—that will be put on at the "resurrection" (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 20:5-6). "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this *mortal* must put on *immortality*" (1 Cor. 15:53). Immortality will be bestowed upon the righteous "dead" at the moment of their resurrection at Christ's Second Coming, when the "last trumpet" is sounded (vv. 50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 11:15-18).

Note these important points concerning man: *First*, Adam and Eve were created *after* the angels had been created and assigned to live on this earth (Jude 6)—and *after* some of them had "sinned" (2 Peter 2:4; John 8:44; Gen. 3:1-4). *Second*, their creation occurred *after* the primeval earth had become *uninhabitable* (Gen. 1:2; Job 38:4-7). *Third*, the first humans were created *after* God had renewed the surface of the earth and created many new life forms—including humans (Gen. 1:2-31; Ps. 104:30).

Human beings are made in God's "*image [and] likeness*" (Gen. 1:26; cf. 5:3), and were also given God-like minds and emotions. But the Creator put in humans a neutral, yet frail, *human nature*, subject to being tempted by evil. Such amoral vulnerabilities predispose all humans to being led inexorably into *sin*. "For *all* have sinned..." (Rom. 3:23; cf. 5:12). Though man was created with a "neutral" nature that was *good* (Gen. 1:31). Nevertheless, man's neutral nature was subjected by God to both good or evil influences, and he was told to "choose" the right way rather than Satan's' evil way (Gen. 2 & 3; Deut. 30:15-20).

In God's eyes, not one human is truly "righteous" or "good" (Rom. 3:10-18). God aptly describes man's natural depravity: "The LORD saw that the *wickedness* of man is great... and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only *evil* continually" (Gen. 6:5). The Prophet Isaiah reveals that "all our righteousnesses are like *filthy rags*" (Is. 64:6). And Jeremiah says, "The heart is *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*" (Jer. 17:9).

Christ also said, "If you then, being *evil* know how to give good gifts..." (Luke 11:13).

"The *carnal mind* is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be," says the Apostle Paul (Rom. 8:7). This explains why men constantly ignore, ridicule, negate or deliberately violate the laws of God Almighty.

From before creation—before Adam and Eve had sinned—God planned to later send His Son to this earth to die for the sins of all mankind. In God's mind, "the Lamb [was] slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). God also planned that after man repented of his sins and was baptized, he would receive God's Spirit, the germ of "eternal life" (Acts 2:38-39; John 3:16). At Christ's Second Coming, all of God's children who are then dead will be given *immortality*—at the time of the *first resurrection*. The saints who are alive will then be changed, instantaneously, from mortal to immortal (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:22-55). Following their glorification, they will live forever in the eternal Kingdom of God (Rev. 20:4-6; 21:1-7). *Man's ultimate destiny* is to be born into the very "family," "house," or "household" of God (Eph. 2:19; 3:15; Rev. 21:7; 22:3-5). (Read our booklet titled, [Your Ultimate Destiny](#)).

THE LAW OF GOD God gave Adam and Eve His instructions—His law—shortly after He created them (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-3). Undoubtedly, the Creator's instructions to our first parents must have included God's directive to hallow His Sabbath (2:1-2). The Creator's basic *spiritual law* is summed up in the "Ten Commandments" (Deut. 4:13, 10:4), which God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai—about 1,442 years before the birth of Christ (Ex. 20; Deut. 5). *First*, God gave His Ten Commandments *orally* (Ex. 20:1-17), then that same law was *also* "written with the *finger of God*" (Ex. 24:12; 31:18).

The Prophet Isaiah had foretold that when the Messiah came "He [would] *magnify* the law and make it honorable" (42:21). In the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus did just that—He *magnified* God's law (Matt. 5, 6, 7), showing His followers that they must obey both the *letter* and the "spirit" or *intent* of His law. In fact, Jesus always upheld God's law (Matt. 5:17-19). He said, "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, *keep the commandments*" (19:16-17), referring unmistakably to the Ten Commandments (vv. 18-19).

The Apostle James calls God's law a "perfect law of *liberty*" (James 1:25; 2:12); and that law is also spoken of as a "*royal law*" (2:8). The Apostle Paul called God's laws and commandments "*holy... just and good*" (Rom. 7:12). Furthermore, he said God's "law is *spiritual*" (v. 14). The Apostle John extolled God's law (1 John 2:4; 3:4-12; 5:2-3, 17). He said those who keep God's commands will be "blessed," will be free to partake of the "Tree of Life," and will be citizens of God's eternal city, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:14).

While humans might keep the letter of God's law in a very limited way, it takes the indwelling presence of His Spirit to empower one to keep His spiritual law in his mind and heart, according to its *spirit* or *intent* (Gal. 2:20; Philip. 4:13; Rom. 7:14-25; 8:1-14). No human can ever keep God's *spiritual* law through his own limited human power (Rom. 8:7)! But, keeping God's commandments—with the help of His Spirit—does not *earn* or *merit* anyone salvation. No amount of law-keeping can atone for one's *past sins*. Sin can only be forgiven through the merits of the *shed blood* of Jesus Christ (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 John 1:9).

God's true Church has always been, and always will be, a commandment-keeping Church (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they have the right to enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). God will not offer His gift of eternal life to anyone

who is in *rebellion* against Him and His law (Rev. 22:15; Heb. 10:26-31).

GOD'S SABBATH—SATURDAY OR SUNDAY? Most professing Christians *say* they believe in the Ten Commandments. But very few profess to keep the *fourth commandment*, which enjoins the seventh day as God's Holy Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11). Nearly all of today's professing Christians observe *Sunday* as their rest day. Muslims keep *Friday* as their day of worship. Jews, and some Christian churches, observe *Saturday* (sunset Friday to Sunset Saturday) as their Sabbath. But, according to the Bible, which day is the true Sabbath?

The Word of God reveals that "the *seventh day* [Saturday] is the Sabbath of the LORD" (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14). The Sabbath was *hallowed* by God after He completed six days of creation (Gen. 2:1-3). It is a *memorial* of God's having rested on the seventh day, after completing His creation (Ex. 20:11). How did God reveal His Sabbath to mankind? For forty long years God gave manna to the Israelites (c. 1446-1406 B.C.). But that manna was nowhere to be found on the "seventh day"—and served as a constant reminder that God expected His people to keep each Sabbath day holy (Ex. 16). The manna only ceased 40 years later, *after* the Israelites entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:12).

The four Gospels reveal that when Jesus Christ lived on this earth, He kept the Sabbath. It was His "custom" to observe God's Sabbaths, both weekly and annual (Luke 4:16; John 2:13, 23; 7:2-14, 37). He even told His disciples, "Pray that your flight may not be... on the Sabbath" (Matt. 24: 20)—pointing to the time when they would flee from Jerusalem shortly before 70 A.D. The primary fulfillment, however, will be during the coming Great Tribulation.

The Apostle Paul habitually observed God's Sabbath with the Jews and Christians (Acts 13:14-15). It was his custom or "manner" to keep God's Sabbath (Acts 17:2). "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (18:4).

There is absolutely nothing in the N.T. that says God at any time *changed* the Sabbath from the *seventh day* to the *first day*, as is commonly believed and taught by many professing Christians today. It is a fact of history that the Sabbath was finally changed by *men*—not by God!—long *after* the death of Christ and His faithful apostles (cf. Dan. 7:25). In the centuries immediately following Christ's death, deceived men began to call God's holy Sabbath Day "Jewish," and adopted the pagan *day of the Sun* (i.e. Sunday) in the place of God's true Sabbath. The Bible reveals that keeping God's commandments—especially His *Sabbaths*—is a "sign" between Him and His people (Ex. 31:12-17; Deut. 6:8; 11:18; Ezek. 20:12-24). His Sabbaths identify who His people really are!

Furthermore, the Scriptures plainly teach that God's Sabbath will be kept in the soon-coming millennial Kingdom of God on this earth (Is. 66:23; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; 46:1-12; Heb. 4:9). (Read our booklet, [Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?](#))

MURDER IS A CAPITAL OFFENCE All societies recognize that murder is *wrong*. Furthermore, the Scriptures clearly teach that committing violence to one's neighbor is a sin. Christ plainly agreed with the Old Testament teaching that *murder* was a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. "You shall not murder," said Jesus (Matt. 19:18). He was, of course, quoting one of those Ten Commandments that God Himself had spoken with His own voice from Mount Sinai in His address to the people of Israel (Ex. 20:13). Later, God wrote those same

commands on the two tables of stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; Deut. 10:1-4).

Military service What does the Bible teach concerning whether or not a Christian can follow Christ's teachings and yet consent to taking part in *military service*?

The members of the Church of God have historically been *conscientious objectors* to military service and war. Christians are not only forbidden to "kill" (Matt. 5:21-22), but are also commanded to love their enemies (vv. 43-44). When soldiers, who were already part of the Roman army and were not *free* to leave, came to John the Baptist desiring baptism, he told them, "Do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14 KJV). When Peter was using his sword to violently oppose the illegal arrest of Christ, he was told by Jesus: "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

Christians should not voluntarily make themselves the servants of men (1 Cor. 7:23), as those who voluntarily join the military do. Those who are in a circumstance of servitude when called, or who are compelled by government authority to enlist, may have to comply with or remain under that *authority* until God makes it possible for them to become free (1 Cor. 7:20). They must, however, still obey God first and foremost (Acts 5:29). They must not violate the *spirit* of the sixth commandment that enjoins on God's people the duty *not* to commit murder!

The Bible reveals that God allows government officials to carry out the death penalty for certain crimes such as murder (cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Rom. 13:1-5).

Abortion In recent decades many nations have legalized "abortion"—even though hundreds of millions still believe abortion *is MURDER*. Our Creator's sixth commandment says, "***You shall not murder***" (Ex. 20:13)! The Word of God strictly forbids *MURDER* in any form. Nonetheless, many who profess to believe in the Bible do not believe *abortion* is to be equated with *murder*.

Some think each decision to abort, or not to abort, a human life is simply a matter of personal "choice" that, according to that viewpoint, neither God nor man has a right to interfere with. But, does the Designer and Creator of humans have the authority to *forbid* certain types of human conduct—including the taking of innocent lives? He certainly does.

Today, many people in the Western world have been polarized into two camps: 1) The "PRO-LIFE" advocates—those who believe abortion is inherently and morally wrong. 2) The "PRO-CHOICE" supporters—who believe it is strictly the choice of the *mother* whether or not she wishes to abort her unborn child. PRO-LIFE advocates believe everyone has a "choice," but should only make the *right choice* by "choos[ing] LIFE" (Deut. 30:15-19). Those who support the PRO-LIFE position believe the PRO-CHOICE advocates are "***PRO-DEATH***"!

The Global Church of God believes abortion *is* to be equated with *MURDER*. When King Herod slaughtered hundreds of Jewish babies in the area of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-18), his heinous crime was considered a terrible *sin* by God—as well as by most who have read the biblical account of his horrible slaughter of the infants. During recent decades countless millions of unborn babies have been murdered in a continuing litany of *mass murder*—about 1.5 million unborn infants are aborted in the U.S. annually!

Like many millions of others who believe abortion is wrong, the Global Church of God believes *abortion is murder*—a *capital sin* in the eyes of the Almighty (Ex. 20:13). We do not

believe that *murder* is only possible *after a baby is born!* Human life begins at *conception!*

Is the aborting of a pregnancy that resulted from either *incest* or *rape* also murder in the sight of God? The taking of an innocent life is *murder*—regardless of the circumstances! In case of rape or incest, the mother of such a child is put in a very difficult situation. The Global Church of God believes the *adult mother* and *father* of a yet unborn child are responsible to protect and nourish the unborn fetus/embryo. They will ultimately be the ones who must make the *final decision, and will answer to God for their decision!*

The Church is *not* responsible for making personal decisions on behalf of members of the Church. Ministers of God are responsible to clearly teach the Word of God, explaining the truths of the Scriptures. Each individual is accountable to God in regard to how he or she applies the Word of God to his or her own circumstances. Hopefully, each woman who becomes pregnant against her will (as in cases of *rape* or *incest*) will have the *knowledge*, the *faith*, and sufficient *godly fear* to enable her to make the biblically correct decision regarding the *life* of her unborn child! She has the *power* of choosing, on behalf of her unborn infant, either *life* or *death*—though that does *not* mean God will approve of the wrong choice.

DEFINING MARRIAGE What constitutes "marriage" in the eyes of our Creator? *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines *marriage* as "the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family" (10th ed.). It also defines marriage as "an intimate or close union." Marriage is also called "holy matrimony," because it is recognized that God is the one who made us *male* and *female*, and, consequently, He is the real Author of marriage.

Jesus Christ said that God "made them [Adam and Eve] male and female... and they two shall become one flesh.... Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:5-6). He intended married partners to be faithful to each other until death (Mal. 2:14-16). But did God make any allowances for human weaknesses? Did He *permit* divorce under certain circumstances, especially when marital infidelity had occurred?

[Note. None of the animals, birds, fish or other kinds of non-human creatures enjoys the benefit of "marriage." Nowhere in the Bible does God give a particular *ceremony* that humans must adhere to in order to become married. But the Scriptures clearly reveal that God intends humans to have some kind of "ritual" or "ceremony" by which they solemnize their taking each other as man and wife. But, in the eyes of God, if two unmarried people of the opposite sex sincerely take one another to become man and wife, He will then consider them married. However, there are numerous good reasons why it is proper that a couple who intends to become man and wife have their marriage *solemnized* by going through some kind of religious or secular ceremony. It would be unwise for people to merely meet and say "lets get married," then start living together—without first making some kind of *solemn agreement* or *binding contract* with the person to whom they wish to become married.]

GOD'S LAW OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE Some churches teach that any kind of "divorce" is unscriptural. Others allow *divorce and remarriage* for just about *any* cause imaginable. What do the Old and New Testaments say about *divorce*?

Divorce in the O.T. The Bible clearly reveals that when God created Adam and Eve, He intended *one man* to be joined to *one woman* (to "cleave unto his wife"), thereby becoming "one

flesh" (Gen. 2:24). And, ideally, God intended that, as "one flesh," they would remain married until death parted them (Gen. 2:18-25; cf. Mal. 2:14-16). However, God is a *realist*, and from the very beginning He realized that many humans—with all their human frailties—would find their marriages under great *strains*, which would sometimes make a continuing marriage relationship very difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, God revealed that He would *allow* divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances.

The O.T. clearly shows that divorce and remarriage *was* permitted (Deut. 24:1-4; cf. Ex. 21:7-11). Though "the LORD God of Israel says He hates *divorce*" (Mal. 2:16), nonetheless, **He who had been Israel's "husband"—gave her a "certificate of divorce" after she committed repeated adulteries against Him.** God says, "Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed *adultery*, **I had put her away and given her A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE...**" (Jer. 3:8).

Some people totally *misunderstand* the statement found in verse 14, thinking that God was somehow still married to Israel—after He had divorced her: "'Return O backsliding children,' says the LORD; '**for I AM MARRIED TO YOU....**'" But what is the meaning of "I am married to you"? A careful scrutiny of this entire section from verse 1 through 19 clearly reveals that this section of Scripture is plainly speaking of a *future time* when God will again take "Israel" as His wife, and will once again be married to her. That remarriage will occur after the Messiah sets up His kingdom on this earth. Further, at that time "Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it" (v. 17). That is when God will "make a new [marriage] covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (31:31). They will become His wife once again (vv. 32-37). Israel will then "return to [her] first husband [God]" (Hosea 2:7).

What did God mean when He inspired Moses to write: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some *uncleanness* in her, and he writes her a *certificate of divorce*... and sends her out of his house..." (Deut. 24:1)? Bible scholars have long debated what Moses meant (actually, what *God* meant, since *He* inspired Moses) when he said a man *could* divorce his wife because of "some *uncleanness* [Heb. *gervah*] in her" (Deut. 24:1). In the time of Christ many Jews liberally interpreted the Hebrew word "gervah" (translated "uncleanness" in the KJV of Deut. 24:1) to mean just about *anything!* For instance, a very liberal interpretation of the Scriptures was espoused by the Jewish sage, Hillel I (*circa* 50 B.C.-25 A.D.), and his followers.

