



## About the Cover

God has a blueprint upon which He has presented **His Plan** for mankind. It is yet a work in progress having begun long ago in obscure darkness and will culminate in man being thrust forth as brilliant spirit beings into the immortal Family of God. Every feature of man from his marvelous mind and stature – directed by God’s Spirit and Law – were designed to ultimately constitute God’s glorious Temple in which He resides. God’s Plan for His spiritual house is coming to fruition, being constructed of living stones – the saints of His Church. God says of His people:

“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of **darkness** and into His marvelous **light**.”

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# ***Plan of God Darkness to Light***

## **Dedication**

To all the people of God – this is for you!

Remembering my dad, W.K. "Zeke" Zehrung (1916-1997), without whose moral character and example this book would not have been possible. His principled honesty and uninhibited kindness toward all set him apart. This work is dedicated to his memory.

*Warren M. Zehrung*

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# ***Plan of God Darkness to Light***

## **Preface**

As far as the people in the world at large are concerned Christianity is a murky and obscure concept. They believe that they understand it all, but they do not. However, for a particular group that God calls His saints, the truth is not elusive at all. Those saints, the people of the Church of God, have been given the unique privilege of knowing more about Christianity and Godliness than the people in the world because God has given them an overview of what He is doing. For a long time, what God is doing was a **mystery**. It is no longer hidden in secrecy. This book contains much of what God has revealed to His saints up to now. For students of the Bible this information should come as no surprise.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

God has a Plan that will eventually impact everyone—some sooner and others later. This book is the story of how God’s Plan unfolds. That Plan is in God’s word the Bible, but it is a long and difficult task to figure out because of the many erroneous notions that are prevalent in society. To begin to know God, a chronological view of the Plan of God is needed. What is His Plan, how did it begin, how will it come to fruition, and what is God’s intent? What is the purpose for which all things were created?

I am writing this book because my expectations were not met. Let me explain: When I first realized that God was calling me and giving me of His Spirit, I supposed that the Church of God would keep growing, and that there would be a tremendous following in this lifetime – like when the huge multitudes from Galilee pursued Jesus (Mark 3:7, 20).

Of course, God knew all along that He would call and work with each of His people from the foundation of the world (John 14:17; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4-5). I fully expected the peace and hope of God’s way would be recognized by a great many as the **Gospel** went out to all nations. I thought then that there would be sizeable congregations, consisting of Spirit led saints with whom to fellowship and provoke unto love and good works, in every town and city (Hebrews 10:24). I thought also that God’s people would have their own lovely culture, customs, and music to replace that of the world. I fully expected that my own family, raised in the hope of that vision, would adopt the way and truth that leads to eternal Life. In the 1970s, it seemed to me that the Eden-like beauty of the award winning Ambassador College grounds, the wholesome student body, and the motivation behind such Millennial quality, would be embraced by many and be replicated and built upon, and spread widely. Now, about a half century later, I recognize that those preliminary anticipations of mine were not to be – not in this lifetime, anyway.

It is evident that my idealistic vision of the end-time Church of God is not to be. Jesus knew that there would be only a weak and small flock, barely viable, at His return (Luke 18:8). God’s true saints would be scattered in an archipelago of small bands, united only by His Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). Even within the larger church corporations of big cities there would be few who practiced true Christianity. The Lord says to us as He did through the Prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. (Matthew 18:20)

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Only God's people know and practice His way of Truth. After being brought up in, and having escaped from this world's educational and religious systems, I know that among God's people I have found the "pearl of great price," and to the best of my ability, desire to share this precious wisdom with those scattered brethren who are and will be called to God's way and knowledge of the Truth (Matthew 13:46; 2 Peter 1:4). This book is only a "rough draft" and "gleaning" of the teachings of God's Church. Everyone must decide for themselves what their informed understanding will be.

The Bible is the living word of God, and as such cannot be exhausted. The Word of God has so much more to it than most are willing to acknowledge. The Bible is a gold mine – but we have to dig for the thousands of hidden tiny nuggets—the solid doctrinal content. We will never find it all – because it is a living document – meaning that it contains more wisdom than we can ever fathom. Through His Holy Spirit in a converted Christian, God leads us to the deeper meanings. I fully hope and expect that those who have a zeal for God's truth will clarify, expound, explain, illuminate and teach this understanding of the present Truth that God has given us (2 Peter 1:12).

During the last century there was a large outpouring of God's Spirit around the world. Today, however, true Christians find themselves a "vanishing breed." The zeal which characterized the spread of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ during the last century is seriously diminishing. In the same way that the Church of the first century left a record of its acts and beliefs for us, it is fitting that this generation set down a legacy to those who follow after us. A time is coming soon when this precious truth will not be widely available.

Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

Because of ever increasing religious persecution on the people of God, and restrictions upon God's word, it is necessary that the vital understandings that the Church of God brethren, the saints of God, once knew – be set forth in a book in order that this discernment and comprehension of the Holy Scriptures not be lost.

At this point in time less than one percent of the earth's population knows that God has a Plan let alone what the **Plan of God** is. And sadly, except for here and there, this valuable information is not being passed along to the next generation so that those who want to know it will have it available to them. God's Plan is an **eternal Plan** (Ephesians 3:11). It is most important that this vital knowledge of the Plan of God be preserved for those with whom God is working. God in His perfect wisdom has not revealed the entirety of godly truth to man all at once.

He imparts certain wisdom that He wants His Church brethren to profit by according to His own schedule and purposes—that's what the Bible calls, "the present truth," when it's received and understood. It should come as no surprise that Biblical wisdom is unique to those in a right relationship with God, and not to everyone. In Matthew 24:5 Jesus said that "many would be deceived" by those who preach Christ – and a sure sign of the fulfillment of that prophecy is how many "Christians" today believe they cannot be deceived. The first century Church of God had Biblical truth and understanding that was subsequently lost to the confused world, but not to the true saints of God. The apostle Peter wrote:

2 Peter 1:12 I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the **present truth**.

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It is this “present truth” which the Church of God possesses today that must be preserved as much as possible for those who will come later. These things have been taught and believed by the Church brethren since the days of Jesus and the New Testament Church. We are living in an increasingly hostile environment which is not conducive to the truth of God. Schools, institutions of higher learning, even the so-called religious leaders of our day do not possess this priceless information. They do not know how to properly weigh the Biblical meanings of the Feasts of the Lord, ceremonies, symbols, figures and patterns that are so plentiful in the Scriptures. Little by little, God revealed parts of His Plan to the prophets of old leading up to Jesus Christ who gave the greater meaning to His disciples (Matthew 13:11).

Thankfully, there have been those in the Church of God community who have compiled a great deal of this Biblical knowledge for the benefit of others. God gives His spiritually deep core truth only to His faithful saints.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: For they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

This foolish world thinks a “**spiritual moment**” is an emotive moment in life that moves one to tears, or a soothing sentimental harmony of peaceable bliss, or one that will take your breath away, or a touching experience that fills you with elation. “Spiritual” in the Bible means so much more than that!

God is Spirit, and He exists in a **spiritual realm** that supersedes our physical realm (John 4:24). **Christian faith** traverses the breach that divides God’s realm from that of mankind.

Jesus told His disciples to go and teach all nations. Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, charged the Church brethren to earnestly contend for the Christian faith and teachings which were once delivered unto them.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.

Paul also urged Timothy to teach Christianity as he had been taught.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 Continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

This book contains much information that was subsequently lost to secular history beginning during the lives of the apostles themselves. The apostles fought against the false information that was polluting the true Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and causing some to break faith with God the Father. Paul wrote:

Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that ye are so soon removed from [God the Father] who called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another [but a false gospel].

Only a very few people are chosen to have this wonderful good news at their fingertips. When asked if there were very few that were saved, Jesus responded:

Luke 13:23-24 Do your utmost to enter in at the narrow gate: For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The Bible is the source and basis of all doctrine put forth in this book. The Bible is the ultimate authority. The story of the Bible is how **darkness** is conquered by **light** (Genesis 1:1-3). The Bible alone establishes the course to that true **Light**—Jesus Christ. All people living in this evil world have been deceived and led into spiritual darkness by false religion, by their own human reason, by the intelligentsia, by the politicians in government, but most of all by Satan himself (Revelation 12:9). Even the Pope has joined into the common refrain today that, “One religion is as good as another—just different paths to the same God.” Jesus taught the opposite: “... difficult is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). Within the pages of this book you will find the answer to the mystery of God’s Plan which was **kept secret** since the world began (Romans 16:25). God is bringing mankind—according to His Plan—out of abysmal **darkness** into His glorious **light**.

1 Corinthians 2:7 We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Mainstream religion, college campuses, and political think-tanks lack knowledge of the Plan of God. If they had it, they would want to bottle it up and sell it to you for a profit (Proverbs 23:23).

After reading this book you will find page after page in the Bible opening up your understanding as never before. It all ties together so well. And, yes it is written with an unorthodox style of **emphasis** for a generation whose attention span cannot be sustained to the end of one of Paul’s long sentences (Ephesians 3:1-14). The information age has changed the public’s attention span due to the amount of information that is presented to them.

The scientific journal, Nature Communications, tells that now people often focus for shorter periods of time. We live in a world of soundbites and headlines – without delving any deeper. Gauging from the micro-bursts of advertisements for public consumption, one would think the entire population is beginning to suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder. Catering to new generations whose primary source of information is social media, smart phones, texting and the sort, this book does not follow a traditional literary orthodox format, but follows a precedent set in our church culture of **bolding** of significant words—in the hopes that pertinent information will readily jump off the page for the reader. Knowing that many readers do not take the time to look up supporting Scriptures, many important supporting verses are placed in the text for easy reference.

There will be perceived inaccuracies in this work due to the fact that no two men agree entirely on every Biblical aspect, but suffice it to say that I seek to add to the Church of God narrative at the time that knowledge is increasing rapidly (Daniel 12:4). I will gladly rectify errors in this work whenever corrections are substantiated with Scripture (Acts 17:11). The answer is to search the Scriptures daily and correct those oversights by proving all things for the benefit of those now being called. God has revealed the Plan of God to His saints by His Spirit:

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). This book is provided free of charge to all those who are searching for answers in the hope that it will help those who are endeavoring to attain to the Kingdom of God. You need to know **God’s Plan** for you. It is far superior to anything you can possibly imagine. You will find the answers that you are seeking in the pages of, *Plan of God—Darkness to Light*.

*Warren M. Zehrung*

# ***Plan of God Darkness to Light***

## **Introduction**

Who is God and what is He doing? Those are good questions to consider. It is not possible to have faith in God without knowing about Him and what is important to Him. No wise man would begin to build a project without a good plan in mind. Why are people so surprised to find out that God, Himself, has a **Plan**? The great majority of the people in the world have not heard that God has a Plan, or what the Plan of God is. It is a mystery to them. The discovery of this knowledge of a hidden mystery is a stunning eye-opener to those who have been living in the dark. Surprisingly, a full understanding of God's intentions was not made known to the prophets of old who foretold them, but it was revealed to the New Testament apostles and subsequently to the Church brethren. God is not calling most people at this time – they are only learning the hard lesson that man's way does not work. But, for those whom God is calling, this book is a heads-up on the overall picture of what God has done, is doing and will do in bringing about His eternal Plan. The apostle Paul explained in Ephesians 3 how God Himself had revealed His mysterious Plan to him.