Divorce in the N.T. Jesus limited *gervah* in Deuteronomy 24:1 to "sexual immorality" (Gk. *porneia*, Matt. 5:32; 19:9), as rendered by the NKJV. The KJV translates *porneia* in these two scriptures as "fornication." Christ did not, however, mean to *limit* "porneia" to what English-speaking people have in mind when they use the English word "fornication"—meaning pre-marital sex!

The New Testament repeatedly uses *PORNEIA* to refer to **various kinds of "illicit sexual intercourse**, in John 8:41; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; Rev. 2:21; 9:21; **in the plural in 1 Cor. 7:2; in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 it stands for, or includes adultery"** (*Vine's Expository Dict. Of Old and New Testament Words*, "fornication"). "*PORNEIA... from [porneuo] harlotry (includ. adultery and incest)*" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). [The Greek language sometimes uses another word, *moicheia*, to refer to "adultery." However, in context *porneia* as used in the N.T.

frequently *includes* "adultery"(cf. Acts 15:20, 29; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3).]

Matthew 1:19 tells us that Mary's "husband," Joseph, though a "just man," had fully intended to divorce his "wife" (vv. 20, 24), after learning that she became pregnant "before they came together" (vv. 18-25). Matthew's account reveals that Joseph and Mary were already *married*, and were actually *husband* and *wife* [i.e. "betrothed" (NKJV), or "espoused" (KJV)]—even though Joseph "did not *know her* [*sexually*] till she had brought forth her firstborn Son" (v. 25; cf. Gen. 4:1). Luke also confirms this fact: "Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin *betrothed* [or "espoused"—KJV] to a man whose name was Joseph..." (1:26-27). Gabriel then told Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary... *you will conceive* in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus" (vv. 30-31).

Note that Joseph and Mary were already married (betrothed/espoused) and were, according to Matthew 1:18-24, already "husband" and "wife" when Gabriel told Mary—"you *will conceive*." The Scriptures do *not* tell us how long they had been married before Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant. Joseph must have concluded that Mary had either committed fornication [*porneia*] *before* or *after* they were betrothed/married. If Mary had committed fornication *before* their marriage, she would have been a *fornicator*. But, *if she* had become pregnant by another man *after* her espousal/marriage, she (being Joseph's *wife*) would have committed "adultery"—*not* "fornication," as that English word is now understood!

Divorce permitted in cases of "sexual immorality" Christ said, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh... what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:4-6).

The amazed Pharisees then asked Jesus, "Why then did Moses *command* to give a *certificate of divorce*, and to put her away?" (v. 7). Christ corrected them by saying, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, *permitted* [*not* "commanded"] you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, **whoever divorces his wife, except for *sexual immorality* [Gk. *porneia*] and marries another, commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"** (vv. 8-9).

If this were the only N.T. scripture mentioning *divorce*, one might conclude that acts of "sexual immorality" are the *only* biblical grounds for divorce in the Greek Scriptures. However, when Jesus spoke those words, the only biblical grounds for divorce was "sexual immorality" (*porneia*). The N.T. Church of God had not *yet* been established! Christ said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). Christ began His Church on Pentecost, 31 A.D., the very day the Holy Spirit first descended from heaven and entered into Jesus' disciples.

A second ground for allowing divorce in the N.T. Not long after the N.T. "Church of God" began, a *new problem* arose, due to friction between "believers" and "unbelievers." That problem is highlighted in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16. In the Church at Corinth, a number of instances arose in which an *unbeliever* was *not* "pleased" to dwell in peace with a Christian *believer* (vv. 12-16). What was a believer to do when his or her partner made life unbearable—simply because of objections to his religion? Paul was inspired to reveal *God's solution* to this problem of religious

hostility/persecution. The Living Christ inspired Paul to give a *second* legitimate reason for divorce: unwillingness on the part of an "unbeliever" to live in harmony with their "believing" spouse—making it impossible to continue living in "peace."

Paul was inspired to write, "If any brother has a wife who does *not* believe [the Truth], *if* she is willing to live with him, let him *not* divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does *not* believe, *if* he is willing to live with her, let her *not* divorce him.... **But if the unbeliever departs, let him [or her] depart; a brother or sister is *not* under bondage [Gk. *douloo*] in such cases.** But God has called us to *peace*" (vv. 12-15). That is, in such cases, God considers a *believer* is no longer "under [marital] bondage" to the *unbeliever* because of his/her unwillingness to live in "peace."

Paul then asked the *believing* spouse, "How do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband [if he *is* willing to live with you in *peace*].... Or [how do you know] O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (v. 16).

[In O.T. times, when certain Jews had married "pagan wives"—after the Jews' return to their ancient Promised Land to rebuild the Jewish nation in the 500s-400s B.C.—Ezra and Nehemiah compelled them to divorce their foreign wives in order to *avoid apostasy* (Ezra 10:2-19; Neh. 13:23-27). Their action was based on the scriptural *prohibition* against Israelites marrying non-Israelite, pagan wives (Deut. 7:1-4; cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13). God's law had strictly forbidden the Israelites to marry foreigners—*unless* they had accepted God (*Yahweh*) as their God, and had become citizens of "Israel" (Deut. 7:1-6; cf. Ex. 12:48-49). "Nor shall you make marriages with them [foreigners]" (v. 3). Why not? "For they will *turn your sons away* from following Me, to serve *other gods*; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly," said the LORD (v. 4). Even though there was no "uncleanness" (Heb. *gervah*) found in these Jews' wives, nonetheless they were made to put away their "foreign wives"! Ezra and Nehemiah realized that the children of those mixed marriages would become corrupted by their mother's false gods/religions, as happened when King Solomon had married foreign wives (1 Kings 11:1-11).]

Conclusion? **There are two specific biblical grounds for divorce given in the New Testament:** *First*, Jesus plainly said that "sexual immorality" [*porneia*] was sufficient grounds for divorce (Matt. 19:9 NKJV). The principle involved here is "fraud" of one type or the other, and could include *fornication, harlotry*, un-repentant acts of *adultery, homosexuality, bestiality* or other perversions. The *principle* of fraud could also include other types of intentional fraud—such as a fraudulent marriage contracted solely for financial reasons, or a "marriage" to a citizen of a country solely to gain citizenship into that country. Of course, a Christian should be willing to forgive a mate who had committed *porneia*—*if* he or she believed the erring spouse had truly repented.

Second, Christ inspired the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, revealing that if an *unbelieving* mate was *not* pleased to dwell with his/her *believing* spouse, then the *believer* would no longer be considered "bound" (*douloo*) to his partner (1 Cor. 7:12-15).

HOMOSEXUALITY When God created Adam and Eve, He designed human sexuality as a vital part of man's nature; furthermore, God said that *all* He had created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)! And He commanded them, "Be fruitful and multiply" (v. 28). They were to come together in the

marriage union. In that union, they were to "become one flesh" (2:24).

There is a perfectly normal, *natural use* of sex in marriage (Rom. 1:27; Heb. 13:4; Prov. 5:18-19); and there is a perverted, *unnatural use* of sex—such as homosexuality, bestiality, fornication/adultery (Lev. 20:13-16; Ex. 20:14; 1 Cor. 6:18). The Apostle Paul was inspired to say that **neither "fornicators.... adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites... will inherit the kingdom of God"** (1 Cor. 6:9-10). However, the Apostle Paul shows there is hope for those who have been overcome by various sexual perversions, and who have repented, asking God to help them overcome. He says, "And such *were* some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (v. 11). With the help of God's Spirit, homosexuals can overcome their sins. But, why will those who persist in living depraved and perverted lives be excluded from God's kingdom (Rev. 22:15)? All who commit abominable acts—such as acts of homosexuality, bestiality or other perversions—are an "abomination" in the eyes of God (Lev. 18:22-30). Even though God hates those abominations, He loves every sinner, and is ever willing to offer forgiveness and a helping hand to those who seek to overcome sin (Matt. 11:28-30; Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9).

God detests fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and other "abominations." Nonetheless, a merciful God loves *sinners*, and will forgive them when they truly repent (Acts 3:19; 8:22). For "Christ died for the *ungodly*... [and] while we were still *sinners*, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6, 8). "Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*" (2 Tim. 1:15).

But Christ died to save us *from*, not *in*, our sins! God's people must learn to have real *compassion* toward *sinners*—drunkards, liars, murderers, adulterers, homosexuals and others who are held in the grip of various perversions. We must learn to have godly love for the *sinner*, while utterly *detesting* every *sin* (Jude 23)—because sin always exacts a heavy penalty, and results in mankind suffering the tragic consequences of sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Prov. 13:15; 14:34).

GOOD RACE RELATIONS THROUGH OVERCOMING RACIAL PREJUDICE God's Word commands all men to *love their neighbors as themselves* (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39). The Apostle Peter said, "**God shows no partiality.** But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35). "God is no respecter of persons" (v. 34 KJV). And the Apostle Paul revealed that the Great God "who made the world and everything in it... [also] made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth... [and] ***we are [all] the offspring of God***" (Acts 17:24-29).

Paul was also inspired to write, "For you are *all* [both Jews and Gentiles] *sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus.... There is neither *Jew* nor *Greek*, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28). However, this scripture doesn't mean we should freely mix the *sexes* or the *races*. It doesn't mean there are no differences between the *sexes* or between various *ethnic groups*. Civilized men must still adhere to the conventional rules that require them to use men's toilets, while women comply with those conventions that set aside certain toilet facilities for ladies. It was God himself who separated the *three great families* that descended from Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen. 10:1-32; 11:1-9; Deut. 32:8). He, therefore, desired to see a number of *ethnicities* develop on this earth—instead of everyone being just one homogenous "race."

God reveals that salvation is now freely offered to both Jews and Gentiles. "For God so loved the [whole] *world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not

perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "For 'whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Rom. 10:13; cf. Joel 2:32).

Furthermore, the Apostle John reveals that God doesn't just call *Israelites* into His Church. He calls people from the "twelve tribes of Israel"(Rev. 7:1-8); but He also calls *non-Israelites* out of "*all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues*" (v. 9). God doesn't love Israelites more than non-Israelite (Gentiles). ***God loves all races equally!***

But it is His prerogative to choose to use *any* nation or any *individual* to fulfill His particular purpose at a given time. In O. T. times, God chose the nation of *Israel*, and revealed His laws and Word to them. But God was no respecter of persons when He chose that *one nation*—Israel—to become "a special treasure" to Him (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6-9). Speaking of Israel, God said: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). God took "Israel" to be His "wife," but they turned their backs on Him and committed multiple adulteries with heathen gods (Jer. 3:1-14; Ezek. 16, 20). When the majority of Israelites rejected the LORD and His Word, God then decreed that He would make salvation available to *Gentiles* as well *Israelites* (Rom. 11:1-33).

The Global Church of God does *not* believe in, nor does it practice, *discrimination* against ethnic groups, the sexes, the elderly, the handicapped—or any other minority. We believe love, tolerance, forgiveness and deep respect should be shown to peoples of all ethnicities. "Love does no harm to a *neighbor*; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10)! Someday, the "whole earth [will be] at rest" (Is. 14:7), as Israelites and Gentiles learn to live together in peace (Zech. 8:20-23). All nations will then lay down their arms—"Neither shall they learn war anymore"(Is. 2:1-4 11:4-9). Feelings of racial *superiority* or ethnic *inferiority* will then vanish from the earth. Only then will mankind become one big happy family—bound together in deep love and respect for all.

GOD'S LAW OF TITHING God is *Creator* of everything (Rev. 4:11). As *Lord* of the universe, He exercises ownership and control over all His creation (Acts 17:24-29). In the Old Testament, we are told that father Abraham paid tithes to God, whom he recognized as "Possessor of heaven and earth"(Gen. 14:18-22). Later, his grandson Jacob vowed to pay a tenth of his increase to God (28:20-22). Still later, when God established the nation of Israel, He commanded the Israelites to pay a tithe to His duly ordained *Levites* to compensate them for their *service* toward Him (Num. 18:20-32; cf. Lev. 27:30-33).

When we examine the N.T., we see that Jesus Christ said His people "ought" to tithe (Matt. 23:23). Later, the Apostle Paul explained that there had been a "*change of the law*"—from the Levitical to the Melchisedec Priesthood—in regard to *whom* the tithes were to be paid (Heb. 7:1-12). In O.T. times, the tithes were to be given to the *tribe of Levi*, but the tithe should now go to the restored *priesthood of Melchizedek*, Who is none other than Christ! Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

God says, "All the tithe... is the LORD'S" (Lev. 27:30). The LORD'S way of supporting His "house" (Hag. 1:2-14; Ex. 25), and His Work has always been through the *tithes* and *offerings* of His people (Mal. 3:8-12). If we don't faithfully tithe to God and His Work, then we "rob" God Himself (Mal. 3:8). The LORD promises to greatly bless those who are faithful in tithing their increase (vv. 10-12). And "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7; Prov. 3:9-10; 11:25). The LORD has always supported His ministers and His Word through the contributions of His people;

and, according to the Apostle Paul, this is still God's way even in N.T. times (1 Cor. 9:14).

A thorough study of the O.T. Scriptures reveals the following: 1) A *tithe* (tenth) of ones *increase* was paid to the Levites for their services (Num. 18). 2) A "second tithe" (or *festival tithe*) was saved annually by God's people, but was kept by the tithe payer for use in keeping the annual holy days that God commanded His people to observe (Deut. 14, 16). 3) Every third year of each seven-year cycle, God's people were commanded to save a "third" tithe, that was used to assist the poor and needy (Deut. 14:28-29). (Read our booklet, [Make God Your Financial Partner](#), that explains that the tithe is holy to God—and is His means of providing support for His true ministers.)

GOD'S LAW OF "CLEAN" AND "UNCLEAN" MEATS Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 give God's instructions concerning what is "clean" (edible) and "unclean" (*inedible*). God's Word says the "unclean" creatures were to be an "abomination" unto His people, and were not, therefore, to be eaten by them (Is. 66:17).

Only those *land creatures* that *both* "chew the cud and divide the hoof" have divine approval as food fit for mankind to eat (Lev. 11:2-3). Of all the *sea creatures*, they must possess *both* "fins and scales" in order to be "clean" (vv. 9-12). The Bible then lists those *fowls* of the heaven that God says are "unclean" (vv. 13-23). At the time of the great flood, God commanded Noah to take *seven pairs* of "clean" animals into the ark, while taking on board only *one pair* of "unclean" animals (Gen. 7:2).

There is absolutely nothing in the N.T. which shows that those laws concerning "clean" and "unclean" meats were *abolished* by Christ. In about A.D. 41—nearly 10 years after Christ's death and the founding of His N.T. Church!—the apostle Peter said he had never eaten anything "unclean" (Acts 10:14). Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 does *not* make the "unclean" foods "clean," but merely shows that believers are *not* to reject those foods that God created and sanctified as *suitable* for human consumption. Only the "clean" meats are "sanctified" (set apart) by the Word of God (Lev. 11 and Deut. 14).

God created *everything*—every *herb* and every *creature*. Although He created all the *plants*, He certainly did not intend that we eat them *all*—such as the poisonous ones. Likewise, although He created *all* of earth's *creatures*, He didn't intend that we eat such creatures as rodents, cats, dogs, pigs, horses, or the many other "creepy-crawly" land and sea creatures.

Some Bible students may be surprised to learn that, at the time when Jesus Christ returns to this earth to establish His Kingdom over all nations, God will destroy certain ones who will still be "eating swine's flesh" and partaking of other "abominations" (Is. 66:17; cf. Lev. 11:1-47). Christ's Kingdom will then rule all nations (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15; 19:15). The then-glorified saints will rule the nations with Christ (Dan. 7:18; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10). God's people Israel, and all nations, will then be cleansed of their "abominations" (Ezek. 44:6-13).

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL TEACHING IN REGARD TO "SUBSTANCE ABUSE"—USE OF TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND "HARD DRUGS"?

Alcoholic beverages There is nothing in the Bible that says it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages, so long as they are consumed in *moderation*.

One of the blessings that God gave to Israel and his descendants was "plenty of grain and *wine*" (Gen. 27:28). He also told the Israelites it was quite proper for them to use "wine," and even "strong drink," so they could "rejoice" in their observance of the Feasts of the LORD (Deut. 14:26). God also tells us that "wine... makes glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104:15).

Furthermore, Christ's first miracle was turning water into "wine" (Gk. *oinos*)—which does *not* mean grape juice (John 2:1-11). Furthermore, just hours before His death, He and His disciples drank wine from "the cup" at Christ's last Passover (Matt. 26:27-28). And Christ said He will not again partake of the "fruit of the vine" until after His return to this earth to establish His "Father's kingdom" (v. 29).

The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use *a little wine* for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). But Paul also told Timothy to instruct the elders and deacons in God's Church *not* to become addicted to wine (3:3, 8). He gave Titus similar instructions (Tit. 1:7; 2:3). Furthermore, Paul told the brethren at Ephesus, "And do not be drunk with *wine*, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Paul also assured the Christians at Corinth that "drunkards... [would not] inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 5:11). "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty," said wise old King Solomon (Prov. 23:21).

Alcoholic beverages will always be a great *curse* when used to excess—but they can be a great *blessing*, if used in *moderation*—to the glory of God. The Bible condemns using alcoholic beverages to excess. In the wonderful Millennial Age, God says His people will "sing" and make merry because of God's blessings—"for wheat and new *wine* and oil... and they shall sorrow no more at all" (Jer. 31:12).

Tobacco and "hard drugs" The Word of God nowhere specifically mentions tobacco, or certain other addictive drugs; nonetheless, history reveals that various mind-altering drugs were used anciently. It is very clear that, in principle, the Holy Scriptures condemn the use of tobacco and those "hard drugs [that are] addictive and gravely detrimental to health" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.).

The Bible reveals that man was made in the "likeness" and "image" of His Creator (Gen. 1:26; 5:3). Further, since man was made in God's image, the Creator commands him to take care of his body, the potential *temple* of God's Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

As an example, man is not to defile his body by eating or drinking either *blood* or *fat*. "You shall eat neither fat nor blood" (Lev. 3:17; cf. 17:11; Acts 15:29); nor should man eat any of those foods which God calls "unclean" (Lev. 11; Deut. 14). "Do you not know that *you* [Spirit-filled Christians] are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Medical science has proven that both tobacco and other addictive drugs (cocaine, marijuana, and other "hard" drugs) are not only *addictive*, but are very *detrimental* to man's physical and mental health. Therefore, in principle, the Bible certainly *condemns* the use of such harmful "substances" by man in his futile pursuit of ever-exhilarating "highs."

GOD'S ANNUAL FESTIVALS PICTURE HIS MASTER PLAN OF SALVATION

The Bible reveals that God's people ought to keep not only His *weekly Sabbath*, but also His *seven annual Sabbaths*. All of God's annual Sabbaths are mentioned in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, as well as in numerous other places in the Old and New Testaments. Those God-given holy days were commanded to be observed "for ever" (vv. 14, 21, 31, 41).

Further, the New Testament plainly reveals that Christ and His apostles kept both the weekly and the annual Sabbaths such as: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Acts 2; 12:3-4; 18:21; 20:6, 16; 27:9; 1 Cor. 16:8). And they observed them according to the so-called "Hebrew Calendar," just as nearly all of God's people in the Churches of God today use this same calendar. Though the early N.T. Church observed God's annual holy days, we never see them observing Easter, Halloween or Christmas!

However, instead of observing *God's commanded Holy Days*, most churches have accepted the world's *counterfeit holidays* of Christmas, Easter and Halloween (All Saints Day), etc. Many good reference books, such as authoritative histories and encyclopedias, clearly explain the *pagan origin* of those commonly observed *holidays*.

God's true Church follows Christ and His apostles by keeping both the weekly and annual Sabbaths. It is only through them that God's Master Plan of salvation is revealed. Furthermore, the prophecies clearly reveal that God's annual Sabbaths will be observed in the coming millennial Kingdom of God (Zech. 14:16-19; Is. 66:23; Ezek. 45-46). What do the *seven annual Sabbaths* foreshadow in the divine plan of salvation?

God's annual Sabbaths picture the *seven vital steps* in His plan of salvation:

1) The Passover The Passover, the first of God's Feasts, pictures the first important step in God's plan of Salvation. Before a single human being can be saved, he must first be saved from his sins; and this can only be accomplished through a Savior, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6). "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The O.T. Passover foreshadowed the coming of the "Lamb of God" to die for the sins of all mankind (Rev. 13:8). Both Jesus and His disciples, as well as the Apostle Paul, all observed the N.T. Passover on the eve of the 14th day of the first month of God's Sacred Calendar (1 Cor. 11:23-34). (Read our article, [When Should the True Passover Be Observed?](#))

2) The Seven Days of Unleavened Bread What do the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread picture in the divine plan of salvation? The Bible clearly reveals that *physical* "leaven" is a type of *spiritual sin* (1 Cor. 5:6-13; Luke 12:1). The Israelites of old were commanded to put all "leaven" out of their homes for *seven* complete days (Ex. 12:15-20; 13:7; Deut. 16:4). They began leaving Ramses, Egypt "on the fifteenth day of the first month [Abib]; on the day after the Passover" (Num. 33:3). But they did not leave Egypt proper until the last day of Unleavened Bread, the 21st day of Abib (Ex. 13 and 14). They finally crossed the Red Sea on the night of the last day of Unleavened Bread (cf. Deut. 16:1). It took them *seven days* to get totally free from Pharaoh and his army, and thus attain complete *liberty*.

Since *leaven* is a type of *sin* (1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 5:9), the Christian observance of this Feast shows us that true Christians will *not* just accept Christ (the N.T. Passover) as their personal

Savior, and *stopat* that. They will not *only* put *physical* leaven completely out of their lives; but, more importantly, they must also put *spiritual* leaven (sin) totally out as well. And a Christian can only accomplish this through the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit (Php. 1:19; 4:13). The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures God's people (those in His Church) becoming de-leavened, spiritually—that is, without "spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27).

3) The Feast of Firstfruits ("Pentecost") What, then, does this Feast picture in God's great master plan of salvation? Pentecost pictures the Church of God (both O.T. and N.T. peoples of God), the "firstfruits of His creatures." We, the N.T. Church, are "firstfruits" unto God. The later, much larger, "harvest" of human souls will occur during the coming Millennium when God will save (judge) the whole world (Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:4-5; Ps. 67:4).

The Feast of Firstfruits is the *third* annual Sabbath that God commands His people to keep. What does it picture in God's great plan of salvation? After one accepts the Lamb of God, then begins to obey his Creator (put the spiritual leaven out of his life), he finds he is totally *unable* to keep God's commands on his own power and strength. He needs an additional "ingredient" in his spiritual life to enable him to really obey God.

He must, therefore, receive the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23), so that he can be truly "led by the Spirit of God" (v. 14). Furthermore, in ancient Israel, the Israelites could not even *begin* reaping their first annual harvest of grain (the *barley*) until they had waved the "wave sheaf" (Heb. *omer*) of barley for God to accept. Fifty days later, the "Feast of Firstfruits" (Pentecost) was observed (Lev. 23:9-21). It is only through the indwelling power of the "firstfruits of God's Spirit" that true Christians are able to overcome the powerful pulls of the flesh and of sin (Zech. 4:6; Rom. 7:12-25; Phil. 3:3; 4:13, 19).

This early, 50-day harvest of firstfruits in Palestine culminated in the Feast of Pentecost. On that solemn day *two unleavened loaves* were offered unto the LORD. Those "two loaves" are understood to represent God's holy people of both O.T. and N.T. times—His bride to be. The fact that they are leavened appears to symbolize the fact that God's people have always had to contend with spiritual leaven (*sin!*) in their lives.

It was on the day of Pentecost that the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit first came into the N.T. disciples of Christ to empower them to do His will (Acts 2). Furthermore, we are told that N.T. Christians are "a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures" (James 1:18; Rev. 14:1-4).

4) The Feast of Trumpets The *fourth* festival of God is the Feast of Trumpets. What does it picture in His great plan of salvation? The Bible clearly reveals that Jesus will return to this earth "with a great sound of a trumpet" (Matt. 24:31). The Apostle Paul also tells us that at His Second Coming, "we [the people of God] shall all be changed—... at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:52). That is the time when both the "dead" (those *asleep* in death) and the "living" Christians will be "caught up" to meet Christ "in the air" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

The Apostle John tells us that when the "seventh angel sounded" his trumpet (Rev. 11:15), that would herald the "time of the dead"—when God's people (the "saints") will be *rewarded* (v. 18). Numerous other scriptures also indicate that Christ will come at the time of the blowing of the "great trumpet" (Is. 27:13), which is the seventh or last trumpet. The long-awaited Messiah will come back to this earth to prevent mankind from annihilating all life on this earth (Matt. 24:21-22). Following His Second Coming, He will establish the glorious Kingdom of God upon this

earth to rule all nations (Rev. 11:15-18; 19:15; Zech. 14:9).

The Feast of Trumpets pictures not only the Second Coming of Jesus—at the time of the sounding of the "seventh trumpet" (Rev. 11:15; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52)—but this Feast also depicts the whole period of time of the divinely sent *trumpet plagues* as mentioned in the 8th, 9th, and 11th chapters of Revelation.

5) The Day of Atonement The *fifth* of God's annual Sabbaths is the Day of Atonement. What does this day picture in God's plan of salvation? According to the 16th chapter of Leviticus, in O.T. times the Israelites were commanded to perform a highly symbolical service on the Day of Atonement.

On that solemn day, Israel's high priest took *two goats*, one for "the LORD [YHWH, the Eternal]," the other for "Azazel the demon" (Lev. 16:8, 10, 26 *Moffatt* transl.). The LORD'S goat was slain as a "sin offering" to atone for the sins of the people (vv. 15-19). The second goat ["for Azazel the demon"] was not slain. Rather, the high priest laid his hands on its head, confessing all the sins of the people over it, then had a "suitable man" take the goat ("for Azazel") out into the desert, far away from the people, to leave it there (vv. 20-27).

What did this mysterious service *prefigure* in the great plan of God? The *first goat* (for "the LORD") represented *Christ*, the Sin-bearer for all His people. The *second goat* (for "Azazel the demon") represented *Satan* the Devil who has "deceived the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). In a sense, a certain amount of blame for the sins of all Israel (and *all humanity*) will someday be placed, symbolically, on the head of Satan. Each of us has a part in our sins, but so does Satan the Old Tempter have a part in every sin committed. After Christ's return, he will then be removed from humanity so that he can no longer tempt humans to sin. The "suitable man" who loosed the "goat for Azazel" represented that, some day, a mighty angel of God will bind Satan and remove him from the people: "Then I saw an angel... [who] laid hold of the dragon... who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should *deceive the nations no more* till the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:1-3).

The Day of Atonement pictures the offering up of Jesus Christ, our Sin-bearer, to die for our sins; and this day also pictures the *binding of Satan*, and the complete *removal* of the Devil and his demons from being able to tempt any humans—during the entire Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3; Zech. 13:2). It reminds us of the awfulness of sin, that must be *atoned for before* man can be "at one" with God. "At-one-ment" literally means to be "at one" or in harmony with another person or group. Man must become "at-one"—in harmony with—his Creator!

This 16th chapter of Leviticus reveals that Christ's sacrifice would be necessary to make an "atonement" for our sins: one "goat" (representing *Christ*) was sacrificed for the sins of the people, whereas a second *goat* ("for Azazel the demon") was *not* sacrificed. Rather, that goat had the sins of the people symbolically placed on its head (vv. 20-22)—then it was sent away into an desolate area, symbolizing Satan's removal, just *before* the Millennium, from his present powerful position of "deceiving" the nations. (Rev. 12:9; 20:1-2).

6) The Feast of Tabernacles The next of God's festivals, the "Feast of Ingathering," was to be observed in the autumn season at the time of the gathering in of the crops (Ex. 34:22). What does this sixth festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, picture in God's plan of salvation? It foreshadows the

time when all nations will be "saved," reaped, or *harvested* by Christ, the divine Reaper (Matt. 9:37-38; 13:3-30).

In God's eyes we humans are like the *grain* in the field, just waiting to be *harvested* by the *Great Reaper* (Matt. 9:37-38; 13:1-30). The Scriptures clearly reveal that during this present "evil age" it is the "many" who wander down the "broad" way leading to *destruction*, while only a "few" travel along the "narrow" road that leads to *eternal life* (Matt. 7:13-14). Furthermore, Christ spoke of His disciples as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). And we are told that Satan has, during this age, deceived the "whole world" (Rev. 12:9).

Clearly, during this present evil age, not very many become true Christians and really *follow* Christ (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 12:32). But there are billions who travel down the broad, popular road of *false religions* to their own *destruction*. However, since they are *deceived*, they don't even realize they are misled; therefore God does not hold them fully accountable for their ignorance and misdeeds.

But, during the soon-coming Millennial Age, Christ will set His hand to save the whole world. He has appointed "a [millennial] day in which He will *judge* the world" (Acts 17:31 KJV). According to 2 Peter 3:8, "one day" is as a "thousand years" and vice versa, as God considers time. When Christ was on earth He plainly said He did not come to *judge* the world at that time. "I did not come [at His first coming] to *judge* the world" (John 12:47); but when Jesus returns to this earth it will be to judge/rule/save the world (Ps. 9:8; 67:4).

At that time He will separate the nations as a shepherd separates His sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31-46). He will then be "King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). His throne will be in Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17); and from that throne will emanate the Word of God and the divine law of God (Is. 2:1-4). At that time the "Prince of Peace" will bring peace, happiness and prosperity worldwide (Is. 9:6-7; Micah 4:1-7). He and His saints will rule all nations with a "rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27; 19:15; Zech. 14:9).

In ancient Israel, God's people were commanded to leave their homes and dwell in temporary "booths" or "tabernacles" during the autumn Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40-43). In the N.T., we find Jesus and His family, His brothers in particular, keeping the "Feast of Tabernacles," as well as God's other commanded Feasts (John 7:2-14, 37). The physical Israelites temporary residence in "booths" during the "Feast of Booths" was a type of true Christians (God's *spiritual Israelites*, Gal.6:16) now being "pilgrims and strangers" in this present evil world, controlled by Satan (Heb. 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).

The *Feast of Ingathering* pictures the great *millennial harvest* of souls—a time when Satan and his demons will be banished, and when Christ and His saints will bring *good* government to the peoples of the entire earth (Is. 9:6-9; Rev. 5:10; Dan. 7:22, 27).

7) The "Eighth Day" Feast What does this final festival, the *seventh* annual Sabbath, picture in God's great master plan of salvation? The "last day" (John 7:37) of this autumn Festival period is called the "eighth day" (Lev. 23:36, 39). It immediately follows the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 33-34). This "last... great day" is the *climax* of all God's Feasts. It was on that "last... great day of the feast" that Jesus spoke of a time when the "living waters" (the Holy Spirit) will be given to *untold billions* of humans who, in this life, never knew the true God, or

never received His Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).