Ephesians 3:2-5 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me for you: How that by revelation **He made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it **is now revealed** unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

And so it became obvious that God has shown His Plan to many in order to ascertain if they will either live their lives in accordance to the will of God, or follow their own whims. Paul tells us that God's Plan is being made known to the Church brethren—the true saints:

Colossians 1:26 Even **the mystery which has been hidden** from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.

When Jesus was carrying out His three-and-a-half-year public ministry He began to reveal His Father—God the Father—and this mystery that had been so long hidden.

Mark 4:11 [Jesus] said unto His disciples, unto you it is given **to know the mystery** of the Kingdom of God.

This book is a Scriptural tour of the **Plan of God** which is hidden in clear view in the pages of the Bible. As Paul says, “the veil remains” over the minds of those who do not believe (2 Corinthians 3:14). God instituted His **Plan of Salvation** for mankind before the foundation of this world. God unilaterally promised Abraham that His Plan would be fulfilled in him. In this book we will see the staggering Plan of God unfolding before our eyes.

1 Peter 1:18-20 Forasmuch as you know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained **before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The Sabbath keeping and observing Church of God has a deep and rich historical narrative of doctrinal understanding. The concepts of this book are built squarely on this foundational understanding from the Holy Bible.

### **The Plan of God Revealed**

The purpose of this book is to illustrate from the Holy Scriptures the timeline of the Plan of God, and a chronological outline of its most important events and themes, past present and future, in order for the saints of the Church of God to have a framework in which to study God's Word and properly interpret prophecy.

In this writing, the Plan of God is outlined from beginning to end as revealed in Scripture. This framework is designed as a format in which the Bible story can be represented in an orderly fashion. Precious truth, that is much too wonderful for the human mind to conceive of, is made known in the pages of the Bible: The origin of life; the spirit world; creation of the earth and the heavens; the nature of God Himself; eternal salvation and the Plan of God. The question is, "How do they all fit together?"

God planned and is implementing each step of the way, not only to bring us to this very point in time, but to establish His sovereign rule over the entire earth. At this point in time, the process is by no means complete. In fact, God continues to generously divulge more and more of His Plan to us as we approach the return of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 12:4 Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and **seal the book**, even to the time of the end.

This book contains some of the knowledge of God's Plan that He has opened up to the saints in this last century. God has painted a picture throughout the Bible of His wonderful Plan. Point by point He is showing His called out ones exactly how He is working out His Plan of Salvation, not only for the Church of God brethren today, but eventually for all of mankind.

Extremely few people realize that God has a Plan—but God's saints are sanctified (set-apart for a special purpose) to know His Plan by the many points of truth revealed in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures contain all the information necessary for salvation because it is the living Word of God—the absolute Truth. The saving of mankind is necessary because everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God and is deserving of death (Romans 3:23, 6:23). Jesus Christ Himself makes it possible to overturn a sinner's guilty verdict and subsequent death penalty and grant him salvation. There is no other Book that contains the means by which man can be saved, and that is because the Bible is inspired—that is, God breathed. The Bible is a gift from God. God spoke it. That means God **inspired** His words as they were being written down.

2 Peter 1:21 Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, in the original manuscripts. All of our beliefs are based on the Bible, and nothing but the Bible. In coming to a knowledge of God's truth the challenge is to see the big picture, the whole picture, without **breaking** a single Scripture.

John 10:35 ... Scripture cannot be **broken**.

## **Godly Character**

It is God's desire that His people strive to have complete moral character as Jesus is perfect:

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 ...The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may *be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The Bible is actually the word of God originally written on parchment. Today it is in print and available to everyone – at our fingertips. God has conveyed details of His Plan to those men of old who were inspired by Him "a little here and a little there" (Isaiah 28:10). When they wrote Scripture down, most of it was not understandable to them. The meaning of God's words that they originally inscribed on the dried skins of animals was not revealed to them and they were unable to see the entire perspective that God is now revealing to His saints. Over time, and especially in this era of the Church, God is making known that which He had previously hidden in plain sight.

Daniel 12:4 But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

In this book, *Plan of God Darkness to Light*, the pieces of the puzzle are laid out from beginning to end in a timely format. A lot of people think that they know what the Bible says. You now have the opportunity to know what the ancient men of God longed to glimpse into.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the **glory that should follow**.

That term, "glory" has to do with the future brilliant glorified state of those resurrected spirit beings who will have attained to everlasting life. The very Plan of God from before the foundation of the world was and is for the Children of God to obtain glorious eternal life in the Family of God. But, in order to do so each individual's character and image must be dramatically made over and greatly enhanced to conform to the image of God. God is sharpening and perfecting His character in those who believe Him and humbly yield to His will. Notice the description of the glorious resurrected Jesus Christ:

## **Godly Glory**

Hebrews 1:3 The Son [Jesus Christ] is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His image.

In Jesus' prayer to His Father the night before He died, He requested that His **former glory** be restored to Him:

John 17:3-5 This is life eternal, that [the saints] might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent... And now, O Father, **glorify** me with your own self, with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

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Everyone who seeks the Kingdom of God in righteousness will inherit everlasting life. Jesus told Peter and the other disciples:

Matthew 19:29 Everyone that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

From the beginning it was God's Plan, not to only provide man with a temporary physical life, but to create man in a way that he might obtain **glorious eternal life**.

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

Matthew 25:34 [Jesus said,] ...Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Paul told the Ephesian Church how he had been appointed by the Creator through a personal revelation, to shed light on **God's Plan** for all mankind, and also for the angelic realm, **enlightening** them about this mysterious Plan that God had kept secret from the very beginning. It was God's purpose in making His Plan known that, through the Church brethren, all the unseen rulers and powers in heavenly places would at last realize God's plentiful wisdom in its rich variety. All of this is in accordance with His eternal Plan, which He is carrying out through Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul explained it this way:

Ephesians 3:3, 9-11 It was by a revelation that the secret mystery was made known to me ... To make all men see what is the **Plan of [God]**, the **mystery hidden for ages** in God who created all things; that through (because of) the Church brethren the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The **secret** things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are **revealed** belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of His law.

With the institution of God's Church, and with the guidance and intervention of God's Spirit, His Plan was **revealed** to the New Testament Church brethren. In this book we explore many of the incredible facets of God's Plan as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

## **The Original Faith**

This book is written for the Church of God brethren living near the very end-time. It contains an understanding of the revealed chronology of events as supported by Scripture. It is most important that the Biblical knowledge that has been learned in this last generation of God's Church be preserved and protected for those who follow. As we saw in Jude 3, the knowledge of the principles and values of the true faith must be sought, conserved and safeguarded. Jude was paraphrasing the Prophet Jeremiah who had written:

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your lives.

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This profession of our faith which was widely known halfway through the twentieth century has been rapidly eroded to the point that it has become woefully missing in this last era of God's Church. It does not have to be that way – but sadly it is. Jesus rhetorically asked the question, "Will the Son of man find faith on the earth when He returns?" (Luke 18:8) It should come as no surprise to us that many would depart the true faith as we saw happened in Paul's day when many left off believing the true Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7).

The time has come when the knowledge of the wonderful sequence of God's master Plan of events up to the return of Jesus Christ and beyond are sorely needed by the Church brethren. Except for the true saints, the entire world will be caught hopelessly off guard:

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

### **Darkness or Light**

Yes, the all-consuming day of the **Lord's wrath** will come suddenly and unexpectedly on all those who are not a part of God's true people (Matthew 24:22). But there is a way to come out of the **spiritual darkness** that encompasses the world—and only God's people have been shown that **glorious light**. We can know—we will know—if our relationship with God is as it should be.

1 Thessalonians 5:4 But you, brethren, are **not in darkness**, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

The purpose of this book is to set forth a fair record of the Biblical narrative of God's workings with regard to creation and mankind. This book does not repeat the Church of God's well defined doctrinal foundation, but builds on the implementation of it. God has revealed these things to all who have the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the faith to believe Him. Those who say, "These things are too wonderful, and just cannot be," are yet lacking the faith of Jesus Christ who, even as a fleshly man on earth, knew these things to be true.

The entire cosmic universe exists for the sole purpose of bringing many men and women to the glorious state of God Himself (Hebrews 2:10). The stars would not exist at all in the night sky except for the fact that God decided in His great expansive love to create man in His image. Man was created in God's image. Physically, man was able to comprehend the mysteries of the universe. Man's mind was brilliant, and meant to be so. Sin corrupted not only man's mental ability, but the face of the earth was severely impacted as a result of man's godless activities (2 Peter 3:5-13).

God's Plan is to bring man back, not only to his former mental brilliance, but entirely in the **Image of God** with its spiritual complement – bringing man to completion and perfection. The phrase, "in our image," describing man's ultimate destiny to be in the image of God, must not be taken lightly, or underestimated.

Genesis 1:26-27 God said, Let us make man *in our image*, after our likeness: So God created man in His own image, in the **Image of God** created He him.

And yet, man in the flesh comes far short of resembling anything like the supreme spiritual God. That is because man was created to be like God, but the process is ongoing. This book is about how God is going about making man in His image. Where the verse reads, "Let *us*," it refers to both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They are, in fact, two separate beings sharing one Spirit. They are a duality of beings because "God" is a family name—not limited to two. Here is the incredible truth revealed in the Bible: God has destined to replicate man into a multitude of Divine Family beings.

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The world is bogged down with the myth of man possessing an *immortal soul* which is destined to go to heaven or hell for the rest of eternity. That is an utter falsehood not to be found in the Bible. What is revealed in the Bible is that man was created to be a member of the Family of God.

Ephesians 3:15 Of whom the **whole Family** in heaven and earth is named.

When the Scripture reads, “God created man in His own image,” we are to realize that God speaks of future events with certainty as though they were already accomplished.

Romans 4:17 ...God calls those things which are not yet as though they are.

The Plan of God calls for a divine Family of beings to be just like God is—in His very image. And do not listen to the cynical critics who will carry that thought to the ridiculous point of saying that we will equally possess every Godly characteristic of God the Father. God the Father is the only all powerful and eternal sovereign God, and we will always be His children.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him**; for we shall see Him as He is.

Indeed, those who think that these words simply mean that God looks like us grossly underestimate and fail to appreciate the things God has in store for the faithful. Christians not only believe in Jesus, they practice and live His moral and ethical code of conduct – especially in regard toward God and fellow man. If we believe in Jesus Christ, and in His words, we will take on His **glorious** image at the resurrection.

Philippians 3:20-21 The Lord Jesus Christ... shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His **glorious** body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

The ultimate goal of God’s Plan is a veritable host of spiritually created beings in His exact glorious image with flawless Godly character. This is the touchstone belief—the standard by which the True Church of God is recognized. Mankind's ultimate future is to become eternal glorious God beings as only God the Father and Jesus Christ possess spiritual glory. This hallmark conviction of our faith sets the true Church of God apart from all other belief systems.

John 17:1, 5 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with your own self with the glory which I had with thee **before the world existed**.

Jesus was a glorious being before He came to this earth, and He is glorious once again after setting aside His glory to die an ignominious death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). God the Father and Jesus Christ are steadfast in conducting their Plan – they do not deviate from their ultimate objective.

Malachi 3:6 I am the Eternal, I change not.

In writing this book the author has followed that rule of constancy. It is an undeniable trait of God. God’s constancy is the quality of being enduring and unchanging – never capricious, volatile or temperamental.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This consistency in God allows us to view His words, not only with uniformity, but possessing a firmness of resolve. This constancy includes the knowledge that not only does God not change; He has also revealed His sure Plan to His prophets of old and the apostles – as a witness (Amos 3:7).

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Jesus Christ believed every word of the Old Testament Scriptures. He quoted them often and lived by them. After all, as the God of the Old Testament, Jesus was the author of every word – having inspired the writers of old to not only speak His words, but to write them down as well.

### **God Rested on the Sabbath**

2 Peter 1:20-21 ...No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, for the inspired writings came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God uttered them as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to us that God rested on the Sabbath? Was God too tired to go on – or did the Sabbath foretell of some greater rest in the Plan of God? Why did God make the Sabbath one of His Ten Commandments?

Genesis 2:2 On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and **He rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Exodus 16:23 ...This is that which the Lord has said, Tomorrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord.

The notion must be categorically rejected that unless an issue or law of God is restated in the New Testament it is not to be accepted as doctrine. Quite the contrary! Jesus often quoted the Old Testament—demonstrating its veracity. The Old Testament and the New Testament writings are never in conflict with one another (John 10:35).

For example, when we find that God has made the observance of the Sabbath one of His Ten Commandments, and He tells us that it is a sign between Him and His people (Exodus 31:13), and we find Jesus Christ keeping the Sabbath holy as a regular practice – we readily accept Him at His word – and follow in His steps. Many years after Jesus died and was raised to life again, Paul explained to the Christians:

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a **rest** [Greek *Sabbatismos* - keeping of the **Sabbath**] for the people of God.

Luke 4:16 And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

So, we take for granted, even if a particular Sabbath or Holy Day is not mentioned in the Gospel accounts of His life (most are), that Jesus obediently lived His life in accordance with the Law of God. When we obey God's Law, He begins to reveal His secret Plan to us. Believing this concept and rule of constancy in the study of the Bible opens a plethora of revelation to those converted saints who believe and act upon what God says in His word. Constancy allows us to confidently “read between the lines.” We see an example of this in:

Luke 24:45 Then Jesus **opened their understanding**, that they might understand the Scriptures.

This book is only the slightest working sketch of those magnificent things God reveals in His word—the Bible. The Plan of God is much too vast for the entirety of it to be written in a book (John 21:25).

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ...Neither has it entered into the **heart of man**, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them **unto us** by His Spirit.

The Bible is the living Word of God containing timeless spiritual lessons for all who **believe and act** on what is written there.

Psalms 111:10 Reverence for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and a **good understanding** have all those who obey His Commandments.

On the other hand, those who reject God's Law and His word need not even try to understand the **mystery of God**:

Daniel 12:10 ...The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked **shall understand**; but the **wise** shall understand.

## **Feast Days of the Lord**

Only a very few people recognize that the apostle John's Gospel account follows an outline of the Feast Days of the Lord during the years of Christ's public ministry. The fact that John wrote very late – nearly 100 AD – well after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, attests to the fact that the Sabbath and Holy Days had not been eliminated by Jesus Christ. If you, the reader, are not familiar with *the Feasts of the Lord* (Leviticus 23:4), or you have been taught that those are Jewish days of no consequence for Christians – take another look. Jesus observed every one of *the Feasts of the Lord* and He taught His disciples (and us) to do likewise. Jesus said:

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... to **observe all things** whatsoever I have commanded you.

The beloved apostle John kept a **precise record** of the activities and teachings of Jesus Christ during His public ministry. Writing very late, John was moved by God's Holy Spirit to fill in the important details of Christ's pursuits not specifically mentioned by the other Gospel writers – Matthew, Mark and Luke. Please notice a small portion of John's Gospel outline of Jesus' public ministry and His observance of **annual Holy Days**, *the Feasts of the Lord*, and ask yourself this question, "Why would God include this record, and more, in the New Testament, if it were not for the fact of its essential significance to the members of the Church?"

In keeping with Daniel's 70-week prophecy, Jesus was baptized first, and then began His 3½-year public ministry on the Day of Atonement in the fall of 26 AD at the beginning of a Jubilee Year (Luke 4:17-21). The Day of Atonement that year was on Sept 11, 26 AD – the 10th of Tishri. Jesus' 40 days of fasting would have begun on the afternoon/evening before the 29th of August, 26 AD, and ended at the conclusion of the Day of Atonement.

Jesus was baptized on the 28th of August, 26 AD – the 25th of Elul, shortly before His fast began in the evening (Mark 1:12-13). The first **Passover** of Jesus' public ministry is written about in John 2:13, 23. Luke had already written of the second Passover and **Unleavened Bread** (Luke 6:1).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In Chapter 4 John writes of **Pentecost** which is another name for the Old Testament Holy Day called the Feast of Weeks. John refers to Jesus' activities during a fall Feast of the Jews (actually the Lord's Feast) in John 5:1.

Then there was Jesus' third **Passover** (John 6:4). A most important lesson about the "Bread of Life" was taught by Jesus during the Feast of **Unleavened Bread** in John 6:33, 35. At that point John moves quickly to the **Feast of Tabernacles** (John 7:2) and the **Last Great Day** of the Feast (John 7:37 to 10:21). Then John writes extensively of Jesus' last Passover and the death of Jesus Christ on that final Passover (John 11:55 — John 19:30). And, not coincidentally, our Savior's work of salvation was not complete until Christ's resurrection—fully three days and three nights after He lay dead in the grave beginning on the High Day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31).

More than anything else, the meaning of these Holy Days that Jesus so staunchly proclaimed, reveals the Plan of God coming to fruition – step by step. Isaiah often wrote about the Plan of God saying, "You have done wonderful things, Your Plan was formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness" (Isaiah 25:1). Make no mistake about it, **God's Plan** is being worked out here and now as He said it would:

Isaiah 14:24, 26 The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall **it come to pass**; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand... This is the Plan that is purposed upon the whole earth.

God declares that His Plan was written – set in stone – so to speak, before He ever began to initiate step number one:

Isaiah 46:9-10 ...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **declaring the end from the beginning**, and from ancient times the things that **are not yet done**, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

At this point in time, God's Plan is well along in its path to fruition...

# Chapter 1

## Darkness to Light

Genesis 1:2 ...**Darkness** was upon the face of the deep.

It is a very simple concept to understand. It is as easy as flipping on a light switch in a dark room. The idea is easy to grasp. What takes a little digging to comprehend is what God means when He begins to expand on this clear-cut notion of **darkness to light** to arrive the deeper spiritual terms that He uses, like 'marvelous light' and 'unapproachable light.'

The entirety of the Scripture is salted with so many phrases that build on this stunning theme. Ultimately all Scripture points to Jesus Christ. It is wise to establish – without a doubt in our minds – that Jesus and His way of life is the true **enlightenment**. Then, it goes without saying that we must know why He came to this earth and what He stood for. And since knowing is not enough, we must also follow in His steps, without exception, throughout life, until death.

Have you ever wondered what God was thinking before He ever started His vast creation that we see all around us? What is He doing right now? Is God a hands-on creator, always tweaking the direction we are headed, or is He a hands-off God, just waiting to see what happens to everything? And, where is all of this headed? Will the sun and all the stars finally fizzle out as the result of eons of entropy, or is there somehow something wonderful to look forward to? Believe it or not, the Bible contains all the answers to these questions and much, much more. God is constantly interfacing with His people so that His positive expectations for us are met. Jesus said, "I am working and my Father is also working." (John 5:17)

It would certainly do us well to know what God is working at so that we can be a part of it. Why are so many people unaware of the answers to the most important matters?

How will man ever emerge from his abysmal ignorance into the **dazzling wisdom** of God? Some will maintain that man has arrived at the epitome of his intelligence and reasoning acumen. We are so sure of our genius as *homo sapiens* – that we've named our species, "wise man." If we are so smart, how is it that man has written such a long and terrible history of devastation and destruction for his legacy? If we could be honest with ourselves for a moment, we would realize how utterly helpless man has been in establishing an enduring and orderly planet for himself and his children. Every king and president promises change for the better throughout his tenure. So, how is it that inevitably, hostilities, invasion or epidemics always dash the hopes for a utopian world? Few realize that the Bible promises a future that will emerge from **dark obscurity**—into a forthcoming **brilliant** and more than idealistic existence of life forever more—and we can be a part of it! God's Kingdom and rule will continue to grow, and there will be peace without end for the children of God (Isaiah 9:7).

There are many things we would not know of, except for the Bible. There are many themes we generally accept for fact that would be unknown except for the Bible. There is much evidence for the spirit world, but only if one accepts Scripture as the source of truth (John 17:17).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

How profound is “**Darkness**,” and what is it? It is much more than the lack of electromagnetic radiation that stimulates sight and makes things visible. What, for instance was lacking in the Dark Ages? Darkness is much more than a supposed lack of scientific and cultural advancement – it is a lack of Godly involvement and direction.

It is the same with “**Light**.” Light can be too brilliant for the eye, but not the spirit. It is not an oxymoron to state that one of the purposes of this book, to illuminate light.

John 8:12 Jesus spoke, saying, I am the **light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in **darkness**, but shall have the **light of life**.

Paul reveals to us that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is light!

2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 ...The **light of the glorious Gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God... For God, who commanded the **light** to shine out of **darkness**, has shined in our hearts, to give the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **Brilliant Glory**

Before creation there was nothing. We might think of it as outer space with no stars or anything at all in that vast emptiness. But the truth of the matter is that there was not even any outer space – there was absolutely **nothing**. God called it **Darkness**. Now what happened is this: God came up with His Plan. God exists in a brilliant state the Bible calls ‘glory.’ The night before He died Jesus petitioned His Father to restore His **glory** that had been set aside so that He could join us humans in the flesh.

John 17:1, 5 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; **glorify** thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world existed.

That glory of God is something that is not only too intense to look upon – its brightness exceeds that of the sun – it is so intensely brilliant it is impossible to comprehend with our finite minds. That brilliance, God calls **Light**.

In that same prayer, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus revealed that His life and resurrection had made it possible that we mere men be able to join Him and the Father in **their glory**—and that would be everything—the fulfillment of God’s Plan.

John 17:21-22 That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the **glory** which you gave to me I have given **to them**; that they may be one, even as we are one.

*Darkness to light* then is the story God has given to us of how the *nothing of darkness* will ultimately be developed into *everything in Christ Jesus*.

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the splendorous **glory of the Lord**, as the waters cover the sea.

## **Nothing to Everything**

Revelation 21:7 He that overcomes shall inherit **Everything**; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

It is too incredible to grasp! Can you imagine that as Sons of God absolutely everything will be at our disposal to do with as we see fit? We will understand God's Plan perfectly – and be an integral part of it. Nothing will be withheld from us because we will be on the same page that He is on.