As we have already seen, during this New Testament Church Age, very, very few are truly called to repentance and salvation (Matt. 7:13-14). The vast *majority* have been deceived and thoroughly blinded by the great deceiver, Satan (Rev. 12:9). They have not yet had their *chance* to be saved. And since God is a *just* God, He will someday see to it that the "untold billions" of people who have *died in sin*, without saving knowledge, will be given salvation—living waters. In fact, that will be their "first chance" to receive salvation.

The Bible assures us that there is no other *door* or *way* to receive eternal life than through Jesus Christ (John 10:1-18). He is the "door of the sheep" (v. 7). "Nor is there *salvation* in any other, for there is no other *name* under heaven given among men by which we *must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Yet most of the billions who have lived and died have never even *heard of the name* of Jesus Christ. Most of them never had a *Bible* to read. The vast majority of them never knew about, nor really understood, God's Truth concerning how to really be saved. But, mercifully, God's Word reveals that they are *not* eternally lost!

Jesus Christ himself revealed that: 1) "Sodom and Gomorrah" (Matt. 10:15), 2) those of "Tyre and Sidon" (11:21-24), 3) the people of "Nineveh" (12:41) and 4) the "Queen of the south" [the Queen of Sheba] (v. 42) will all "rise in [the] judgment" together with many of the *blinded Jews* of Christ's day—all of whom will, at the time of their resurrection back to *mortal life*, receive God's gracious gift of salvation. This is further elucidated in Ezekiel 16:46-63 and 37:1-14.

Some mistakenly teach that *if* one does not receive Christ as his Savior now in *this life*, and *if* he does not *obey* God, then he will be damned forever! But this is not taught in the Bible. Rather, God reveals that the vast majority of humans who have ever lived, have *died in their sins*—without a saving knowledge of Christ, His Word, or salvation. But they are *not* lost. They are yet to come up in the "second" resurrection" to be given their *first chance* to receive the knowledge of the Truth, and be brought to God (Rev. 20:11-15).

On beyond the Millennium, Christ will sit upon His Great White Throne, and the dead will be resurrected to *stand* before Him; and the "books" (the Bible) will then be *opened* to them (Rev. 20:11-12). They will then come to the fullness of the knowledge of God's Truth. They will then be judged by Christ, the Great Judge (2 Cor. 5:10), just as the people of God's Church are *now* being judged by Him (1 Peter 4:17; John 12:47). Now is not "the" only day of salvation. Rather, now is "*a* day of salvation" (Is. 49:8 KJV).

The Eighth Day Feast pictures the wonderful time when the many "unsaved" billions will be resurrected back to *physical life*, and will then be given their first opportunity to really understand God's purpose and attain salvation through mankind's only Savior, Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, the great majority of those who are resurrected to receive their salvation during the "Great White Throne Judgment" will accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, repent of their sins, be baptized, then receive God's precious Holy Spirit, and will ultimately be granted immortality (Acts 2:38-39; cf. Ezek. 16; 37:1-14). Some think the *hundred-year period* mentioned in Isaiah 65:17-25 also depicts the "Great White Throne Judgment" period when countless billions will be resurrected, as mentioned in Ezekiel 37, and will be given their chance for salvation.

WHAT IS THE "GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD"? Few subjects have evoked as much *confusion* and *controversy* as "the Gospel." What, according to the Bible, is *Christ's true Gospel*? If we look to the Word of God, we see Jesus' "gospel" was called the "gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark. 1:14). *Gospel* simply means "good news," or "glad tidings." What, then, is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?

A kingdom must always have four vital components—otherwise there can be no kingdom: 1) a *king* or supreme ruler, 2) a body of *subjects* or peoples over which a king rules, 3) a *territory* in which the king and his subjects live, 4) and a code of *laws* by which a king governs his subjects. If *any* of those four components is *missing*—there can be *no kingdom!*

So will it be with the "Kingdom of God," when it is established on earth during the Millennium. It, too, will have four vital components: 1) the *King*—Jesus Christ, 2) the *subjects*—all nations, 3) the *territory*—the whole earth, 4) the *laws*—God's eternal laws.

The "Gospel of the Kingdom of God" is not, primarily, a "gospel" about the *person* of Christ—though it certainly *includes* the preaching of "Christ" as man's only Savior (Acts 4:12; 9:19-22). Christ's Gospel is the very *message* He brought to this earth nearly 2,000 years ago. Most "gospels" now being preached today are *false* gospels that leave out one or more of the vital components of Christ's true gospel; therefore not one of those gospels is, in fact, Christ's gospel. Instead, they are all *spurious gospels* of "Satan [and] his ministers" (2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-11).

What, then, is the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is the "Good News" of the soon-coming Kingdom and government of God, and is the means by which we are saved. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..." (Rom. 1:16).

Here are four important aspects of Christ's true gospel: 1) In order for one to enter that Kingdom, it is vital that he accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in payment for his sins. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; cf. John 3:16; 10:7-9).

2) Jesus Christ—and also the Father—is now *living* His life in every believer, through the power of His Holy Spirit (John 14:23). Paul said that "**Christ in you** [is] the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). He also said, "I have been crucified with Christ [and therefore] **Christ lives in me**" (Gal. 2:20). Furthermore, as our High Priest, Jesus continually intercedes for members of His Body, the Church of God (Heb. 2:17; 4:14-15; 10:21).

The Bible reveals that no amount of "good works," *not* even the keeping of God's holy commandments (Rom. 7:12, 14), can *earn* anyone salvation. Man, by his own merits, could never deserve salvation. Rather, salvation and immortality in the Kingdom of God is the "gift" of God. We are to **give "thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints"**(Col. 1:12).

3) God the Father is now *reproducing Himself* through the spiritual process of begetting us as His children. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..." (Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:49). In order to become "perfect" as our Father is (Matt. 5:48), we must yield to the powerful influence of His Spirit dwelling in us. By yielding to Him,

we thereby "grow in the *grace and knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). In Christ's message to the *seven churches*, He said only those who "overcome" sin and the world will be given immortality in His eternal kingdom (Rev. 2; 3).

4) Finally, Jesus, as "King of kings" (Rev. 19:16), will soon become "King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). Under Christ, the then-made-immortal "saints" will serve as "kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10), will be given "power over the nations [and will] rule them with a rod of iron" (2:26-27).

When rightly understood, Christ's gospel has *nothing* whatsoever to do with the false notion that, after death, His people will go to heaven to bask in idleness and ease, perhaps to spend eternity playing on a harp. Rather, the true gospel of the Kingdom of God is the Good News of Christ's coming Kingdom to rule, with the assistance of His saints, over all nations right here on this earth!

"SIN"—ITS ORIGIN AND CONSEQUENCES Sin is very real and very hideous in its consequences, according to the Bible. But, "Fools mock at sin" (Prov. 14:9). Satan the Devil is the real *author* of sin, having "sinned from the beginning" (John 8:44). Shortly after Adam and Eve were created and put in the Garden of Eden, Satan appeared on the scene and tempted both of them into sinning (Gen. 3). That is how "sin entered the world" (Rom. 5:12).

But what *is* sin? "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). The KJV says, "Sin is the *transgression of the LAW* [of God]." Sin is *not* doing what men think is right or wrong (Prov. 14:12; Is. 55:6-9). God says "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). Sin is anything which man does that breaks God's law! There are also sins of *omission* (Matt. 25:41-45).

Furthermore, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and "the wages [payoff] of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23). When man sins *he* (and often *others* as well) suffers as a result. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21). As man's Creator, His life was worth infinitely more than all other human lives. Likewise, Jesus' voluntary death on behalf of all humanity was more than sufficient to pay the price for the sins of all mankind. Through Christ, sin and "Death [will eventually be] swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). But, clearly, the Bible speaks of two types of "death"—the *first death* and the *second death*.

The first death is the natural "cessation of life" which God has decreed that all who break His laws should experience (Gen. 2:17, Ezek. 18:4). The Bible says "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (6:23). The Apostle Paul told the Romans that "death spread to *all* men, because all have sinned" (5:12). And he reminded the brethren at Corinth that "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). He also told the Hebrews that "it is appointed for men to die *once*" (Heb. 9:27).

The Apostle John said, that "there is a sin *not* unto death" (1 John 5:16-17). By that, God means that those who sin through weakness, yet maintain a right attitude toward God and His mercy, can be forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus (1:9; 2:1-2; John 3:16). But those who "sin unto *death*" (1 John 5:17)—means that that particular "death" is the ultimate penalty for *unrepented sins*. The Bible speaks of the penalty of this unrepented sin as the "second death," which is *eternal death* (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8; Matt. 25:46).

After experiencing the "first death," all men will be resurrected back to life. The Bible reveals that *all men*, sooner or later, will be resurrected (John 5:28 ; 1 Cor. 15:22).

The "second death" is eternal death, total annihilation. Those who experience that death shall never again regain consciousness (Mal. 4:1; Matt. 10:28; 25:46). The *second death* is, in fact, *total extinction*. After every human who ever lived has had his or her chance to receive divine salvation—has either accepted or rejected God's grace!—then what? "Then Death and Hades [i.e. those yet in *Hades*, their "*graves*"] were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the *second death*.** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15).

"If we *sin willfully*" after learning God's truth, then there is no way that even God Himself *can* forgive such willful sins (Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31; cf. Deut. 21:18-21). In such cases, the *willful sinner* sets his mind stubbornly *not* to obey or follow His Creator and His will. By rejecting God and His way, he thereby rejects the only means by which he can receive immortality; and if he resolutely chooses *death*, rather than *life* (Deut. 30: 19), then God will not *force* eternal life down his throat (Mal. 4:1; Matt. 25:41-46; Rev. 20:14-15). The ultimate penalty for willful "sin" is eternal *death* in the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14; 21:8).

The miserable wretches who will experience the "second death" will be those who—after learning about God's Word and His way to eternal life—deliberately, "willfully" reject God's free offer of immortality in His eternal Kingdom (Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31). God will not *force* His precious gift of eternal life on anyone. If anyone deliberately chooses *eternal death*, then there is nothing further that a loving Creator can do for him or her.

[**Note.** There is a great deal of confusion in the world today concerning the afterlife. Some believe in limbo, purgatory, heaven, or spending an eternity in *hell*!

But, what is "HELL"? Does the Bible say there is such place as "hell"? The King James version renders the following *three* Greek words by *one* English word "hell":

Hades is mentioned many times in the N.T. (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14). Hades simply means the *grave*. *Hades* has the same meaning as the Hebrew word *Sheol*. All humans (including even Christ—Acts 2:27, 31) who *die* go to "Hades," and remain there until the time of their *resurrection*.

Gehenna is also mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament (Matt. 5:22, 29; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; James 3:6). *Gehenna* simply refers to the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15). It will be a place in which incorrigibly evil humans—those who utterly reject God and His way of life—will be "burned up" (Mal. 4:1; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:14-15).

Tartarus is the third Greek word translated "hell" ("cast down to *hell*") in the KJV. It is used only *once*. The *evil angels* are now confined to that particular *place* or *condition* [*Tartarus*, or "hell" KJV] (2 Peter 2:4). The Bible never speaks of *humans* being in *Tartarus*.]

SEVEN VITAL STEPS TO SALVATION What is "salvation"? And *why* must man be "saved"? Saved from what? The Apostle Paul tells us that **man must be saved from "sin" and its consequences —"death."** Salvation can only come through God's *grace*—by His *free gift* of eternal life to mankind. No one can ever *merit* or in any way *deserve* immortality. Christ's death,

of itself, does *not* give life; for we are not saved by Christ's *death*, but "by His *life*" (Rom. 5:8-19). Jesus' death on our behalf pays the full penalty for all the sins of mankind (John 3:16). Additionally, man must receive the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit in order to receive eternal life (Acts 2:38; 1 John 5:11-13; Rom. 8:9-14).

But, why must humans be "saved"? Because "*all* have sinned" (Rom. 3:23); and "the wages [reward] of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23). The Prophet Isaiah says, "*All we like sheep have gone astray [sinned].... And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all*" (53:6).

However, Jesus Christ did not die to save us *in* our sins, but *from* our sins. The blood of Jesus doesn't confer on man a *license* to sin in the future. When man sins, and truly repents of those sins, then a loving, merciful God freely forgives all his sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Ps. 103:8-18; John 3:16).

According to the Bible, one can't be saved without first being "converted" or "changed" by being *begotten anew* (John 3:1-12; Acts 2:38-39). To be "converted" (Acts 3:19), means to have a total *change of heart* or attitude—from having a *carnal mind* (the natural mind of the flesh) to a *spiritual mind* (Rom. 8:5-8; Ps. 51:1-12, 16-17). A spiritual mind is the result of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, the very mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). Yet, no one can put himself into (or *join*) God's Church or Kingdom. He must first be *invited* (Matt. 22:2-14)—"drawn" to God by the power of His Spirit (John 6:37, 44, 65).

What are the seven important steps necessary to achieve "salvation"?

1) Our calling and enlightenment *First*, before man can be saved, his "carnal mind" must be "enlightened" (Heb. 6:4; Eph. 1:18), or "illuminated" (Heb. 10:32; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:4-6). Man must have his eyes opened to receive the "light" of God's law (Ps. 119:105). Man's heart must first be softened to receive God's Word, before his darkened mind can "see" spiritual truth (Eph. 4:18). In other words, God must "draw" (John 6:44), or *woo*, the sinner to His way of life (v. 37). As long as man's "carnal mind" is *unenlightened*, he is helpless (Rom. 8:6-14): "There is none who *understands*[God's Truth]; There is none who *seeks* after God" (Rom. 3:11). God must "call" sinners to repentance (Matt. 22:1-14; Rev. 17:14).

Paul informs us that "it is impossible for those who were once *enlightened*...if they shall *fall away*, to renew them again to repentance" (Heb. 6:4-6). Furthermore, he speaks of "the eyes of [the believer's] understanding being *enlightened*; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). Before man can begin the process of "being saved," he must first "see the light" of the Truth of God as revealed through the true Gospel of Christ! For one to be truly enlightened he must believe in *God* and His *Word*, the Holy Bible—"for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). And Christ said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Luke 4:4)!

2) Repentance The *second* vital step in achieving salvation is *repentance* of sin—the "transgression of the law" of God (1 John 3:4 KJV). Since every human has sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the penalty of sin is death (6:23), each guilty sinner must turn from breaking God's law. But, repentance is something that God must "grant" (Acts 11:18). God's Word says "that the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). True repentance is usually the result of the teaching or preaching of the Word *via* the media, or in person (Rom. 10:12-17). And, as Paul says, "He

[God] called you by our gospel" (2 Thess. 2:14).

Before one can receive salvation, he must genuinely *repent* of his sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19). To truly repent of sin means one must have genuine "godly sorrow" for having sinned (2 Cor. 7:10; Ps. 38:18). He, therefore, resolves that with God's help he will *not continue* sinning in the future. The very first "doctrine of Christ" mentioned in Heb. 6:1 is that of "*repentance* from dead works."

Some sincere people believe in *penance*—rather than *repentance*. However, God's Word never mentions "penance." *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* says that "penance... as practiced in Roman, Eastern and some Anglican churches... [is] something (as a hardship or *penalty*) resembling an act of penance (as in compensating for an offense)..." (10th ed., "penance"). But, according to the Bible, no acts of "hardship" that we may ever perform can *atone for* our sins. Only "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"(1 John 1:7).

And it is very important to remember that a true Christian must continue to maintain a spirit of repentance—constantly asking the Great God to forgive him when he, through human weakness, does sin (1 John 1:8-9)!

3) Faith in Christ and His sacrifice for all mankind The *third* important step in overcoming sin is building complete *faith* in God (Heb. 6:1; 11:6), and in the perfect sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. On the Day of Pentecost, many conscience-stricken Jews asked the Apostle Peter, "...what shall we do?"—in order to be saved (Acts 2:37). Peter told them they must turn away from their sinful ways ("repent"), then be "baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins" (v. 38).