Psalms 84:11 The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and **glory**: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

God uses the *darkness* and *light* symbolism for the purpose of making known His much deeper Plan— His spiritual Kingdom that we need to comprehend more fully. There are more than fifty verses in the Bible that specifically utilize both 'darkness' and 'light.' As we read how God utilizes *darkness* and *light* we will see that it is a most important theme throughout the pages of the Scriptures.

Men readily comprehend the disparity between phrases such as, "works of darkness" and "let one's light shine." Almost instinctively, we perceive that one is evil, while the other is proper and beneficial. **Darkness** is associated with things that are evil, like ignorance, sin, death and the Devil. In the same way that we cannot remember our own first steps, we cannot remember the first time we heard the words, "works of darkness" or, "let your light shine." Our very existence is centered in light. And yet, we too often take it for granted.

## **Let there be Light**

**Light** in the Bible is often a metaphor for life, happiness, righteousness, and understanding – especially spiritual understanding and spiritual wisdom which reflect God's character, will and attributes. Light is a symbol for righteousness and goodness. God is life-giving spiritual enlightenment – and Jesus Christ is the epitome of that Light.

We are given the concepts of physical *darkness* and *light* to express the death and despair of godlessness as compared to the life and truth that come with Godliness. Light is one of the most common allegories utilized in the Bible to reveal a higher spiritual concept. The light of God has far-reaching connotations. This light is the **wisdom of God**, it is His truth and His law; it represents His perfect way that leads to life everlasting.

Romans 11:33-34 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is **no light** in them.

In the same way that physical light allows us to see our way, spiritual light reveals the way and truth of God. The spiritual light found in the Scriptures is necessary for spiritual life. The light of God's way of life dissipates the darkness of ignorance and falsehood.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

When God said, “**Let there be light,**” in Genesis 1:3, our first thought is that He was bringing physical light into existence—electromagnetic radiation in all its wavelengths—the source and conveyor of all energy and matter throughout the universe. But, that light is only a mere physical type of the True Spiritual **Light of God** that dissipates spiritual darkness (Genesis 1:4). Paul expresses this meaning here:

2 Corinthians 4:6 God, who commanded the **light to shine out of darkness**, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God is Light (1 John 1:5). When God said, “Let there be light,” He was stating His elaborate Plan whereby He would bring many divinely enlightened sons and daughters into His **brilliant Light**, the superb glory of His divine Family (Hebrews 2:10, Ephesians 3:15).

God’s intent, “Let there be light,” was uttered prior to the creation of the sun at the center of our solar system (Genesis 1:14-18). Here, on day four, God was speaking physically of the sun—*seemingly* the source of all energy and growth—because it too, dissipates the darkness (verse 4).

Let us understand how the Bible is written. God is speaking of light. But He is speaking of the illumination of sunlight shining forth which is only a type of the much greater spiritual meaning in God’s scheme of things which is the pure enlightenment of God Himself. When God said, “Let there be light,” He was more importantly alluding to a much more profound eventuality wherein He would inaugurate spiritual wisdom and life—even life everlasting. The beloved apostle John makes that clear:

John 1:4-5 In [Jesus] was **life**; and that life was the **light of men**. And the light shone in **darkness**; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Jesus is that soon coming light that will finally and entirely **enlighten** the world. We must ask ourselves how we can come out of darkness and enter into His glorious light—there is no more important subject than that. Jesus is the Light that is the ultimate goal of man. We need to understand what this means.

Paul explained to Timothy that Jesus Christ resided in the light which was all too intense and dazzling for mere mortal man to endure. It is the habitation of Jesus and the Father right now! Unapproachable light is off-limits to mere mortal man.

1 Timothy 6:16 [Jesus Christ] only has immortality, **dwelling in the light** which **no man can approach unto**; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting.

Why does Paul say that the dwelling light of God is unapproachable? The answer is that Paul was harkening back to God at Mount Sinai where Moses ascended the mount and God revealed the Ten Commandments. No one was able to approach the mountain except Moses who was given a divine safeguard. We know how Moses could not look directly on the intense **glory** of Jesus Christ’s brightness and yet live (Exodus 33:18-23). That light is associated with the radiance of God’s glory and when that glory appeared, humans and animals had to keep their distance.

That is how **unapproachable** God was to ancient Israel. But as spirit-born beings in the coming resurrection, this light will become our reality.

## **Analogy of Light**

God chose the analogy of natural light to help us visualize a much more splendid and obscure characteristic of Himself. This comparison of natural light to God's unapproachable spiritual light is appreciated by only a small number of converted people at this time. That is true, because everyone thinks he knows what light is; that is, until you ask them to explain what it is. Light is both beautiful and mysterious to us. Our finite minds cannot begin to grasp what physical light is – let alone the spiritual light in which God dwells. Scientists tell us that natural light is that cause or driving force that stimulates sight and makes things visible to us. But, they cannot explain what it is. They only have theories. In some conditions light can be measured as a stream of mass-less photons, but acting like particulate matter. Light also behaves as an electromagnetic wave that is able to oscillate in the vacuum of deep space and be measured with regard to its wavelength (color), its intensity, and its frequency, etc. With all that, scientists still cannot really explain why or how light works. It is indeed a spectacular and inexplicable thing that God created **life sustaining light** that is able to carry energy and heat across the **darkness** of space.

It travels fast. The speed of light is one hundred eighty-six thousand miles per second. But God in His omnipotence is not limited by time or space. In the Bible we are being shown that there is so much more in store for man than meets the eye. We must rely on the many ways God expresses light in Scripture to begin to glimpse the complexities of spiritual light and what it foreshadows for mankind.

Make no mistake, this world is in darkness, and men love it so. The reason that men prefer darkness is because truth and light expose their wrong ways. God says that the foolish will have misfortune because they put **darkness for light** (Isaiah 5:20).

That is why paganism is idolatry. It usurps the worship of the True God with the worship of the bright sun. Sun-Day worship violates God's Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). And, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). However, it is fitting and right that God draw an analogy between His utmost righteousness and the intensifying light of the rising morning sun:

Malachi 1:11 [The Lord of hosts says,] From the *rising of the sun* even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great...

Malachi 4:2 [The Lord of hosts says,] But unto you that revere my name shall the *Sun of Righteousness* arise..."

As physical flesh and blood individuals we should feel the warmth of the sun on our face and realize that He who made the sun is so much greater than that which He has created.

Light and darkness are very different from one another; they are not only opposites. **Light dispels darkness**. "It is better to light one candle than to stumble in the dark." But, darkness cannot dispel light. Think about this: You have two rooms side by side – one is lit and the other is dark. When you open the door between the rooms light flows into the dark room. Darkness does not flow out into the lighted room. You can project light, but you cannot project darkness. We would be wise to ask ourselves if our light shines in this darkened world.

Philippians 2:15 Become blameless and harmless children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

## **Kingdom of Darkness**

When Jesus came, He brought the truth of God to a dark world void of spiritual understanding. The light He ushered in is the wisdom of God that represents His perfect way that leads to life eternal. Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came to dispel darkness. Those are beautiful words, but unless we can understand what they mean they are without profit to us as Christians. We must allow the Holy Scriptures to define what God means by these words that are much more than merely pious sounding sentiments. The importance of these words cannot be overestimated in that they represent the way to eternal life—the **light of life**. Jesus gave us a most stern warning with regard to the path a Christian must walk when He said,

Matthew 6:23 If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus was telling us of the importance of knowing **who** the source of true light is. We live in a world of darkness and god-less-ness. This world is Satan's kingdom—the **kingdom of darkness** (Matthew 12:26). As saints, God's people have separated themselves from this evil world (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). And we give thanks to God because of what we will inherit:

Colossians 1:12-13 We have qualified to partake in the inheritance of the saints in the **Kingdom of light**. [God the Father] has delivered us from the dominion of **darkness** and transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son.

What an incredible thing to be told that as saints we have qualified for the Kingdom of Light – which is the very purpose of God's Plan in the first place. Satan has deceived and blinded the minds of those who do not believe, with the intent of preventing them from having the **light** of the glorious gospel of Christ shine unto them. Jesus has qualified to replace him forever.

How can anyone know whether he is truly walking in the light rather than darkness? That's the most important question a person will ever answer for himself. John tells us that it's all about Godly relationships. God does not allow Christians to opt out of their Christian duty to others by simply watching while other brethren persist in the darkness of sin, knowing that those in darkness will be excluded from the Kingdom of God (Leviticus 5:1, James 5:20, Galatians 6:1). Christians cannot sit idly by and watch others continue in darkness, knowing that those in the darkness of sin are destined for death.

Jesus Christ, the **light** of the world expels the **darkness** and imparts His wisdom everywhere—we are to do the same. If we are walking in the **light** of Jesus, then we will be showing love toward the saints – wherever they are. If we are unwilling to lay our lives down for the sake of the brethren, we walk in **darkness**, and are not cleansed from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7 This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in Him is no **darkness** at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in **darkness**, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we **walk in the light**, as He is in the **light**, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

## **Who is Your Father**

We are seriously warned not to make the mistake of putting darkness for light, and vice versa. Jesus says that the answer to walking in light lies in who it is that you have for your father. Jesus spelled it out so that there could be no doubt. The world has Satan for its *father* – while the saints have the true God for their *Father*. That is a most important distinction. Jesus made that distinction perfectly clear when He said:

John 8:42-44 If God were your Father, you would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me... You are of **your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father you will do.

Many who think they are saints – are still walking in darkness. Only God's people are able to understand the difference between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light. When Jesus came, He brought the truth of God to a dark world void of spiritual understanding. The *light* He ushered in is the wisdom of God that represents His perfect way that leads to life eternal.

## **Fountain of Life**

It is only the word of God that contains the way of truth (John 17:17). Man, without God's truth, will always stumble in the dark because of his ignorance of God's perfect way. Man must drink of the fountain of life—Jesus Christ.

Psalms 36:8-9 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and thou shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with you is the *fountain of life*: in your **light** we shall see **light**.

Jesus informed the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah and the true *fountain of life*:

John 4:14 Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the [living] water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

We use the phrase "I'm in the dark" to indicate when we do not know something, or we are confused, or we do not understand, or things are unclear to us. There is a way to come out of the darkness and into the light of God.

The Bible abounds in symbols, metaphors, types and antitypes to help us understand the deeper meaning of God's rich spiritual truth. God reveals His truth to us in this manner because there are no human words to adequately express His profound spiritual concepts. Often a figure of speech is incorporated in order to establish a basic concept such as when Jesus spoke of a "rock" to give us the certainty of a sure spiritual foundation. He spoke of water and air to help us comprehend the unseen and inestimable workings of His Holy Spirit.

Are we sure that we know what God means to convey to us when He speaks mysteriously to us of darkness and light?