Clearly, Peter urged them to put their *faith* in Jesus Christ, who had died for their sins. He also told them that it was *only* through Jesus' name that they could be saved: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (4:12). Jesus Himself had previously revealed that He was the "door" through which every human must enter the Kingdom of God (John 10:1-9).

Later, when an Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip the evangelist, "What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip told him, "If you *believe* with all your heart, you may" (Acts 8:36-37). Believe what? The eunuch then assured him, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (v. 37). But *before* the eunuch asked for baptism, Philip had "preached *Jesus* to him" (v. 35).

What is God's GRACE? Today, many pervert the meaning of God's "grace." Some believe salvation is a matter of *either* "law" *or* "grace." But salvation is the result of the application of *both* God's "law" *and* His "grace" (Gk. *charis*). Some mistakenly think His grace gives one *liberty* to sin (Rom. 6:12-23; Jude 3-4). Others think God's grace has only a very narrow application—that is, it just applies to His *forgiveness* of our sins. But, **God's grace simply means all those gifts and blessings that He freely grants His human creatures!** His grace includes: the gift of *physical life*, innumerable *physical blessings* in this life, divine protection, *forgiveness* of past sins, the receipt of the *Holy Spirit*, various *spiritual gifts* (love, faith, joy etc.) bestowed by His Spirit, and a knowledge of God and His way which leads to *immortality* in the Kingdom of God (James 1:17).

"For by *GRACE* you have been saved through *faith*, and that not of yourselves; it [that faith] is the *gift of God*, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus for *good works*, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10)! We need to be reminded that we are "justified by His [Christ's] *blood*" and are "*reconciled* to God through the death of His Son [but] we shall be *saved* by His *life*" (Rom. 5:9-10).

God's grace is not a *license* for man to sin in the future (Rom. 3:8; 6:12-18). He only extends salvation to those who, of their own free will, *repent* of breaking His commandments—with a firm determination to *obey* God and His law in the future. However, all humans do *slip up* from time to time and commit sin (1 John 1:6-10; 2:1-5). In such cases, a loving God freely extends His *grace* (*unmerited pardon* or forgiveness) to such erring humans *if* and when they truly repent (1 John 1:8-10; Is. 1:18; Ps. 103:2-18).

"Justification" What does it mean to be "justified"? To "justify" is to "make just." In printing, when the margins are "justified," they are all aligned so that each line of type is perfectly in line with the other lines. When God justifies us, we are made right with God—are aligned with Him spiritually—through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Since "*all* have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and the "wages [penalty] of sin is *death*" (6:23), how can one be forgiven of his past sins? How can our guilty past be made *just*—i.e. *justified*? The Bible clearly reveals that you must not only *repent* of your sins *before* baptism, but you must also accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior—realizing that only through the *name* of Jesus can man be "saved," that is, "justified" (Acts 4:12).

God's Word says we are *not* saved by Christ's *death*, but by His *life*: "For God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been *JUSTIFIED* by His *blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the *death* of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*" (Rom. 5:8-10).

Paul told the saints at Rome that they were "*justified* freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24; cf. 4:24-25; 5:1). Further, Paul assured the Corinthians, "But you are washed... you were *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter preached to the Jews, explaining that Jesus, whom they had murdered, was their Savior. "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36; 4:10). When the Jews heard Peter's inspired message, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent, and... be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins" (v. 38). Their guilty past could only be *justified* through the shed blood of Jesus. Only the Spirit of God in a Christian can enable him to live a life that continues to be "just" (or justified) in the sight of God.

4) Baptism by immersion So, what's next after God *calls* us, brings us to *repentance*, and after we *accept Christ* as personal Savior? The *fourth* vital step to salvation is *water baptism*. One must then be *baptized* immediately (Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 9:1-18). The Apostle Paul tells us that "the doctrine of baptisms" is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2).

But, is it possible to be properly "baptized" by *sprinkling* or *pouring*? Or, must the one being baptized be totally *immersed* in water? John the Baptist was chosen by God to baptize many

thousands in order to prepare them for God's Kingdom (Matt. 3:1-12). Jesus Christ was Himself baptized by John—not because He had sinned, and therefore needed to repent—but merely to set the proper "example" for others to follow (vv. 13-15; 1 Peter 2:21).

The Greek word *baptizo* means to "immerse" or "overwhelm." The Bible reveals that the believer must be baptized (immersed) in water. John's baptismal ministry occurred at the Jordan River (Mark 1:5), where there was "much water" (John 3:22-23). After Jesus was baptized, "He... came up immediately *from* ["out of" KJV] the water" (Matt. 3:16).

Furthermore, later when an Ethiopian eunuch was baptized, "both Philip [the baptizer] and the eunuch *went down into* the water, and he baptized him... [and they both] *came up out of* the water" (Acts 8:38-39). According to the Word of God, baptism is always by *immersion*—never by either *sprinkling* or *pouring*!

The Apostle Paul explains this further by saying, "we are *buried* with Him [Christ] through baptism" (Rom. 6:4). He also says that through this act of baptism we are "*planted* together in the likeness of his death" (v. 5 KJV). When something is either *buried* or *planted*, it is put completely into earth, water, etc.

At baptism, the Christian enters the "new covenant" with God (Matt. 26:28). That *new covenant* does *not* do away with the law of God. Rather, through that covenant, God writes His laws in our minds and hearts: "For this is the covenant [" new covenant," Heb. 8:8] that I will make.... I will put My laws *in* their mind and write them *on* their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). When one is baptized, he makes a *solemn covenant* with His God that, with the help of His Spirit, he will keep His commandments and live a godly life from that day onward!

5) Receiving God's Holy Spirit through "laying on of hands" When we *repent, accept Jesus* and are *baptized*, God forgives us our sins: "Repent... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38; cf. Ps. 103:3, 10-13). But we are still utterly *powerless*, of ourselves, to overcome sin. If we are to truly overcome sin, we must receive God's "power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This "power" (Gk. *dunamis*) from God empowers us to obey Him in the future. Through God's dynamic Spirit we can keep His commandments—thereby internalizing the laws of our Creator God. "Christ in you [is] the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Following water baptism God then "sanctifies" or "sets apart" the believer by granting him the most precious gift of all—His precious Holy Spirit. Hebrews 6:2 says that "laying on of hands" is one of the major "doctrines of Christ" (cf. Acts 8:17-18). After true *repentance* and *baptism*, God then promises to give the one being baptized the free gift of His *Holy Spirit*—"and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And Christ said, "If you then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts... how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13; cf. John 7:38-39). According to N.T. teaching, the Holy Spirit was given through the *laying on of the hands of Christ's apostles, or elders* (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6).

The Apostle Paul revealed that the "Gentile" Christians, like the Jewish disciples, were "*sanctified* by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren... because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through *sanctification* by the Spirit and belief in the truth to which He called you..." (2 Thess.

2:13-14).

Through the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit, following the *laying on of hands*, Christians are "set apart" (sanctified) for God's special blessings, including ultimate immortality. The Apostle Peter wrote to the "elect [Church] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in *sanctification* of the Spirit, for obedience..." (1 Peter 1:2).

[Note. What is the meaning of "BORN AGAIN"? Many believe that when they are converted (repent, are baptized and receive God's Spirit), they are immediately "born again." Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that anyone who wished to enter the Kingdom of God must be "born again" (John 3:3, 7). "I say unto you, unless one is *born again* [Gk. *gennao anothen*, "born anew" or "born from above"], he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3).

"GENNAO... *to beget* [or] *to be born*, is chiefly used of *men* begetting children, Matt. 1:2-16; more rarely of *women* begetting [i.e. *conceiving*] children, Luke 1:13, 57" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, "beget"). Though many assume that the "new birth" to which Christ referred occurs the very instant one receives the Holy Spirit, shortly after baptism, the Bible reveals otherwise.

Let us compare the physical *human* birth experience with the *divine* birth: **1) With a physical human birth**, there must first be "begettal" (by the *male*), or "conception" (by the *female*)—then after about nine months of *gestation* the actual "birth" occurs. **2) With a spiritual birth**, there must first be a spiritual *begettal/conception*—then after a period of "spiritual gestation" or spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18)—true Christians will someday experience a literal spiritual "birth," thereby becoming an *immortal* son or daughter of God. In English versions of the Bible, the Greek word *gennao* is correctly rendered both as *beget/begotten* and also as *born*. The context of each verse dictates whether *gennao* should be translated as "beget" or as "born." In Matthew 1:20, we see that *gennao*, though translated as "conceived," literally means "begotten" by the Father.

It should be noted that when we receive God's Holy Spirit, it joins with the *human spirit* of our minds, much as the human *sperm* joins with the human *ovum* to form a newly-begotten individual. The Bible mentions this human "spirit" in numerous places (1 Cor. 2:9-11; Job 32:8; Eccl. 12:7).

Jesus Christ said that he who is "born" of the Spirit is like "the wind" (John 3:8). The wind is *invisible*. When one is "born again" he can't be seen by human eyes. Furthermore, Christ said that "**unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**" (v. 5). But that Kingdom will not be established on this earth until *after* Christ's Second Coming (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 11:15).

The Apostle Peter also explains the new *spiritual birth*: "Blessed be the God and Father... [who] has *begotten us again* [Gk. *anagennao*] to a living hope..." (1 Peter 1:3). "Having been *born again*[*anagennao*, "*begotten again*"], not of corruptible *seed* but incorruptible, through the word of God" (v. 23).

Clearly, those who receive the Holy Spirit, after baptism, receive the impregnating "germ" of *eternal life* from the Father: "For His *seed* [Gk. *sperma*] remains in him" (1 John 3:9; cf. 5:11-13). And just as the *human* embryo/fetus must grow for about nine months before actually being *born*, so must each *spiritual* embryo/fetus experience a period of spiritual growth and

development before it is born. The actual *birth* of the *spiritual fetus* will occur at the moment of the *resurrection*—not at the instant when one first receives the Father's "seed"—His life-giving *Spirit*, by the laying on of hands after baptism.

"Whoever has been *born* [more properly, "begotten," Gk. *gennao*] of God does not [practice] sin, for His *seed* [Gk. *sperma*] remains in him; and he cannot [practice] sin because he has been *born*[*gennao*, "begotten"] of God" (1 John 3:9) "Everyone who *practices* righteousness is *born* [*gennao*, "begotten"] of Him [the Father]" (2:29; cf. 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The *American Standard Version* says, "**Everyone also that doeth righteousness is *BEGOTTEN* of him.**"

6) Growing in the "grace and knowledge of God" After *repentance, acceptance of Christ, baptism* and receipt of the *Holy Spirit* by the *laying on of hands* (Acts 8:17-18), the recently baptized and newly begotten child of God must then continue to "**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord**" during the remainder of his Christian life (2 Peter 3:18). God will not grant anyone immortality until he has first proved, usually by years of spiritual growth, that he will voluntarily seek to obey Him and do God's will, rather than his own (cf. John 5:19, 30).

Throughout the New Testament, we are exhorted to *overcome*, but can only do so with the assistance of the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. No one will enter the Kingdom of God unless he or she becomes a true "overcomer" of sin (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). Christ's Bride, the Church, is to be presented to Him "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:26-27). Anything that never *grows* is either dead or dying. Jesus himself likened individual *members* of the Body of Christ (His Church) unto "branches" that must be joined to Him, the main stem of the "vine," thereby receiving the spiritual nourishment (like the *sap* flowing through a vine into the branches) in order to grow and produce "much fruit" (John 15:1-8).

Paul told the Ephesians that God has established apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers "for the *perfecting* of the saints.... Till we all come in the unity of the faith... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of... Christ [so that we may] *grow up* unto Him in all things" (Eph. 4:11-16). The Christian's life is a time of spiritual growth and *overcoming*!

Only *overcomers* (Rev. 2 and 3), those who truly "grow in *grace* [godly character] and knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18), will be given a position in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 2:26-27). Jesus said, "He who *endures to the end* shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13)! All true Christians must remain "sanctified" ("set apart") in God's eyes, and must maintain a life of Christian growth and sanctity to the very end!

7) "Glorification"—putting on immortality—is the final step in receiving salvation (1 Cor. 15:53). God's plan of salvation involves man's ultimate *glorification* in His Kingdom. But it is only after a period of *growing* and *overcoming* that God will bestow upon His people the gift of *immortality*—if they are really willing to "seek" it (Rom. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:49-54). Man will then be truly *glorified* (Eph. 5:27; Philip. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:10).

Nevertheless the "glorification" of God's saints is an ongoing *process* that culminates in ultimate glorification—the putting on of immortality at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:50-54). "But we all... *are being transformed* into the same *image* [of "His Son" Rom. 8:29] from glory to glory... by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Christians "have put on the *new man* who is renewed in

knowledge according to the *image* of Him who created him" (Col. 3:10).

Will the saints, once they are glorified with *immortality*, then be "male" and "female" as we are in this life? Will there be *marriage* in the Kingdom of God? No, for Jesus said, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, *neither marry* nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are the sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34-36). Of course, the immortal saints will be married, forever, to Jesus Christ (Rev. 19: 6-9; Eph. 5:23-33).

God says all humans—by virtue of the fact that He is our Creator—are "His offspring" (Acts 17:28-29). Members of Christ's Body (Church) are now God's spiritually *begotten* "sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6:18). We are highly privileged to be called "sons of God" (1 John 3:1-2). God made "man... a little lower than the angels," but it is His will, ultimately, to crown him with "glory and honor"—*immortality* (Ps. 8:4-5). As glorified, immortal children of God, "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3), and we shall forever be "His people" (Rev. 21:3). Furthermore, we—His divine "sons and daughters"—will someday "inherit all things" (v. 7). As God's truly *born again* "children," we shall "reign forever and ever" (22:5). Ultimate *glorification* will include *immortality* in God's eternal family/Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:49-54).

WHAT IS THE "CHURCH OF GOD"? Must people who wish to be "saved" belong to a church? Just what is a "church"? What is God's Church?

God's O.T. "Church"—the "Congregation of Israel" In O.T. times, God considered *Israel* as His "special treasure" (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 7:6-11). "You [Israel] only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). God took Israel as His *wife*, as mentioned repeatedly in the O.T. (Jer. 3:12-14; Ezek. 16). The "Congregation of Israel" was His people—whom He had *called out of* Egyptian slavery. **Israel was His "CHURCH in the wilderness"** (Acts 7:38 KJV). In order to become a member or citizen of the O.T. *congregation of Israel*, every male had to be physically *circumcised* (Ex. 12:43-49).

The N.T. "Church of God" But in the N.T., God's *Church*, or *congregation*, is comprised of all those whom He *calls out of* all nationalities (Rev. 7:9). To become a "citizen" of God's N.T. Church, one must be circumcised—in *heart*, or *mind* (Eph. 2:19; Rom. 2:28-29; 1 Cor. 7:19). God's N. T. Church is called the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), and is comprised of peoples of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-21).

In twelve places in the N. T. we read of the "Church[es] of God." The English word "church" is from the Greek word *ekklesia*—the "*called out ones*." Of itself, the word *ekklesia* does *not* mean a holy or sacred congregation. Rather, this word is also used in the N.T. to refer to *non-religious* "assemblies" (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). But when the words "of God" are attached to "Church" (*ekklesia*), then that designates that particular Church as being owned by God. The "Church of God" is *holy* only because it is filled and led by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-14).

What, then, is the "Church" or "Church of God"? God's true Church is *not a physical corporate organization*, but is a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM! His Church—His *called out ones*—comprises all who have been *called out of* Satan's evil world (2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4; 1 John 2:15-17; Rom. 12:2-3).

How does a person become a member of Christ's "body" (Church)? **You can't "join" God's Church. Rather, God Himself must "draw" you to Him (John 6:44), and by putting His Spirit within you, He thereby "adds" you to His Church (Acts 2:47)—**

after *repentance* and *baptism* (vv. 38-39). Only God can "grant" true repentance (11:18). One who is truly repentant, turns away from "his way" to "God's way" (cf. Prov. 14:12). He will have been truly *conquered* by God. As a result, he will be filled with, and led by, the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14). And God only gives His Spirit to those who "obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

Christ's Church is also called the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27); and even though "there is [only] *one body*" (Eph. 4:4), *all* true believers are "members of His body" (Eph. 5:30). "For as we have many members in one [physical] body... so we, being many, are *one [spiritual] body* in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom. 12:4-5).

"For as the [human] body is *one* and has many members... so also is Christ. For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...** and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Furthermore, Paul says, "**Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His**" (Rom. 8:9). These verses prove that the only ones who are in the true "Church of God" are those who have repented of their sins, been baptized, and have then received God's Spirit—thereby inducting them into "the body of Christ."

God's true Church is scripturally identified with those who keep His laws—especially the Ten Commandments (Matt. 19:16-19; Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

GOD'S FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT How was Christ's Church to be governed? Is His government from the *bottom up* (*democracy*= "rule by *the people*")? Or, is His government from the *top down* (*theocracy*= "rule by *God*")? Whether we look to see the kind of government God used in the O.T. or the N.T., we see essentially the same thing.

The Hebrew Scriptures clearly illustrate God's Old Testament form of government while Israel was a *theocracy*. At that time, "God was [Israel's] king" (1 Sam. 12:12). Moses was the LORD'S prophet—His direct representative/judge, ruling Israel under God's divine authority (Ex. 4:14-16; cf. Deut. 18:15-18). Then, under Moses were all the leaders/judges—the "able men... rulers of *thousands... hundreds... fifties* and rulers of *tens*" (Ex. 18:21-22). That theocratic government was "pyramidal" in form—broad at the bottom and narrowing progressively toward the top. That type of government is often referred to as *hierarchical*.

It should be noted that though Aaron was, in certain respects, under his brother Moses, yet Aaron's God-ordained priestly office or function (as Israel's *high priest*) was not in a direct sense under Moses' authority or control. Only Aaron the high priest (or in later years, his successor) could go into the *holy of holies* to officiate in the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle. Only God's high priest could use the sacred lots (the *Urim* and the *Thummim*) for determining God's decision in a matter. And only Aaron's descendants could legally function as *priests* in Israel (Num. 3:10).

Thus, we see that even though *Moses* functioned both as a "prophet" (Deut. 18:15), *and* as Israel's supreme "judge" or civil leader over the nation of Israel (Acts 7:35; Ex. 18:13-16), nonetheless God established His priesthood through Moses' brother *Aaron and his sons*. Nothing in the Word of God says God ever gave Moses authority to rule over their priestly ministry over Israel.

God did, however, communicate many of His instructions through Moses, and commanded him to pass them on to "Aaron and to his sons" (Lev. 6:25; 16:2; 17:1-2).

In numerous instances, God told Moses to speak directly to the "congregation of Israel" (Ex. 25:2; 30:31; Lev. 23:2, 10, 24, 34). Thus, we see that *Moses* functioned as Israel's chief *judge* in what might be called the *civil government* over Israel, while *Aaron and his sons*, the priests, were empowered to act for God in all *ecclesiastical matters* pertaining to the functioning of the *priesthood*.

Further, in subsequent generations, Israel's judges or kings were *never* permitted to usurp the authority that God had given only to Aaron's descendants, the priests. In fact, when King Saul took it upon himself to offer sacrifices, unlawfully, he was sternly rebuked by God. Samuel, a Levite by birth, reprimanded Saul for arrogating to himself the Levitical function of offering sacrifices to the LORD. As a result of Saul's willful presumption, he was rejected as Israel's King (1 Sam. 13:8-14).

Clearly, God deliberately kept the function of Israel's *kings* and *priests* totally separate.

The kings did not have authority over the divinely appointed priests; neither did the priests have authority over the "judges"—such as Joshua, Gideon or Samuel—nor at a later time, over the *kings* that God appointed to rule His people Israel. Those whom God used in His government were always placed there by His divine *appointment*—though He often used His human servants as His representatives through whom He appointed (i.e. ordained) kings, prophets, priests, apostles, ministers, elders or deacons to a particular office or function.

From time immemorial, God's form of government has been *hierarchical!* The Father is supreme in authority, and His Son Jesus Christ is under Him, lower in rank and authority (John 14:28). Paul tells us that the "head [leader] of Christ is *God* [the Father]" (1 Cor. 11:3), and "Christ is the HEAD of the Church" (Eph. 5:23). Under the Father and under His Son Jesus Christ are "[1] apostles... [2] prophets... [3] evangelists... [4] pastors and [5] teachers" (Eph. 4:11). A close scrutiny of N.T. church history reveals that the apostles had authority over the evangelists (eg. Paul over Timothy and Titus—Tit. 1:4-16), who, in turn, were over pastors/elders and deacons/deaconesses.

As we have seen, God's government has always been *government from the top down* (Ex. 18:21-26)—not from the bottom up, as in a *democracy!* Today, many churches follow the "congregational" form of government (i.e. rule by the *congregation*/lay members), rather than by divine *appointment* from God on down through the apostles, evangelists, pastors, elders, deacons and deaconesses.

The Global Church of God believes the plain New Testament pattern of government is neither DEMOCRATIC, nor AUTOCRATIC, that is, DICTATORIAL in form. An AUTOCRACY is rule by a SOLE individual—i.e. ONE MAN—who is empowered to make all major decisions regarding *doctrine* and important *administrative* matters. The N.T. clearly reveals that Peter never usurped a position of authority *over* the ELEVEN APOSTLES. However, God appointed him to *oversee* and guide (like a *chairman*) the preaching of the gospel to the "circumcision," whereas Paul was given the *oversight* (*charimanship*) of preaching Christ's gospel to the "uncircumcised" Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-8).

God's people must not follow the example of those lay members who may wish to have a "congregational" form of representative government ruling over God's Church. You don't find that kind of government anywhere in the New Testament. The hands of the *evangelists* and *administrators* of God's Church must not be tied. God's people must never yield to those who would like to see **the PEOPLE** (Gk. *demos*) run God's Church. In following God's HIERARCHICAL form of government, His true ministers must prove to God's people that we truly are "servant leaders." Unfortunately, some have misunderstood "hierarchical government" to imply AUTOCRATIC, ONE-MAN RULE!

What is a "hierarchy"? The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that "HIERARCHY [is] a term commonly used in ecclesiastical language to denote the *aggregate of those PERSONS* who exercise authority within the Christian Church" (11th ed., Vol. XIII). *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines "hierarchy" as follows: "a ruling body of clergy organized into orders or ranks each subordinate to the one above it.... a body of persons in authority" (20th ed.). And the *New International Dictionary* defines *hierarchy* as "A CONTROLLING GROUP of any kind" (1966 ed., Vol. II). God's pattern of church government has been called by some PYRAMIDICAL in form—broad at the bottom and narrowing progressively toward the top (cf. Ex. 28:13-26). But the top of that *pyramid* of Church leadership is somewhat flattened. The "apostles and elders" at Jerusalem formed the flattened top of that pyramid (Acts 15). **However, Jesus Christ—the Church's true "Head"—forms its topmost CAPSTONE!** Should any single human occupy that unique seat? For any human to occupy an autocratic position carries grave risks. It has often been said that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely!"

The leaders of the Global Church of God believe in the principle of *always acting on wise counsel!* "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; **But in the multitude of counselors there is safety**" (Prov. 11:14). "He who **heeds counsel** is wise" (12:15). "**Without counsel, plans go awry**, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (15:22). "**Listen to counsel...** that you may be wise in your latter days" (19:22). "Every purpose is established by counsel [that is, by means of wise counsel]" (20:18). We need to learn to *seek*, then *heed*, God's solemn admonition to always seek "a multitude of counsel" in all matters of importance. Why did Christ ordain *twelve apostles* to guide His early N.T. Church?

Christ warned His disciples that no minister of His (regardless of their rank or experience) should ever act like a LORD—usurping "final authority" in deciding doctrinal or major administrative matters. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles **LORD IT OVER [katakuriuo] them**, and those who are GREAT exercise *authority* over them. Yet is shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20:25-28). The *New English Bible* states that "**their great men make them feel the weight of authority.**"

The *Moffatt* version says, "the rulers of the Gentiles *lord it over* them, and **their great men OVERBEAR them; not so with you.**" The *central idea* embodied in Christ's statement that His ministers shouldn't "*lord it over*" God's people is that they must never be domineering, overbearing, or AUTOCRATIC in the way they rule His Church. Did Peter obey Christ's instruction? He certainly did. Peter later repeated Christ's admonition forbidding God's ministers to ever *lord it over* others by wielding absolute power (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The Global Church of God officially teaches that the final authority in making doctrinal and major administrative decisions rests not with ONE MAN, but with Jesus Christ as He inspires members of the COUNCIL OF ELDERS, some of whom also serve on the BOARD OF DIRECTORS of the Church! The N.T. Scriptures, and the 1995 edition of

Global's booklet on Church government ("When Should You Follow Church Government?"), as well as our Bylaws all exemplify the biblical teaching concerning God's type of government for His Church! Both the 1993 and 1995 editions of our Church government booklet point out that **in the early N.T. Church, doctrinal and major administrative decisions were made by a GROUP OF MEN, rather than by ONE MAN!**

Furthermore, it explains that in the N.T. Church there was no "Moses figure" or "Pope Peter" figure "who towered over the other apostles and elders, giving them orders, threatening to 'fire' them.... But you do *not find* him [Peter] giving orders to the other apostles, sending them out on missions, or in any way 'lording it over' them..." (p. 12).

According to that booklet, what kind of leadership did Christ establish in the N.T. Church of God? **"It was a COLLECTIVE sort of leadership. The responsibility for directing the Church was NOT then invested in a SOLE INDIVIDUAL on earth. The decision was clearly through 'multitude of counsel'.... Peter... NEVER unilaterally decided ANY of those basic matters in the New Testament Church"** (pp. 12-13). In fact, Acts 8:12-25 reveals that it was "the APOSTLES [who] 'sent' Peter and John to Samaria"—not a decision made by either Peter or John (p. 13).

The Church's booklet also mentions that "evidently **"the local Church's CONSENSUS-BUILDING LEADERSHIP** [at Antioch]" sent the apostles Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to thrash out a doctrinal problem which then troubled the Church. **"Paul did not unilaterally make this decision [to go to Jerusalem]!** It was obviously made—*in concert with* the other ministers and leaders of the local church" (p. 14).

While attending that important Jerusalem Conference, **"God guided many apostles and elders to work in a brotherly, non-threatening atmosphere, and no single ONE of the apostles or elders towered over the others at that conference"** (p. 14). So, "The APOSTLES and ELDERS came together to consider the matter' [concerning whether the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the [entire] *law of Moses*] (v. 6)" (pp. 14-15).

The Church government booklet adds, **"There is no hint of any AUTHORITARIANISM, highhandedness or threatening behavior on the part of ANY of the apostles.... And no one ever threatened to fire or disfellowship their fellow ministers except in the cases of plain heresy, directly causing division or moral turpitude"** (pp. 16-17).

What kind of world government will there be when Christ's millennial Kingdom rules over the whole earth (Zech. 14:9; Jer. 3:17; Is. 2:1-4)? In that soon-coming Kingdom of God, David (ruling under Christ) will reign as "king" over all Israel (Ezek. 37:24; Jer. 30:9; Hosea 3:5), while each of the 12 apostles will be a ruler/governor over one of the "twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28-29). Other then-glorified Christians—those who "overcame" sin in this life—will then be given authority over "five cities," "two cities," etc. (Luke 19:17-18).

And when God's glorious millennial Kingdom is set up on this earth, to govern all nations, that *government* will be placed on the "shoulder" of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Is. 9:6-9)! His government will not be in the hands of fallible humans who often find it difficult, if not impossible, to govern their subjects wisely, justly—always looking out for the good of the people. **God's N.T. ministers were never put in their offices by men.** Rather, they were *appointed* (ordained) directly by Jesus, or by His duly ordained ministers. How were the

seven *deacons* ordained by Christ's chosen apostles? After the lay members of God's Church had first chosen seven highly recommended candidates, they presented them before the apostles, "and when they [the apostles] had prayed, they laid their hands on them," thereby ordaining them as deacons (servants) in the Jerusalem Church of God (Acts 6:1-7).

Most important of all—those who rule in God's government must be God-fearing persons of good character and ability (Ex. 18:21-26; 1 Tim. 3:1-13)! God told King David, "**He who rules over men must be JUST ruling in the fear of God**" (2 Sam. 23:3)!

WHAT IS "LIVING" FAITH vs. "DEAD" FAITH? According to the Word of God, faith is vital for salvation, being one of the foundational doctrines of the Bible (Heb. 6:1).

The most outstanding quality of the Patriarch Abraham was his sterling example of *faithful obedience*. When God asked Abraham to obey Him and sacrifice his son Isaac, he promptly proceeded in the task of attempting to carry out God's command. When the LORD saw Abraham's implicit obedience, He then provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac (Gen. 17:9-25; 22:1-14). Abraham was greatly blessed for his willingness to faithfully obey God (vv. 15-18). He knew God would, if need be, resurrect his son Isaac in order to keep His promise to him (Heb. 11:18). For his great faith and obedience to God, Abraham is called the "friend of God" (James 2:23), and is also known as the *father of the faithful* (Rom. 4:1-22).

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is called the "faith" chapter. It names many of the righteous people mentioned in the Old Testament—men and women of great faith in God. When we come to the New Testament, we see that Jesus and all His apostles were also men of faith. Just as the servants of God in O.T. times worked many miracles—including healing the sick, through faith in God—so did Jesus and His apostles.

Christ repeatedly healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and worked many mighty miracles through His living faith (Matt. 8:16-17; Acts 10:38). Furthermore, Jesus commanded His disciples to exercise that same kind of faith by preaching, healing, and working various miracles (Mark 16:15-20; Matt. 10:7-8; 28:19-20).

Jesus implied that there wouldn't be much faith on earth at the close of this evil age: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). *Living faith* is absolutely vital for salvation (James 2:17-26). "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). *And faith* in God and His Word is always required before anyone can be either *forgiven* or *healed* by God (Mark 10:46-52; Matt. 17:14-21).

But what is *living faith*? James says, "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?... Do you see that faith was working together with his [Abraham's] works, and by works faith was made perfect?" (James 2:20-22). He then adds, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead also**" (vv. 24, 26).

In order to be saved, *we* must "Have faith in *God* [the Father]" (Mark 11:22; cf. Heb. 11:6). *We* must also have "faith in *Jesus Christ*," God's Son (Rom. 3:22; Col. 1:4; 2:5; 2 Thess. 3:15). But, in addition to our faith *in* Christ as Savior, *we* must also have *Christ's* very own faith in us. We are told that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by **the faith OF Jesus**

Christ, even *we* have believed *IN* Jesus Christ, that *we* might be justified by **the faith OF Christ**, and not by the works of the law..." (Gal. 2:16 KJV). Furthermore, Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **the faith OF the Son of God...**" (v. 20 KJV). In the original Greek, both of these verses use the *possessive case* (of), showing that it is, indeed, the *faith of Christ* that is needed.

Some versions of the above scriptures indicate that it is solely *our* faith "*in Christ*"—rather than showing that it is *both* our faith *in Christ*, combined with the "faith *OF Jesus*," that saves us. The King James Version correctly shows that, though *we* ourselves must first have faith *in Jesus Christ*, nonetheless *His faith*—which He puts within us, as one of the fruits of his Spirit, Gal. 5:22—is also required to enable us to overcome sin. Numerous other scriptures also reveal that it is "the *faith of Christ* [and] the righteousness which is *OF GOD* by faith" which enables us to be saved (Php. 3:9; cf. Rev. 14:12).