The Prophet Isaiah helped develop the Biblical concept that **light** is associated with *goodness*, while **darkness** is synonymous with *wickedness*. Isaiah introduces the contrasting dichotomy of walking in light as opposed to walking in darkness in:

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Isaiah 5:20-21 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put **darkness for light**, and **light for darkness**; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

As the analogy develops in Scripture, we begin to see how 'light' represents the perfect characteristics of God - while 'darkness' signifies the absence of Godliness. 'Light' begins to be used to symbolize God, His wisdom, and holiness, as well as many other of His attributes.

As the concept of *light* expands in Scripture, we begin to see how *light* represents the upright characteristics of God – while *darkness* epitomizes the vile and contemptible aspects associated with the absence of Godliness. Light is used to symbolize God, His holiness, and goodness, among His many other attributes. God is spiritual radiant light. God's essence is of light.

Matthew 17:2, Habakkuk 3:4 His face did shine like the sun..., His radiance is as the sunlight.

The Bible definition of darkness has to do with sin, ungodliness and even Satan. Whereas the definition of Light is—Jesus Christ. John tells us, "He is the Light." The world does not know that it lies in spiritual darkness. From cover to cover, the Bible gives us the answer for combating that deficit with its pervasive theme of *Darkness to Light*.

### **From Genesis to Revelation**

The theme of *Darkness to Light* opens with **darkness** in Genesis 1:2 and runs through the entirety of the Bible to the very last chapter of the Book of Revelation where we read in 22:5, "The Lord God gives them **light**." This topic's importance is shown by the emphasis it receives by being cited time and again throughout the pages of the Scriptures. Immediately, in Genesis, God began developing the contrasting concepts of **light** and **darkness**.

Genesis 1:1-4 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth became without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be **light**: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was **good**: and God divided the **light** from the **darkness**.

Everything had become **darkness** [Hebrew '*coshek*']. In verse 4, God in **dividing** the light from the darkness gave meaning to the *darkness* and *light* metaphor of His Plan to eradicate all evil and establish His ultimate righteousness. Spiritually speaking, all the wickedness of darkness will be eliminated and replaced by the light of decency and uprightness. God's Plan will usher in the time when none will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the **enlightenment** of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Dividing light from darkness—that is the story of the Bible. We do not have to live in the **dark ages**. Darkness was upon the face of the deep. God did not create that darkness. That darkness prevailed over all creation as a result of Satan's rebellion. The fallen angels' rebellion reduced them to hatred and bitterness toward God and His Plan for all humanity.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Right away in the very first four verses of Genesis we find the *specific purpose statement* of the entire Bible which shows that it is for us to escape spiritual darkness by the hand of God—into His glorious light:

1 Peter 2:9-10 You [Church brethren] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people purchased and possessed by God; that you should show forth the praises of Him who hath **called you out of darkness** into His marvelous **light**. Who in time past were not a people, but are now the **people of God**.

### **God's Law is Light**

There can be no greater quest for us than to be able to come out of darkness and become the people of God. Yes! True Christians have been plucked up out of Satan's kingdom of darkness, and relocated into Christ's Kingdom of Light (Colossians 1:13). Without a doubt, God shows that it is He alone who calls us out of darkness, and the one who separates light from darkness. For us to escape spiritual darkness requires intervention on our Creator's part. And so we find this persistent theme throughout the Bible establishing the premise that God **illuminates** the journey from darkness to light. The Bible, God's word, shows the way.

Psalms 119:105 [O Lord] Your word [the Bible] is a lamp unto my feet, and a **light unto my path**.

Proverbs 6:23 For the Commandment is a lamp; and the **law is light**; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

It is God's word that is able to lead those in this dark world to light. Since Jesus Christ has come to this world, man no longer has to live in the darkness of ignorance where mankind has rejected the knowledge of God.

Romans 1:21 When they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, neither were they thankful; but they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was **darkened**.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 You are all **Children of the Light** and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

### **Abide in the Light**

As **Children of the Light**, we are to reflect His light onto a world darkened by sin. Over and over God distinguishes between light and darkness, and the choice we have to make.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what participation has **light** with **darkness**?

The great majority of mankind remains to this day **in the dark** because they have not learned how to live true faith. They remain in the dark because they do not know the love of God. God is love (1 John 4:8). The love of God has to do with dealing with others in compliance with the Ten Commandments. In other words, we do not fight, steal, lie, cheat, or in any way hurt or mistreat others. How can a person know whether or not he is availing himself of the **light of Jesus Christ**?

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 John 2:8-11 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the **true light** now shines. He that says he is in the **light**, and hates his brother, is in **darkness** even until now. He that loves his brother **abides in the light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in **darkness**, and walks in darkness, and knows not whither he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes.

John insists in almost every chapter of his writings that the true test of Christianity has to do with loving our fellowman. True Christianity has nothing to do with locating the exact right corporate organization with which to associate. No! He that loves his brother **abides in the light**. For example:

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His Commandments.

What does the phrase, “abide in the light,” mean? “Light,” is all about remaining in right relationships with God and with our fellowman. Without that simple, straight forward **light**, there is reserved for us the **blackness of darkness** forever (Jude :13). There is no in-between – there is only life or death:

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that does not love his brother abides in death.

John could just as easily have written, “We know that we have passed from **darkness unto light**, because we love the brethren. He that does not love his brother abides in darkness.

As part of God’s Plan, Jesus came among men. God came into the fleshly realm of man in order for man to be able to attain unto the extraordinary **spiritual realm** that is God’s. This is the great mystery of the ages. The most amazing thing is that it is so plainly hidden in open sight right there in the pages of the Bible. The Scriptures speak of Jesus’ existence long before He came to the earth as Emmanuel—God with us—in the flesh:

John 1:2-4 [Jesus] was in the beginning with God. All things [the universe] were made by Him [Jesus Christ]; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the **light of men**.

Then, John begins to interface with the Genesis account showing that **Jesus is that Light** and life-giver.

John 1:5 And the **light** [God’s Truth, God’s Word, God’s Way] shone in **darkness**; and the darkness [Satan’s way] comprehended it not.

This dark world is still unable to see what God has in store for all. Only those who are specifically selected and converted by the Father are able to grasp the things of the Spirit of God. To the worldly man, the things of the Spirit are foolishness: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). Jesus is the summation of all wisdom, truth, understanding, honesty, knowledge, enlightenment, life, and salvation.

## **Jesus is the True Light**

John 1:7-10 [John the Baptist] came for a witness, to bear witness of the **Light** [Jesus Christ], that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That [Jesus Christ] was the **true Light**, which lights every man that comes into the world. He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

The beloved apostle John explained that without the **true light**, Jesus Christ, men did not stand a chance – but were doomed to condemnation.

John 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that **Light** is come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were **evil**. For every one that does evil **hates the light** neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that does truth **comes to the light**, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

## **New Heaven and a New Earth**

Light is uncomfortable to those who are accustomed to the dark. The world loves its own. The vast expanse of this great gulf between the two, darkness and light, make obvious to us the consequence of the backwardness of ignorance and sin, as distinguished from the **ultimate spiritual enlightenment** of God's truth. God makes it possible for us to come out of darkness and into His light. A great deal of man's history on earth has been lived in spiritual darkness—not knowing the purpose for his existence, and not knowing how to escape death's dark door.

By establishing this powerful theme of *darkness to light*, God shows that it is He alone who separates light from darkness. The narrative of the Bible is clear: Mankind must be brought entirely out of darkness in order to **walk in the light**. The time is coming when Jesus Christ will by His brilliant glory illuminate the new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:23):

Isaiah 60:19-20 The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the Lord shall be **your light** forever, and your God your glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for **the Lord shall be your everlasting light**, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Our eventual destiny is to have darkness far behind us and to dwell, not just in enlightenment, but to exist in the ultimate spiritual light of God. John repeats the definitive goal of God's theme of *Darkness to Light* in the last chapter of the Bible, while describing man's everlasting reign within God's Kingdom.

Revelation 22:1-5 He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb... And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him... And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the **Lord God gives them light**: and *they shall reign for all eternity*.

Through His Prophet Daniel, God foretold how there would be a people who believed and submitted to His sovereign rule over their lives to overcome this world's darkness. He spoke of a future resurrection to everlasting life in which the obedient, converted saints, who had triumphed over this world's darkness, would radiate as beams of light like the stars of heaven:

Daniel 12:3 They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to *righteousness* shall *shine as the stars* forever and ever.

## **A Light Shines in a Dark Place**

The question we must ask ourselves is, “Do we turn others to Christ? In Proverbs 4:18 we see *righteousness* symbolized as the “morning sun.”

Proverbs 4:18 The path of the righteous is like the *morning sun, shining* ever brighter till the full light of day.

Jesus chose a title for Himself which reflects His purpose for coming into the realm of mankind. He said of Himself, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and **the bright and morning star.**” (Revelation 22:16) This Bright Morning Star reference is given in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy about Christ.

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.

The significance of that title, “The Bright and Morning Star,” designates Christ’s role as our Savior. Jesus also said unto the Churches, “He that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations... And I will give him **the morning star**” (Revelation 2:26-28).

It is abundantly clear that Jesus Christ came to bring **light** to the world. It may be translated various ways, but, “The Dawning Sun,” “The Morning Sun,” and, “The Day Star,” all properly refer to the Messiah. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, used the expressive title, “The Dayspring” in describing the Messiah. Zacharias, was moved by the Holy Spirit to prophecy of his son and of Jesus Christ:

Luke 1:78-79 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby **The Dayspring** [the manifestation of Christ the Messiah as the morning sun] from on high hath visited us, to give **light** to them that sit in **darkness** and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Jesus often drew the analogy of Himself as the rising morning sun that gives light and life to the earth—after all; He is the Light that gives **eternal life**, just as without sunshine there would be no life possible on this earth. The apostle Peter was explaining how we might be partakers of God’s divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world (2 Peter 1:4) when he said of Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a **light that shines in a dark place**, until the day [of our Lord] dawns, and the **day star** [morning sun] arise in your hearts.

The picture that Peter painted for us is of the pitch-black darkness of a moonless night, punctuated by the early dawning of the brilliant morning sun as it springs up over the eastern horizon. When that happens, a new day has fully arrived, bringing with it everything that was hidden in the dark of night. We see that Jesus is described just that way—as the **dayspring**, or **morning star** bringing understanding and wisdom to a dark world steeped in ignorance and iniquity.

Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

God’s intent is that we not walk in darkness. In Christ Jesus is bound up in all the meaning and fulfillment of all the prophecies of how this world, void of Godly love and understanding, would find redemption in the True Light:

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the **light of the world** [light to the nations, Isaiah 42:9, 49:6]: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the **light of life** [That is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23)].

## **The Light of the World**

We find here that it is Jesus who is the ultimate **light**. Those are extremely powerful words. The reason that the Bible has so much to say about 'light' is for the crucial reason it is a most important subject. For emphasis, John declares Christ's definitive role again in the next chapter where Jesus says:

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the **light of the world**.

Matthew reiterated the prophecy that Isaiah was inspired to write by God's Holy Spirit about Jesus Christ coming as the "**Great Light**."

Isaiah 9:2, Matthew 4:16 The people that walked in **darkness** have seen a **great light** [Jesus Christ]: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the **light** shined.

Paul witnessed this **great light**, this worthy light, and he tells us that it was none other than the **resurrected Jesus Christ**.

Acts 22:7, 9:3-5 ...Suddenly there shined round about [Paul] a **great light** from heaven... And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus...

Light brings vision and understanding. When we understand a matter we say, "I see." The Messiah's light will bring spiritual understanding to a darkened world.

Isaiah also describes the attributes which the Messiah, Jesus Christ would possess. He would usher in everlasting order and peace with righteousness and justice. The **eyes of the blind would be opened**, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. There will be the Highway of Holiness bringing all men unto Him. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 35:5-8, 9:6-7).

Isaiah 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us **walk in the light** of the Lord.

Daniel foretold how Jesus would establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth:

Daniel 7:27 The Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

## **Spiritual Light**

It is so interesting how well the concepts of light and darkness have been developed. Light exposes that which is hidden in darkness; it shows things as they really are. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, came to dispel the darkness and impart His wisdom to all. The use of the terms “light and darkness” are widely used and accepted language referring to wisdom and understanding – or the lack thereof.

We need to understand God’s self-revelation—and that is the fact that **God is brilliant spiritual radiant light**. As a perfect Savior, Jesus **died** a most ignominious death so that we do not have to die for our own sins and transgressions, and He was raised to life by His Father that we too may **live**. He did that in order to elevate us out of darkness into the light of life. Jesus’ ‘light’ illuminates the path of life that we are to walk – if we are to be like Him. King David realized that:

Psalm 18:28 For thou [O Lord] will light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

David is saying that an awareness of God’s word and way of life brings enlightenment to us in how we are to live.

## **Children of Light**

All throughout the Scriptures, Jesus tells us that this world is operating in the dark without a road map – and that what He brings to the table is that much needed illuminating guidance.

John 9:39 Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they who cannot see **will be given sight**.

1 John 5:20 ...the Son of God has come, and given us deep **understanding**.

Jesus is that Light and He fully intends that we become **children of light**, and not remain in the darkness of worldly ignorance like the religious leaders of His day (John 9:39-41). We find Jesus correlating physical light with spiritual vision:

John 12:35-36 Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the **children of light**.

## **Walk in the Light**

Jesus clearly demonstrates here that He alone is the source of spiritual light and truth for mankind. The revealed allegory He used speaks to the light of His life, the light of His truth, and the light of His word. Perhaps Paul best captured the significance of Jesus Christ as ‘light’ when he said,

2 Corinthians 4:5-6 We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**, has shined in our hearts, so that we can enlighten men with the knowledge of the glory of God as we see it in the face of Jesus Christ.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

That is so beautifully phrased. We would all like to live in a perfect world, and be able to assemble with perfect people every Sabbath. However, Jesus knows that we must be making every strenuous effort to put the forces of darkness behind us, and be building Godly character in His light which guides us in growing in grace and in knowledge. It is like a weight lifter “pumping iron.” Without the weight to exert his strength against, he cannot build bulky muscles. Describing the constant struggle of a Christian against forces of darkness, Jesus put it this way:

Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven is attained only with an utmost struggle on your part, it is acquired only with a maximum effort, and with all your being and strength; and it is only the most serious and dedicated ones who will obtain the Kingdom.

It may often seem that our Christian struggle is with people—but it is not. God ascribes all the **works of darkness** to Satan. We must understand that our battle is not with people because darkness does not originate with them. Speaking of Satan and his demons, we read:

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the **rulers of the darkness of this world**, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

It is Satan who plunges us into darkness. Our Christian battle is against Satan and his agents. Our clash is with the author of darkness, but we have the Light for our strength. King David knew it well:

Psalms 27:1 The Lord is my **light** and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

We never join forces with the dark enemy – the devil and his demons. As we saw, only God’s law is to be the lamp unto our feet, and the light to our path. If we turn tail and run away from the Light, we are deserters, and not loyal forces of the King who has called us and recruited us (John 6:44, 65). God is calling a people out of this dark world to be a separate and holy people of light.

Ephesians 5:8-11, 14 You were sometimes **darkness**, but now **you are light** in the Lord: **walk as children of light**... And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of **darkness**, but rather reprove them... Consequently, the Scriptures say: Awake you that sleep, and **arise** from the dead, and **Christ shall give you light**.

Paul is generally quoting Isaiah 60 here. To **walk in the light** means to repent of sin, examine our hearts’ motivation, know God, understand the truth, and live in righteousness. We must come out of darkness entirely and **walk in the light**. Unless our righteousness is the righteousness of Christ, and if our life’s motivation is not singularly on God’s perfect way, we are doomed. Isaiah prophesied of the **glorious** millennial day of which God prophesied:

### **Rise and Shine**

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for your **light** [the rising daybreak] is come, and the **glorious splendor** of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall shine upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The millennium will usher in Godly **light** to this **dark** world – when Jesus Christ will have established His Father’s Kingdom over this entire earth.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the goal of the Ten Commandments is Godly love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

We cannot go outside of the **law of God** and hope to achieve His will by doing so. The Bible makes it plain that only those who keep the Commandments have a clear view of God's will (Psalm 111:10). Purity and singleness of mind are the result of keeping God's law.

Matthew 6:22-23, Luke 11:34-36 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single [a pure heart set on God], your whole body shall be **full of light**. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! If your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give you light.

Satan attempts to cloak himself in a camouflage of light – but to no avail. He has a voracious appetite for hatred, destruction and deception. He even attempts to co-opt Christ's own personal title of "the morning sun" to himself. Lucifer was used mightily by God in the original formation of the physical universe. "Lucifer" literally means light-bringer. Imagine how involved he was in the development of the material cosmos until iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). Satan expropriated the title, "the morning sun," that rightly belongs only to Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, *son of the morning!*

Paul clarified how Satan wanted to seize for himself the title of being the bright morning sun that enlightens the world. Warning: The works of darkness abound in the world today. It is more than prudent to ask whether faith is founded in Christ or not. Paul demonstrates how Satan is that *false light* who is deceiving mankind (Revelation 12:9).

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an *angel of light*.

Solomon was astute enough to realize that darkness and wrongdoing are sometimes more attractive than the truth of light:

Ecclesiastes 2:13-14 I saw that wisdom excels folly, as far as **light excels darkness**. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness.

Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the **works of darkness**, and let us put on the **armor of light**.

We would not know about darkness, if it were not for the word of God. Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). Sadly, for so many, they actually love their deceived state of mind – worshiping on Sun-Day and Easter morning Sun-Rise services – which God calls an abomination (Ezekiel 8:13-17).

We will see more about Satan later, but suffice it to say here that he fell from his original role as the greatest and most enlightened spirit-being ever created by God.

Remember when Jesus said to Nicodemus, "This is the condemnation, that light [Jesus Christ] is come into the world, and **men loved darkness** rather than **light**, because their deeds were evil." Both Paul and John wrote of those who are in darkness—deceived—through works of darkness.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

John 1:9-10 [Jesus] was the true Light, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew him not.

James, the half-brother of Jesus described this '**darkness**' that is foisted on man. To the unconverted mind this conduct appears to be smart and wise, and the way to get ahead, but it does not originate with God, but from Satan.

James 3:14-18 If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This kind of wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

2 Peter 2:4 God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [*tartaroo*] and delivered them into **chains of darkness**, to be reserved unto judgment...

### **God's Nature**

John says that God's very nature is light. Jesus imparts His light to the world. The important lesson for us to gather from this is that we are invited, as the Children of God, not only to exist in the same dazzling light that is God—but to actually become that Godly light as eternal spirit beings in the Kingdom of God.

It is God's Plan that eventually – not yet – all men will come out of this darkened world into His splendid spiritual light. We are invited as the Children of God, to actually become that **godly light** as eternal spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. That is part and parcel with the Plan of God.

### **Jesus – Savior of the Church**

Before Jesus Christ came to this earth, it was impossible for men to **draw near** to God. But, because of Christ's redemptive act of paying for our sins with His death on the cross, He made reconciliation with God the Father possible.

Colossians 1:19-22 It pleased the Father that in [Jesus] should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He **reconciled in the body of His flesh through death**, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.

Prior to those two perfect acts of love: First, by God the Father in the giving of His Son (John 3:16), and Secondly, by Jesus Christ on the cross in the giving of His life – mankind could not approach unto God because of their sin.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities [sins] have **separated** between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear you.

However, because of repentance, faith and conversion, Church brethren are able to avail themselves of God's reconciliation. The greatest part of this evil world is not yet ready to believe and do what Jesus says. They do not possess His uncompromising standards.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Revelation 21:23-25 The [Holy City Jerusalem (21:10)] has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the **glory of God illuminates it**, and the **Lamb** [of God, Jesus the Messiah] **is the light** thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall **walk in the light** of it: And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be **no night** there.

Mt. Sinai was the physical type of the spiritual Mt. Zion. Now, Jesus has given His Church brethren access to the throne of God. God is no longer unapproachable. God the Father, through Jesus Christ, has made Himself open to them, and will share His immortality with believers. John describes Jesus as being as **brilliant as the sun** itself in Revelation 1:13-16. But what about the resurrected saints?

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the Children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him**; for we shall see Him as He is.

Even now, as His begotten children we are able to have a unique relationship with God. Now we are able to approach unto God – not as men but as Children of God. We have been reconciled to God the Father by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us **draw near** [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

## **The Bible is the Word of God**

From the time before the fall of man until the fruition of God's Plan, only the Bible reveals knowledge of God's direct involvement in man's quest to come out of the darkness of ignorance and sin, and into the **glorious light** and liberty of God's radiant life.

2 Corinthians 4:6 God, who commanded the **light to shine out of darkness**, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ [Jesus' face shone like the sun].

Matthew 17:2 [Jesus] was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

On the wrong side of the scale is the eternal darkness of death, while the ultimate goal of the Plan of God is for mankind to attain to its vital and glorious destiny of becoming sons and daughters of God in His eternal Kingdom. That is the purpose for which man was created. It is God's Plan and desire that every human being that has ever lived be a child of God – each in his own order. God can and does intervene in our lives at all times to keep us headed toward His Kingdom.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart devises his way: but the Lord directs his steps.

God's first offspring to be added to His family will come from His Church. They will be the first to become God beings. Evidence of this is found in God's instructions to the Philadelphians in the Book of Revelation. Keep in mind that only God is to be worshipped—not angels or men. Jesus is referring to those who are persecuting the saints:

Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and **worship** before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The resurrected saints will be worshipped, as God is worshipped, by those men who once reviled them. This is only one of many verses that shows that those who constitute the Church will be a part of God's divine family of beings. The goal and purpose for mankind is that we might be made the righteousness of God:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For [God the Father] hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us [on the cross], who knew no sin; that **we might be made the righteousness of God** in Him.

King David said it this way in Psalm 119:105: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a **light unto my path**.

The narrative of the Bible is clear: Mankind must come entirely out of darkness and **walk in the light**. 'Walking in the light' means living according to the principles that Jesus taught. Unless man's righteousness becomes the righteousness of Christ, he is doomed to death and to be cast into the hopeless outer darkness reserved unto the blackness of darkness forever (Matthew 8:12, Jude 13). As Paul expounds on Daniel's words, "the righteous saints shall shine as the stars forever" (Daniel 12:3), he notes that some resurrected saints will shine more brightly than others:

1 Corinthians 15:40-41 There are also celestial bodies [stars in the heaven], and bodies terrestrial [men on earth]: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is a brilliance of the sun, and a lesser intensity of the moon, and another glow of the stars: for one star differs from another star in [brightness].