DIVINE HEALING The subject of healing is mentioned repeatedly in the Bible. *Healing* is one of the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1, 9). There are numerous instances of healings mentioned in Scripture—from Genesis in the O.T. on through the books of the N.T.

One of God's Hebrew names is *Yahweh Ropheka*, meaning the *Eternal who heals*. God told the Israelites, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight... I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. **For I am the LORD who heals you** [*Yahweh Ropheka*]" (Ex. 15:26).

According to the 23rd Psalm, it is God who "restores [your] soul" (v. 3). The LORD is a Great God "Who forgives all your iniquities, who *heals* all your diseases" (Ps. 103:3). When studying the N.T., we see Jesus constantly healing people (Matt. 8:16-17; Acts 10:38). He then commanded His apostles to go "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons" (Matt. 10:8). Furthermore, just before Christ ascended to heaven He told the disciples to "preach the gospel.... And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons... they will *lay hands on the sick*, and they will recover" (Mark. 16:17-18).

We read of numerous healings in the book of Acts—by *Peter* (3:1-11; 9:36-42) and *Paul* (19:11-12; 28:7-10). Finally, the *Apostle James* says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the *sick*, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:14-16).

When the Apostle Paul was unable to be physically present at the bedside of a sick person, he sent *handkerchiefs* or *aprons* to the sick, and through that means God healed a number of the recipients who believed. "And God worked *unusual miracles* by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:11).

Truly, the LORD is still a miracle-working God. Hebrews 13:8 says that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Further, God says "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Ma. 3:6). The LORD is still "*Yahweh Ropheka*"—the Great God who *heals!* If we exercise *faith* and *patience* and truly look to Him, it is still *possible* to receive divine healing from

the Great Healer.

Undoubtedly, many more *would* be healed today *if* they would only go to Him in faithful obedience, looking to Him in faith, actually *expecting* a miraculous healing! However, there are numerous instances in the Scriptures where God, for His own good reasons, did *not* heal certain of His servants: *King David* (1 Kings 1:1-2; Ps. 38:7), the *Prophet Elisha* (2 Kings 13:14, 20) and the *Apostle Paul* (2 Cor. 12:5-10).

The Bible reveals that it *is* not wrong to use the services of the medical profession. The Apostle Paul made favorable mention of "Luke the beloved physician" in writing his epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:14). Furthermore, Jesus Himself said, "Those who are *well* have no need for a *physician*, but those who are *sick*" (Mark. 2:17). There are many situations in which the services of a competent physician should be utilized. Whoever is responsible for making such decisions in all cases of serious illness or injury, must also be the one who decides what to do in all matters requiring the competent services of a good physician.

Today there are some *incompetent physicians*—just as there were in the time of Jesus Christ. During Christ's ministry, "**a certain woman... had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse**" (Mark. 5:26-27). In like manner, many people today "suffer many things from many physicians," and all too often they "spend all they have" and are *not* healed, but "rather grow worse"! Anyone who utilizes the services of the medical profession ought to be very careful to procure the services of a *competent physician* who is both *knowledgeable* and *conscientious*!

And let us remember, God's divine healing goes above and beyond any services that the most competent physicians can provide. All too often, however, people fail to go to God for healing, and look solely to the medical profession. But even those who do so often go to God for healing as a last resort!

The Bible says that Christ "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness—**by whose stripes you were healed**" (1 Peter 2:24). It is interesting to note that after Matthew says Christ "healed all who were sick" (Matt. 8:16), he adds, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah... 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'" (v. 17; cf. Is. 53:4). His sacrifice made it *possible* for us to be healed both *spiritually* as well as *physically*!

WHAT, ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, IS "PREDESTINATION"? Does mere "chance"—blind "fate"—rule the universe? Or is there a supreme Being who has a great Master Plan for mankind that He worked out long before man was put on this earth?

Does the Bible teach *predestination*? No one who has studied God's Word can doubt that it teaches "predestination," but few seem to understand *what* predestination is all about. A careful study of the Scriptures reveals that predestination has absolutely nothing to do with the *supposition* that some humans are predestined to *annihilation* in a "burning hell," while others are supposedly foreordained to receive *eternal life*. When rightly understood, predestination merely concerns *when* and *how* God will call various ones to an understanding of the *Truth*—to be given their God-given *chance* to receive His free gift of immortality!

The Apostle Peter tells us, "The Lord... is not willing that *any* should perish but that *all* should

come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; cf. Matt. 18:14). He also says that "**God shows no partiality**" (Acts 10:34). The Apostle Paul assures us that "God our Savior... desires *all men to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3-4; cf. John 3:16). Clearly, however, these verses do *not* say it is God's will that all men be brought to the knowledge of the Truth—and therefore be *saved—in this life!* Rather, **God has ordained *three different times* (or *judgment periods*) when all humanity will be offered His free gift of salvation:**

1) The O.T.-N.T. Church Age Those called into God's Church during this Church Age are *now* being judged by God and His Word. "For the time has come for judgment to *begin* at the HOUSE OF GOD" (1 Peter 4:17). Furthermore, the Bible reveals that the O.T. *patriarchs, prophets* and other servants of God were called by God and filled with His Spirit (1 Peter 1:11; Gen. 41:38; Dan. 4:8-9). In addition to those called in this Church Age (including the N.T. *apostles*), Jesus said the O.T. *patriarchs* and *prophets* will also be in the "Kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28; Matt. 17:3; 19:28; cf. Ezek. 37:24).

The first resurrection, to occur at Christ's Second coming, will include all of the righteous dead, from the time of "righteous Abel" to the instantaneous change to immortality of the righteous saints still living at His coming. In other words, it will include both the O.T. saints as well as those N.T. saints who remained faithful to God.

2) The Millennial Age All who will live on this earth as flesh-and-blood *mortals* in the Millennial Age will be judged during that *thousand-year* period called "the Millennium" (Rev. 20:4-6; Ps. 67:4; Matt. 25:31-46). That is the millennial "day" mentioned in Acts 17:31, and is also referred to, prophetically, as a "Sabbath rest" (Gk. *sabbatismos*) in Hebrews 4:9. In biblical prophecy, one "year" often represents one "day" (Num. 14:33; Ezek. 4:6; 2 Peter 3:8-9). The Millennium will be a time of great peace, prosperity, joy and universal salvation (Is. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 14:7; Jer. 31).

3) The "Last Judgment" Age The overwhelming *majority* of those who have lived and died in past ages—from Adam up to Christ's "Second Coming" (all those who *never really knew the Truth*) will be raised from the *dead*, and will be judged by God during a future time of *indefinite duration*, after Christ's 1,000-year rule on earth (Rev. 20:11-12; John 5:28-29). Some call that period the "Last Judgment." Others call it the "Great White Throne Judgment." According to Revelation 20:11-15, this judgment period, when the "dead... [will] *stand* before God" (v. 12), will occur *after* the Millennium.

Christ also alluded to this same time of "judgment" when *all* the *unsaved* peoples who lived in past ages (including those of *Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh*, and the *Queen of Sheba*, etc.) will "rise in the judgment," along with many of the "unsaved" Jews of Christ's day (Matt. 10:15, 11:21-24; 12:41-42; cf. John 5:25-29). Ezekiel also gives additional details of what will happen in that Great White Throne Judgment period (16:44-63; 37:1-14). Some believe this "Last Judgment" is also depicted in Isaiah 65:17-25.

The main scriptures dealing with *predestination* are found in the books of *Romans* and *Ephesians*. Those scriptures clearly show God *foreordained* that those who are *now* in His Church were *predestined* to be called at this time, during this N.T. Church Age. "For whom He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He *predestined*, these He also

called [and] justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

Paul also says that "He [God] chose us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having *predestined* us to adoption [*sonship*] as sons of Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:4-5; cf. Rev. 13:8). He then adds, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which *God prepared beforehand* ["before ordained" KJV] that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Furthermore, Paul says that God "has saved us and called us with a holy calling... according to His own purpose and grace **which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began**" (2 Tim. 1:9). He also said Christians have a firm "hope of *eternal life* which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2).

Biblical Examples of Predestination Scores of Scriptures reveal that, long ago, God foreordained the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Gen. 3:15; 49:10, Ps. 69:7-21). The Scriptures foretold that Jesus would be born of "a virgin" (Is. 7:14-16). Many other details of His life and ministry were foretold (Is. 42:21; 52:13-15; 53). But, was He the *only* person who was foreordained to have a special mission and work to do?

Clearly, some persons were even *mentioned by name* long before they were born: *Isaac* (Gen. 17:21); *King Cyrus* (Is. 44:28; 45:1); the *Messiah/Christ* (Dan. 9:25-26; John 4:21; 4:25); *Immanuel/Jesus* (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

Numerous others (though *not* actually *named* by God before they were born) were *predestined* to fulfill a particular role in God's preordained plan: *Jacob* and *Esau* (25:20-26), *Pharaoh* (Rom. 9:17); *Samuel* (1 Sam. 1:1-20), *Jeremiah* (Jer. 1:4-10), *John the Baptist* (Luke 1:5-57), and the *Apostle Paul* (Gal. 1:15),

The Scriptures reveal that, "before the foundation of the world," God himself foreordained that during various preordained ages, the LORD (*YHWH*) would call certain ones to be His true worshippers. In the time of the Prophet Elijah, 7,000 worshippers of the LORD (*YHWH*) remained faithful to Him (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:4). Prophecy reveals that God will seal 12,000 out of each of the "twelve tribes" of Israel—144,000 in all (Rev. 7:1-9). And, in addition, "a great multitude of *all nations*" will receive salvation (v. 9).

God Almighty controls the *precise numbers* of those whom He wishes to be in His "congregation," "Church" or "family" (Eph. 3:15) during any given age—whether 7,000 or 144,000! God is never sloppy or imprecise in the way He does things. He foreordained the *twelve tribes* of Israel and the *twelve apostles*—who would be eye-witnesses of His ministry, death and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22; Rev. 21:12-14).

Though God predestined that He would *call* certain ones into His Church in this Church Age. (Rom. 8:28-30; cf. 11:25-26), absolutely nothing in the Bible says or *implies* that God ever predestines anyone to be *lost*! Neither will God *force* anyone to be "saved" against his will (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13-15; Rev. 22:17).

Paul says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the *called* according to His purpose. For whom He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He *predestined*, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified

[and] glorified" (Rom. 8:28-30).

The sixth chapter of the Gospel of John contains some of Christ's most shocking statements. Jesus said, "All that the Father *gives* Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). But He quickly added, "**No man *can* come to Me unless the Father who sent Me *draws* him;** and I will raise him up at the last day" (v. 44). Shortly afterward Christ reiterated this point: "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been *granted* to him by My Father" (v. 65; cf. Acts 11:28).

Immediately after Christ's third affirmation of that vital truth, many of His disciples were offended. "From that time many of His disciples *went back* and walked with Him no more" (v. 66). Three times Christ had told the Jews that no man could come to Him unless the Father drew him—and that was just too much for their minds to comprehend! Today is no different. It is still impossible for the average Christian-professing person to really *believe Christ*—that "No man can come to [Jesus] unless the Father... draws him."

Unless your name is *in* the Lamb's Book of Life, and unless the Father himself *draws* (or woos!) you, you can't of your own self come to Christ and become one of His faithful disciples. God puts you into His Church by giving you His free Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13).

God has made every human being a "free moral agent," having a free will so each can make his own choices (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Joshua 24:15; Prov. 1:29-33). But God the Father has a great Master Plan that He devised and fulfills. It is *He* who determines *when*, and *how many*, He will call into His Church at any given time. *Predestination* merely concerns *when* and *how* (in *which* of God's *three* judgment periods) each person will be "called" to understand and follow the Truth of God—thereby receiving his one and *only chance* to be saved! *All* will be called to understand God's Truth—sooner or later! But God determines both *when* and *how* He will call each human being, and reveal His truth to him or her.

If God predestines only a certain number to be called at this time, then what use is there in preaching? Preaching God's Word serves several purposes: 1) To *call out* of the world—"Church" (Gk. *ekklesia*, "to call out") those whose names were written in the Book of Life "from the foundation of the world"; 2) To be a "witness" to the world of what God plans to do at various times (Genesis 6; Jonah 3; Ezek. 3:18-21); 3) And, to warn both *individuals* and *nations* of God's dire judgments to fall on those—like *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* (Gen. 18; 19), *Nineveh* (Jonah, chapters 1-3), *Jerusalem* (Matt. 24:1-2; Luke 19:41-44)—whose heinous sins have "reached to heaven" (Rev. 18:5; Jer. 51:9).

God's Word teaches *predestination*, but as we have seen—sooner or later!—*all* are predestined to be given a *chance* to be saved, thereby receiving God's free gift of *immortality*.

It would be totally contrary to God's perfect character, and also contrary to His revealed will, for any human to have been predestined to *failure*—i.e. to be annihilated through eternal death!

BIBLE PROPHECY AND "ESCHATOLGY" *Prophecy* is "history written in advance." *Eschatology* is "a branch of theology concerned with the final events... of mankind [and includes] a belief concerning *death*, the *end of the world*, or the ultimate *destiny* of mankind... the *Second Coming*, the *resurrection* of the dead, or the *Last Judgment*" (*Merriam*

Webster's Collegiate Dict., 10th ed., "eschatology").

It is impossible to understand Bible prophecy and *eschatology* without first comprehending the biblical fact that, as previously noted, **God has ordained three great periods of judgment:** 1) The *O.T.-N. T. Church Age*, when people in God's Church were to be judged. 2) The coming *Millennial Age*, when all nations will be judged by Christ and His saints. 3) And the "Last Judgment"—sometimes called the Great White Throne Judgment. That "Last Judgment" will occur shortly *after* the Millennium is over, at which time all the "unsaved billions" will be resurrected, so they can then learn about God and His way, as well as be taught about Jesus Christ, their Savior (Rev. 20:11-15). Undoubtedly, the overwhelming *majority* of people during those three judgment periods *will* freely accept God's way of salvation, once they understand it, and will then be saved.

God inspired the Apostle Paul to say, "**Do not despise prophecies**" (2 Thess. 5:21). Much of the Bible is *prophecy* (usually estimated to be about one fourth to one third), and much of that prophecy concerns the *end time*—the close of "this present evil world [Gk. *aion*, 'age']" (Gal. 1:4), and the ushering in of the glorious Millennial Age (Dan. 12:4, 10)?

The Apostle Peter also tells us that prophecy *is* very important: "We also have the *prophetic word* made more sure, which you do well to *heed* as a light that shines in a dark place... knowing this first that *no prophecy* of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-20).

Hundreds of O.T. prophecies, which predicted Christ's *first coming*, have already been fulfilled in marvelous detail. But there are even more prophecies that concern His *Second Coming*—and those earth-shaking events that will *occur* after His Coming. It is, therefore, very important for us to understand those prophecies that are *yet to be fulfilled* at the close of this age, as the Millennial Age is about to dawn in all its glory.

A MASTER-KEY OF PROPHECY—IDENTITY OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN

PEOPLES One of the most *vital keys* to understanding prophecy is knowing the *true biblical identity* of the Jews and their *cousins*, the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples of Northwest Europe—and those countries settled by their descendants. Why have the English-speaking peoples dominated the world during the last few centuries?

Both the Bible and history reveal that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples of N.W. Europe are, in fact, descendants of the ancient, so-called "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel, who were taken captive to Assyria and Media *circa* 734-721 B.C. Following their captivity, they became known as the "Ten Lost Tribes." During subsequent centuries, they immigrated from Southwest Asia into N.W. Europe. Later, their descendants emigrated to, and claimed for themselves, most of North America, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world.

God made certain *unconditional promises* to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by which He promised their descendants many fabulous blessings: 1) Their offspring would become "many nations" (Gen. 17:1-8, 16; 48:16-19). 2) They would possess the "gates" (strategic *sea gates*) of their enemies (24:60; 22:17). 3) Their descendants would inherit the "fat places" (fertile lands) of the earth (27:28; 49:22-26)—North America, Australia, New Zealand and N.W. Europe. 4) And their offspring would become very powerful, militarily speaking (Gen. 27:29; 49:1-27; Deut. 33:13-17;

Num. 23:20-24; 24:5-8; Micah 5:8-9).

But, only the descendants of Jacob's son JOSEPH were to inherit the "birthright," that is, a "double portion" (Deut. 21:17) and its attendant "blessings" (Gen. 48:1-22; 1 Chr. 5:2). Joseph's older son, Manasseh, was prophesied to become a *great nation*, while his younger brother, Ephraim, would become a "*multitude of nations*" (Gen. 48:19). Ephraim was put ahead of Manasseh: "Ephraim is My firstborn," says the LORD (Jer. 31:9). Many of the early immigrants to the new lands of North America—the "core" peoples who formed the prophesied single "great nation" of the United States—were from *Manasseh* (Gen. 48:17-19), whereas many of the immigrants to Australia and New Zealand—forming those British-descended Commonwealth nations, the prophesied "multitude of nations"—were from *Ephraim*.

Why is it important to know that the Anglo-American peoples are the possessors of the *birthright* and its accompanying *blessings*? Because God's Word reveals that at the end of this age, a time of *great trouble* will overtake these peoples—a time called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:4-7; Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1). It is important that the modern descendants of Israel/Jacob be warned of the terrible time of "Jacob's trouble" that is about to engulf them. Sadly, most of them will *not* heed that warning. But, if anyone, individually, will heed, he can deliver his soul from the coming holocaust (Jer. 18:6-8; Ezek. 3:17-21; Luke 21:36). (To understand who these peoples are in Bible prophecy, read our brochure, [America and Britain in Prophecy](#).)

THE PROPHETIC "BEAST" OF REVELATION Prophecies in the book of Revelation reveal that a seven-headed "Beast" will rise up in Europe just before the close of this age, becoming the world's most powerful power bloc (Rev. 13; 17; 19). Six of those prophesied *seven* heads have already arisen, and *one* is "yet [to] come" (Rev. 17:10). Out of the last (the 7th) head will come "ten horns"—that is, "ten *kings*," or ten powerful *leaders*—who will "give their power and authority to the BEAST" (17:8-14). The "Beast" will not only be a "man" (a powerful *leader*), but will also comprise the *group of nations*, over which that super dictator will rule (Rev. 17:13; 19:19-21).

Bible prophecy clearly reveals that the seven-headed Beast of Revelation is the *Roman Empire*. The seventh "head" (or 7th revival of the old Roman system) is *now* in the process of forming in Europe. **It will be the outgrowth of the today's *European Union*.** When it becomes fully developed, it will constitute the mightiest, most fearsome power this earth has ever known. Daniel 11 and Isaiah 47, Zechariah 14, and other O.T. prophecies, reveal that this European Beast power will destroy the Anglo-American nations and the Jews (Hosea 5:5), by initiating a diabolical end-time *holocaust* that will eventually engulf the entire world (Matt. 24:2-22; Rev. 3:10; Luke 21:35). (In order to understand who the "Beast" of revelation is, read our booklet, [The Beast of Revelation](#))

WHAT IS THE "GREAT TRIBULATION"? The Bible speaks of a soon-coming time of great catastrophe, called "the great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21-22; Dan. 11:40-45; 12:1; Luke 21:19-36)—also called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:3-7). It will be the most terrible time of trouble ever to befall this earth. This time of "*great tribulation*" (Gk. *thlipsis megale*) will fall heavily upon Jacob's (or Israel's) end-time descendants—the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples of N.W. Europe, including the English-speaking peoples of the world and their relatives, the Jews (Hosea 5:5). But the Gentile powers who initiate this time of world trouble will be unable to *control* the terrible destruction and misery which they unleash. As a consequence, unspeakable *misery* will

eventually engulf the entire planet (Rev. 3:10; Luke 21:22-26)!

Eventually, Jesus Christ himself will have to shorten those hellish days, otherwise "not a soul would be saved alive" (Matt. 24:22 Moffatt transl.). Apparently the Great Tribulation will last for only two and a half years (Rev. 11:1-15; 12:7-17), and will be immediately followed by a one year period called the "day of the LORD" (Is. 34:8; Hosea 6:1-2). This entire period will last for three and a half years (Rev. 11:1-13; Dan. 11:3).

DEFINING "DAY OF THE LORD" Many confuse the "Great Tribulation" with the "day of the Lord." According to Matthew 24:29, the *heavenly signs* will occur "immediately *after* the tribulation." The *heavenly signs* will be that period of time when "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven" (same verse).

But the Prophet Joel tells us that the *heavenly signs* will occur *before* the "Day of the Lord." "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth.... The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the coming of the great and terrible DAY OF THE LORD" (Joel 2:30-31).

The "day of the LORD" is mentioned in over 30 places in the Bible. It will be a time when God will divinely *intervene* in the affairs of men on this earth—a time when He will punish the inhabitants of the earth for their flagrant sins (Joel 1:14-20; 2:1-32; 3:9-17). The Prophet Zephaniah describes the "Day of the LORD" as "a day of darkness and gloominess" (Zeph. 1:1-18). Zechariah also describes the terrible "day of the LORD" as a time when God will gather the armies of "all nations against Jerusalem," which He will then destroy (14:1-15). During the "day of the LORD" *God's wrath* will be "poured out" by Jesus Christ—*after* He returns to this earth. In fact, the "seven last plagues"—which are the *culmination* of the Day of the Lord—will be meted out in His very "presence" (Rev. 14:10). What, then, is the "day of the LORD"? In the Scriptures, this expression (day of the LORD) appears to be used in a variety of ways:

1) In a general sort of way, the day of the LORD apparently refers to that period of time that begins at the close of this age with God's intervention in human affairs on earth. In that broader sense, it appears to *include* the two and a half years of "Great Tribulation."

2) However, in a secondary, more limited, sense, the *day* of the LORD is referred to as "the *day* of the LORD'S vengeance, the *YEAR* of recompense for the cause of Zion" (Is. 34:8). That "year" will include the most intense portion of God's wrath upon the wicked nations, and will follow a two and one-half year period of "Great Tribulation." Hosea 6:1-2 says, "on the third *day* [that is, third *year*—according to Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6]" God will "raise up" His people by beginning to deliver them from the "Great Tribulation." In that sense, that *one year period* of God's wrath poured out on the Gentile nations will be the final culmination of the "wrath of God" against the wicked inhabitants of this earth. That "year" of God's wrath will occur shortly *before* the beginning of His 1000-year Kingdom of God on earth. The day of the LORD will then continue throughout that millennial period of Christ's rule on this earth (Acts 17:26; 2 Peter 3:8; Rev. 20:1-7).

3) The 18th chapter of Revelation (v. 8 in particular) indicates there will be a literal 24-hour "*one-day*" *period* during which the brunt of the Lord's wrath will fall on "Babylon"—thus destroying many of the world's cities, along with the entire political, economic and religious systems of this

world!

4) Finally, in the broadest sense, the "day of the LORD"—the time of God's direct intervention in human affairs—begins shortly before the Millennium, but will continue right on through the Millennium, and on into the *endless eons* that will follow Christ's 1000-year rule over the entire earth (2 Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21; 22).

CHRIST'S "SECOND COMING" AND THE "FIRST RESURRECTION" Bible prophecy reveals that Christ's Second Coming will be heralded by spectacular signs in the heavens (Matt. 24:29-31; Rev. 6:12-13; Joel 2:30-31). Jesus solemnly promised His disciples that He would assuredly "come again" to this earth (John 14:3). In fact, Jesus' "coming" back to this earth is mentioned ten times in the 24th chapter of Matthew. Christ said the "tribulation of those days" will *precede* the "coming" of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:29-30). His coming, with a "great sound of a trumpet" (v. 31), will occur when the "*seventh trumpet*" sounds (Rev. 11:15). That trumpet is also called the "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

At that very moment the "first resurrection" will occur. Those who take part in that resurrection will reign "with Christ for a thousand years.... This is the *first resurrection*" (Rev. 20:5, 6). That resurrection is also called: 1) "the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14), 2) "the resurrection to [eternal] life" (John 5:29), and 3) "a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35).

Christ's *second coming* is mentioned repeatedly in the Apostle Paul's epistles (1 Cor. 1:7; 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8, 9). He assured Jesus' followers that Christ will "appear the *second time*" to those who eagerly await His return (Heb. 9:28). The *Apostle Peter* spoke of "the coming of our Lord" (2 Peter 1:16; 3:12); but he also prophesied that skeptics would deny His Second Coming: "Scoffers will come in the last days... [and will say] 'Where is the promise of His [Second] Coming?'" (3:3-4). The Apostles *James* and *John* also spoke of Christ's Second Coming (James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28; Rev. 11:15-18; 19:11-14).

When Christ comes again to this earth, He will be opposed by the warring armies of this world. Jesus will, therefore, have to fight against those belligerent nations who will make war against Him (Rev. 17:11-14; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). After His spectacular victory (Zech. 14:1-5, 12-14), the "Prince of Peace" will establish His throne in Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17). This "Prince of Peace" will send out His law from that "City of Peace" (Is. 2:104; 9:6-9; Micah 4:1-7). (Read our booklet, [*Fourteen Signs Announcing Christ's Return*](#)).

THE "MILLENNIUM" (CHRIST'S 1,000-YEAR REIGN ON EARTH) Many Old and New Testament prophets foresaw a wonderful time of peace and tranquillity on this earth (Is. 2, 9, 11, Micah 4; Zech. 14; Rev. 20). The Apostle John says that Utopian Age will last "a thousand years" (Rev. 20:2-7; cf. Acts 17:31). Such a time of utopian peace, prosperity and earthly bliss has long been prophesied. God's weekly Sabbath, as a day of rest, foreshadows the soon-coming 1000-year Sabbath rest for the whole earth (Heb. 4:8-9).

When we look at the millennial prophecies—including chapters 2, 9, 11 of Isaiah and Micah 4, as well as Zechariah 14 and Jeremiah 31—we see that the Millennium will be a time when all nations "beat their swords into plowshares," there will be great prosperity (Amos 9:13-15), supreme happiness (Is. 14:7), and mankind will dwell peaceably with the ferocious animals and poisonous snakes (Is. 11:6-9). Anti-semitism and other forms of racial prejudice will then

disappear from the earth (Zech. 8:20-23).

In fact, Christ's gospel of the "kingdom of God" points to a time when His Kingdom will govern *all nations* (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 19:15). Any "gospel" which teaches that, at death, Christians go immediately to *heaven*, perhaps to play on some kind of musical instrument, is missing the point. God's Word reveals that Christ and His saints will rule all nations *on this earth* (Dan. 2:44; 7:21-22, 26-27; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10). That is the same earth Christ promised His saints would inherit (Matt. 5:5). The Millennium will be the most wonderful time this earth has ever seen—an indescribable Utopia of worldwide peace, abundance and great joy (Jer. 31:1-14).

THE "LAST JUDGMENT"—THE "SECOND RESURRECTION" There are *three* great periods of judgment mentioned in the Bible: **1)** The O.T-N.T. *Church Age* during which God only judges His people, those He called out of the world and into His Church (1 Peter 4:17); **2)** The *Millennial Age* in which all nations will be exposed to Christ's Truth and His wonderful way of life for 1000 years (Matt. 25:31-45; Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:2-6); **3)** The *"Last Judgment" Age* (called by some, the "Great White Throne Judgment") in which all who have ever lived—yet who died in *sin* and *ignorance* of God's Truth and His way of life—will be resurrected and will have the Word of God opened to their understanding (Rev. 20:11-14; Matt. 10:15; 11:21-24; 12:41-42; Ezek. 16; 37:1-14). Some students of Bible prophecy also think the prophet Isaiah speaks of this "Great White Throne Judgment" age in which those who are then resurrected will have a *hundred year period* in which to come to know God and His way, and decide whether or not to choose eternal life (Is. 65:17-25). In any case, those who take part in this "second resurrection" will *then* be offered God's gracious gift of eternal life, through His Son Jesus Christ, which, undoubtedly, they will freely receive at that time.

A loving God would *not* create untold billions—then permit Satan to deceive them all (Rev. 12:9)—allowing them to die in total ignorance of Him and His ways—and *not* provide some means by which He would *later* offer them His free gift of salvation (1 Tim. 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16). This does *not* mean that they will have a "second chance" to be saved. Although it will be their *second life* in human flesh, it will only be their "first chance" to really understand and follow the Truth of Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS MAN'S ULTIMATE DESTINY—ETERNAL LIFE IN "HEAVEN," OR IMMORTALITY IN THE "NEW EARTH"? Most professing Christians believe that when they die they will go to *heaven*—in spite of the fact that their Savior promised, **"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth"** (Matt. 5:5; cf. Ps. 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

All the prophecies and promises of the Bible tell us that man's reward will be a place or position of *rulership* in God's Kingdom (John 14:1-3; Rev. 3:21; 20:4-6), right here on this earth (Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; Dan. 2:44). Furthermore, we are told that father Abraham looked for "a city" (Heb. 11:16). In the book of Revelation, that same city is described. It is there called "the New Jerusalem... [which] comes down... out of heaven from My God" (Rev. 3:12).

John says, "And I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then, I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, *coming down* out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:1-2). This old earth will then be made "new" by first being "burned up"—just as one might melt the metals of an old car and refashion them into a new automobile. "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord *one day* is as a *thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day.... [And] the elements will melt with fervent

heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.... [For] the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt.... Nevertheless we... look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:8-13)

The Bible says God's people will inherit "the kingdom *of* heaven" (Matt. 5:3; cf. 25:34); but it doesn't say God's kingdom will be *in* heaven. Clearly, the promised inheritance of the meek is "the earth" (v. 5; Ps. 37:9-11, 22, 29). Matthew uses the expression "kingdom *of heaven*," whereas all the other Gospel writers use the term "kingdom *of God*."

The 21st and 22nd chapters of Revelation clearly reveal that an indescribably dazzling city, New Jerusalem, will be situated right here on this beautiful planet—a gloriously beautiful city. It will be God's universe-ruling capital city. But is this earth *all* that man will inherit? "***He who overcomes shall inherit ALL THINGS*** [the entire UNIVERSE], and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7)! "All things" are to be made *subject* to "man"—once he is glorified with immortality (Heb. 2:5-8; Ps. 8:3-8).

But Christ said man must first be "born again... of the Spirit" *before* he can "enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:1-12). Furthermore, Paul says "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor.; 15:50). To inherit God's Kingdom, we must first be "converted"—*changed from mortal to immortal* (v. 53)—at the "resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14).

The Bible clearly prophesies the coming of a time when all humans who have been given, and have accepted, God's offer of salvation will eventually live on a *renewed*, beautiful *earth* (called "a new earth," 2 Peter 3:13), and will have free access to God's universe-ruling capital city, the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21; 22). Revelation describes that divine city as the most beautiful and magnificent city that has ever existed. Its size, beauty and grandeur are truly beyond words. And it will be established right here on this wonderful earth that God created as man's eternal home (Rev. 3:12; 21:1-2).

Instead of *men* going *up* to live with God in His *heaven*, the Bible says *He* will come *down* to live with men on this *earth*—after it is renewed and made into a wondrously beautiful planet: "And I saw a new heaven and a *new earth*... [and] saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, *coming down* out of heaven from God [to the earth]... And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and *He will dwell with them*, and they shall be His people, and **God Himself will be with them and be their God**'" (Rev. 21:1-3)

The glorified saints will then live *with* the Father and His Son in the New Jerusalem. "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God [Father] and of the Lamb [Jesus] shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads.... And they shall reign [*rule*, under God] forever and ever" (22:3-5). (Read our booklet, [Your Ultimate Destiny](#))

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