Paul is saying that just like on earth there are those who are recognized as being important people, and there are others who are not as notable, in the Kingdom, the resurrected saints will have been raised to various states of majesty and grandeur, having differing responsibilities as Jesus said in Luke 19; some over five cities, and others over ten cities. Paul is speaking of the resurrected saints being given greater or less prominence with significant positions of distinction and leadership in the Kingdom of God.

### **Let Your Light so Shine**

Yes! The righteous saints shall shine as the stars forever. This incredible actuality is contingent on our letting our lights shine now as Jesus has directed us to do.

Matthew 5:16 **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Godly enlightenment is bestowed on those who are being led by God's Holy Spirit. God's way must be lived however, in order to emanate it to others.

The truth of God must be acted on – we must live it before we are able to let our light shine for others to see (Matthew 5:14). The light of which the Bible speaks must be acquired before it can shine forth to another.

James 1:22 Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

This could easily be paraphrased this way, "Talk is cheap, you are only fooling yourself if you are not living it." Someone once said it more astutely, "Salvation lies not in belief of a concept, but in literally following the narrow path to enlightenment."

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

However, Christians, like the moon reflecting the light of the sun, have no light of their own right now. It is incumbent upon us that we mirror that true Light. In our daily lives, we must be reflecting the light of Christ, seeing and doing things as He does them, for all to see. We must exhibit His mercy, graciousness, compassion, and righteousness.

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, is the “true light” (John 1:9). As children of God, we are to reflect His light onto a world darkened by sin. One of our duties is to witness to others who have not heard the Gospel message.

Acts 26:18 **To open their eyes** and turn them from **darkness to light** and from the power of Satan to God.

And what is that Light? That Light is God Himself. The message is that God is completely perfect, absolutely holy, with no taint of sin, nor hint of iniquity, and no trace of injustice.

John 4:24 **God is Spirit:** and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

Jesus tells us that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that He is the exclusive source of **spiritual light** for man. In Him was **life**; and the life was the **light** of men.

John 14:6 Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.

We find then that **light** is God’s essence, as is **life, law, and love**. John says it so well:

1 John 4:8, 16 He that has no love does not know God; for **God is love**...

And we have come to know for certain that God loves us. **God is love**; and he that abides in Godly love dwells in God and God in him.

John 11:25 Jesus said, I am the resurrection, and **the life**:

1 John 5:3 This is Godly **love** that we keep His Commandments.

1 John 1:5 This is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in Him is no darkness at all.

## **True Light**

It is God's Plan that eventually – not yet – all men will come out of this darkened world into His splendid spiritual light. It was Paul who explained how the Father relegated the implementation of the Plan of God to His Son, Jesus Christ. We are told that God the Father brings forth the ages or periods of time in which the steps of His Plan are implemented.

Hebrews 1:2 [God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He **made the worlds** (brings forth the ages).

The remaining seven chapters of this book describe the steps that God is following in order to make us His eternal children. He started long ago and He has a way to go yet, but we are all being called in His order to have an incredible part in His Plan (1 Corinthians 15:23).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

As we saw, many of these verses are speaking metaphorically and figuratively about **light** to suggest a resemblance to God's greater fulfillment of spiritual wisdom, freedom, deliverance, righteousness and even eternal life.

The ultimate fulfillment to all these references to light is the way of life represented by the life of Jesus Christ. We must discern the figurative from the spiritual and begin to understand, with Godly wisdom, what it means to go from *darkness to light*. The rest of this book describes how God, over the past millennia, perhaps eons of time, has been bringing about His Plan—and is bringing about His Plan - darkness to light. The time to act for us is now.

The entire story is in the Bible which is God's word that He has reserved for us. Being a Christian is not easy. It was not easy for Jesus Christ. He died in performance of God's will. The good news is that He was raised so that we might have life. He set us an example so that we can follow in His steps.

1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.

The important thing to do is make sure that it is His steps in which we are following. Jesus warned us that there would be many false teachers in these last days.

Jesus Christ is coming again soon to establish His Father's Kingdom over all the earth. It will be a bright and new day—the dawning of a new era. But let us understand that it is always darkest just before the morning light. There is a coming time of unprecedented darkness on the people of North America and the British Commonwealth. This horrendous tribulation descending upon us is defined in the Holy Scriptures as the time of "**Jacob's Trouble**." The good news is that God's people will be saved out of it.

Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be **saved out of it**.

### **May Darkness Become Light**

This book is able to help in that anticipation that some be saved out of the coming tribulation. It will begin with the modern Israelites and then sweep the earth—Jacob's trouble.

This book is the story of how God's Plan began, where it is today, and where it is going. The account, from beginning to end, is right here in our Bible—a little here and a little there (Isaiah 28:10-13).

Psalms 36:9 With you [O Lord] is the fountain of life: **in your light shall we see Light**.

Jesus came to turn things around – and for those of us in God's Church, He has. He has shed His light on us. But what about the rest of this fouled up world – will they ever come out of darkness? God prophesied through Isaiah that the time is coming when this blinded world will also be enlightened by Him.

Isaiah 42:16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make **darkness light** before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This present evil world has rejected God's word as it is given to man in the Holy Bible. They fear to read what it says. They are unable to understand Scripture because they have formed an adverse impression that is opposed to everything it contains. Jesus says that He will turn their minds and set them straight.

Isaiah 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of **darkness**.

Pure religion has to do with serving others – especially those who are in dire need. To those who are blind and in darkness it is a non sequitur that providing for the needy would be able to change one's way of thinking. For them, it is illogical that their minds could be opened to see clearly what they have been missing.

And for now, they go their own way seemingly secure in their dark ignorance. But this is a sure promise that God makes to us:

Isaiah 58:10 If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall **your light rise** in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

It is in the practice of true Christianity that one becomes truly enlightened.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

At the fulfillment of the Plan of God there will be no further need for the sun in the heavens because the Light of God will shine for all. **Darkness** will be eradicated when the Plan of God comes to fruition.

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them **light**.

This book is all about how man is able to come out of darkness and enter into that glorious light. Now, we will begin to look at how it is that God is making it possible for us to implement His way into our lives so that we begin to resemble His Son Jesus Christ – the Light of life.

Everyone who is wise should want to know – for himself and his loved ones – the way from *darkness* to *light*. There is only one way to get from *darkness* to *light*, and that is the way shown by the Plan of God. That Plan is set forth in the pages of this book. Be mindful of this one thing – God's Plan is sure. Every person should take to heart the Prophet Daniel's admonition for the end-time:

Daniel 12:10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but **the wise shall understand**.

## Chapter 2

### Before the Beginning

In our quest to follow the trek of coming out of abject darkness into the brilliant light we go where John the beloved apostle began in his Gospel when there were only Jesus and His Father – and nothing else existed. We will look into what the Bible reveals about what they were thinking and what they were doing before the earth was created.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The first workings of God of which we are aware took place in the pre-Adamic age **before the beginning** of time and space. This period lasted until the destruction of the earth prior to the creation of the first man—Adam. We certainly do not presume to know all the workings in the Plan of God. Even King David was not given the knowledge of the mystery of the Plan of God as we are privileged to have so much of it revealed to us today.

The Book of Genesis speaks of a later beginning—the beginning of physical matter, energy, light and time. God's Plan began long before that. Time, matter and space are a part of God's physical creation for the purpose of bringing about His Plan through man. Without a physical universe there is no such thing as time.

Anyone who has ever been a part of a construction project has learned that a great amount of detailed work had been done prior to the groundbreaking ceremony where the dignitaries come out to the building location with shovels to turn the first spade of dirt. We understand that engineers and surveyors had previously designed and mapped out the area long before. Feasibility studies and cost analyses had been done to determine the profitability of the venture.

Artist's concepts had been presented to the stockholders. Licenses, regulations, permits, rights-of-way, agreements, schedules and a whole host of other considerations had been secured before the public beginning of the undertaking. In short, there had been a great deal of collaboration between the involved parties. In the same way, God the Father and Jesus Christ designed every facet of their entire **Plan before the beginning**.

### The First Beginning

The beloved apostle John adds greatly to our narrative by expounding on how Jesus Christ and God the Father were together in a previous all spiritual 'beginning' even before they began to put their creative Plan into action. Putting the Biblical pieces together we find how God's Plan for us began spiritually before creation, then transitioned into its present temporary material phase, and will then see its ultimate spiritual manifestation. Jesus Christ is God and has always been God and always will be God. John is writing of their status much earlier – before 'the beginning' we read of in the Genesis narrative of creation:

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John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God [the Father], and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

God the Father and Jesus were the only two beings that existed. Even when Jesus came to this earth in a temporary fleshly body, He was the same one who was the 'hands-on' Creator God – Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us** (Matthew 1:23).

The Scriptures reveal that even infinity is not a limiting factor for the incredible Plan of God because, after all, infinity is only limitless time, and God supersedes time and space.

Psalms 102:27 You O my God are the same, and your years shall have **no end**.

God the Father is the eternal, glorious, supreme Creator of the heavens and the earth. The Bible reveals that God the Father created all things **by and through** Jesus Christ. Through His eternal creative power, Jesus sustains the entire universe. When Paul says in Hebrews 1:3 that God upholds all things [the universe] by the word of His power, it means that Jesus Christ is guiding, powering and sustaining everything through the might of His Spirit. Without His ever vigilant support everything would vanish in a split-second just like when matter and anti-matter annihilate one another.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

As temporal, physical beings we like to say things like, "God has existed forever and ever," and "God has existed for all past eternity." And we think of it as being a long, long time. Actually, time, matter and space did not exist in the very beginning—only God existed. There were only two, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Word. Time as we know and experience it had not yet begun. Yes, time had a starting point!

Time, matter and space are a part of God's physical creation for the purpose of bringing about His Plan. The Book of Genesis speaks of a later beginning—the beginning of physical matter, energy, light and time. God's Plan began prior to that Genesis account.

The Book of Genesis begins with a **physical** re-creation of the earth. God does not reveal how He brought about such a vast and magnificent handiwork—He simply states that He did so. Man, with all his brilliance, is unable to understand even the basic building blocks of that wonderful work. It is important that we understand that God the Father created everything by Jesus Christ—long before He became Mary's flesh and blood son at Bethlehem. That is why John straightforwardly says of Jesus: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Luke 1:31-32, 35 Behold Mary, you shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...the **Son of God**.

## **God Exists**

Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, **you are God**.

1 Timothy 1:17 God is eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, to Him be honor and glory forever and ever.

## **God is the Lawmaker**

Before God began His act of creation He established and set in motion many laws that would govern everything in the universe. He created all law – physical and spiritual. And, when God began, He started big! The vast physical universe is only a token of His Planned spiritual expanse.

Why would God create so vast a universe with so much power and so much potential? It was created for a transcendent purpose. God does nothing without purpose; no more than we would go out and build a barn for which we have no use. So, for what purpose was the universe created? The vastness of the heavens not only points to His unlimited power to create, but it is also an indication of God's extensive Plan to expand His **God Family**. Yes, the Bible reveals that God in deed has a family!

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the **entire Family** in heaven and earth is named.

Isaiah 9:7 Of the **increase** of His empire and peace **there shall be no end**.

Scientists speak of the distance across our observable universe being 14 billion light-years — and expanding at a rate that would preclude our ever seeing it all. Why did God create so vast a universe with so much power and so much potential? This vast universe demonstrates the inestimable scope of the Plan of God.

A universe worthy of such a noble project as the Plan of God requires order and regulation of its forces. Everywhere in the universe all things are ordered and governed by a distinct **set of laws**. Laws of physics, nuclear energy, special relativity, thermodynamics, electro-magnetism, gravity, and all the sciences are found to be uniform and unalterable across an almost limitless sea of stars.

Whether Newtonian physics, astrophysics or nuclear physics, all nature obeys laws—many laws. That multiplicity of law requires a commanding **Lawgiver**. Even the best scientists are at a loss when it comes to answering the question, "Where do the laws of physics originate?"

## **Proof of God**

Most do not believe it, but it is possible to prove that God exists. However, each man must prove that God exists for himself – he cannot rely on another. First, he must believe what God says in His word:

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near:

2 Chronicles 15:2 The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.

The very fact of the existence of 'law' demands that a Lawgiver exists. A universe without the stability provided by uniform law cannot exist. It would soon disintegrate as a result of its chaotic and haphazard condition. Chaos is not a law – it is a fact! The entire universe follows the laws of physics, gravity, light, heat (thermodynamics – all across the universe it is the same – no matter how far astronomers see...) The intelligent design of the universe is in itself evidence of a lawgiving Creator. **Law is a proof of God**. Speaking of God, James wrote:

James 4:12 There is one **Lawgiver**, who is able to save and to destroy.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

On the earth alone (not including the angelic realm), the tremendous number of life forms up to and including man necessitate a **Life-giver**. Life comes from life. God is the only source of life. Man has never created life. Man is foolishly genetically modifying life-forms to 'improve' them, but life from scratch is God's prerogative alone. Not only is God the only fountain and source of life, in His incredible Plan He is making it possible for us to attain to everlasting life—to drink in of His Life. David poetically wrote of this wonderful certainty in this manner:

Psalms 36:8-9 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and thou shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with you is the **fountain of life**: In your **light** shall we see **light**.

Scientists in their efforts to substantiate a God-less universe are always searching for the “missing link” that would prove their theory that life evolved from inorganic elements. While supporting their “life from non-life” conjecture, evolutionists would never admit that any species came into existence by creation—because that would be tantamount to admitting that there is a God. Creation is categorically dismissed by them because it does not fit their postulated development of events. Let's understand this: Missing links stay missing because they do not exist. The discovery of older and older specimens (using questionable dating methods) does not support evolution at all. In fact, when the historic record of the Bible is understood, the older specimens lend support to the Scriptural narrative.

Academics and scientists continue to push the age of the earth back farther and farther because they recognize the requirement of enormous amounts of time for all life to have evolved from a singular ancient ancestor. The branches of Darwin's tree of life need inordinate amounts of time to slowly develop, or the whole thing falls apart. Since ninety percent or more of all species originated **in the same age**, there simply is not time enough for amphibians to slowly become reptiles, then birds, and then mammals with symbiotic relationships with other species. Only unreasoned logic can accept such an unsupported theory.

This present evil world has been hoodwinked into believing the false narrative of 'evolution.' Today's informed biologists categorically dismiss Darwin's theory of evolution, though atheists continue to push it in the schools. Evolution has become the litmus test of orthodox education – like the Trinity is the orthodox test of false religion. Evolution teaches that there is no God, and that life spontaneously developed in some warm primordial ooze. "Evolution" remains the default position of almost all education systems. It is not our purpose here to disprove evolution as there are many good writings on the subject.

For the God-less men among us, the desire to be free from the **consequence** of all law, whether moral, religious or physical, is seen as the ultimate. On the other hand, the Creator God has given mankind an operating manual that is designed to offer happiness and prosperity. The Ten Commandments comprise the supreme points of God's Law – which is spiritual in nature. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). In the same way that a bird does not fly half as well with only one of two wings, any single sin is the transgression of the entire Law of God. Breaking any single point of God's Law invalidates the integrity of all.

James 2:10 Who so ever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

## **Kind after Kind**

**Kind after kind** is a God given law, and a **proof of God**. Dogs never have kittens. There is absolutely no evidence on record of one species or creature ever turning into something else which is able to reproduce – becoming a new viable line. Mallard ducks do not hatch Robin Red Breast songbirds. There are entirely too many symbiotic species that mutually depend entirely upon one another to function and survive. For example: Bees could not have waited for flowers to evolve for their food source, and cherry trees could not have waited eons for bees to learn to fly from blossom to blossom in order to reproduce and propagate.

Symbiotic relationships are essential to many life-forms and they provide the balance that can only be achieved by working together in harmony. They had to be created simultaneously.

Genesis 1:25 God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the earth **after its kind**: and God saw that it **was good**.

Not only that, but when the objective of God's Plan (mankind) was set in motion—*male and female on their way to being made in God's own image and likeness*—everything was declared by God to be, not only good, but **very good!** (Genesis 1:27, 31) 'Very good,' means that absolutely everything worked in perfect accord, and would continue to do so generation after generation until the Plan of God came to its full realization.

John 16:21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish of childbirth, for joy that a man is born into the world.

There is nothing more intricate, perfect and possessed of an incredible potential than a newborn baby. Growth to maturity is a part of its promise. Thousands, if not millions, of complex connections form an involved composition of organs, glands, controls, and sensory perceptions. The five senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell are only the most obvious. The infant's digestive, respiratory and excretory systems are interlaced into its muscle and skeletal structures. The child's immune, circulatory, hormone and nervous systems function Together perfectly. Imbedded deep within the child are his intellectual and reproductive systems waiting to blossom at the proper time.

The human brain will develop into brilliance unmeasured. There are an estimated one hundred-trillion synapses in the human brain – the junction across which a nerve impulse links. There is no design more perfect in all of the physical creation. This design proves a designer, and **design** is another **proof of God**.

Psalms 139:13-14 Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast **knit me together** in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well.

## **Step by Step**

No man can predict the future. Only God can foresee centuries and millennia into the future because He is in control of it and brings it about. Man can only speculate ahead of time. When prophecy comes to pass – and it always does – then we know it was of God. **Fulfilled prophecy is a proof of God**. God says:

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Isaiah 46:10-11 I Declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, **My Plan shall be accomplished**, and I will bring to pass all my pleasure... yes, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

When God intervenes in the natural course of life, it is necessary that He momentarily suspend the every physical laws of nature. The Bible has a word for it – miracles. The unconverted mind will not give God the credit for His miracles, but will instead attribute them to time, chance and coincidence. God the Father, according to His Plan, and to achieve His Plan, often works miracles, as He did at the hands of Jesus Christ. **Miracles are a proof of God.**

Acts 2:22-23 You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by **miracles** and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the predetermined **Plan of God**, and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

Have you ever cried out to God in prayer, “Oh God, help me?” “Oh God, heal my child?” How many times have our prayers been answered? **Answered Prayer is a proof of God.**

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, **and pray**, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will **heal their land**.

Matthew 7:7-8 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

To prove that God exists and to know God in a personal way can only take place through the intervention of Jesus Christ. It is only by the involvement of Jesus Christ that we can have faith in God.

1 Peter 1:21 Who by Jesus Christ **do believe** in God the Father, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Once we believe – the Bible will reveal all we must know about God. There can be nothing more important to us than knowing what God has revealed about Himself, and understanding how intimately involved He is in our lives. How well do we know God? That is an important question. Is He near? Is He in our minds and hearts? Is He with us continually, or is He far away? For many people, especially for too many of those in God’s Church, God is too remote in their lives and thinking. How can we know more about God in order to draw nearer to Him? How can we know more about God so that He becomes real to us?

## **God’s Characteristics**

The Holy Spirit is the Life of God the Father and Jesus Christ. It is the Power, Wisdom, Mind, Holiness, Love, Mercy, and a multitude of divine characteristics of God. The Holy Spirit is not a person or a separate third member of the Godhead. The Bible reveals that God is not a trinity of beings.

John 4:23-24 The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. **God is Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship him in **spirit** and in **truth**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

When we say, “God is Spirit,” we understand that God is not a part of the fundamental nature of the universe – but higher in essence, form and substance than the physical state in which we were created. Jesus said, “the **words** that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are **life**” (John 6:63).

In fact, not only is God Spirit, God is set apart above all others. “Holy” means to be set apart. God is Holy. Do not be confused by the trinity heresy that declares God to be three persons because that is not what the Bible reveals. The word “trinity” is not in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is not a third person. God the Father and Jesus Christ are personal Spirit beings. Scriptural references to “Holy Spirit” and “Spirit of God” show God’s incomprehensible might in dealing with His creation. God gets things done by way of His Spirit as we see in Genesis and Psalms:

Genesis 1:2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God moved** upon the face of the waters.

Psalms 33:8-9 Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

We humans are temporal flesh and blood – we perish after a while. On the other hand, God is Spirit – eternal Spirit. In the same way that oxygen is the life of our blood, Spirit is the Life of God. At baptism we are given a token of God’s Spirit which is necessary if we too are to have eternal life. We must become like He is. We strive as Christians to acquire the splendid and holy characteristics of God.

Spirit is not visible to us mere mortals – but that should not surprise us because so much of our physical realm is invisible. We cannot see gravity, electricity, heat, air, magnetism, sound, radio waves. We cannot even see light until it reflects or bounces off an object. The characteristics of God’s Spirit are invisible to our eyes:

Ephesians 4:23-24 Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

God’s people are cultivating His spiritual characteristics including kindness, self-denial, empathy, compassion, and the willingness to serve others to the point of laying down their life in self-sacrifice. It is only through the power and motivation of God’s Spirit that it becomes possible for mankind to become similar to God. It is only by God’s Spirit that the saints become God-like:

1 Corinthians 15:49 As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The characteristics of God’s Spirit must be in our minds and in our hearts, replacing all of the sinful and wrong thought patterns which once defined us. The apostle Paul said that for our hope of eternal glory in God’s Kingdom, “Christ must be within us” (Colossians 1:27). God’s Spirit is able to bring every characteristic of God to His saints – His righteousness, gentleness, peace, compassion, excellence, generosity, mercy... the list is endless. We are totally unable to grasp all of the features of God’s Spirit with our human intellect, because God is far too great. And yet, it is absolutely necessary that we “grow in Spirit” in order to put on the Godly character that is essential to being in the Spiritual Family of God. God’s Holy Spirit is the Life, Mind, Love, and Power of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Are you truly led by God? Do you seek to do God’s will in every thought and action you perform? A Christian is one who is led by God’s Holy Spirit. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we do not belong to Him (Romans 8:9,14).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Colossians 3:12-16 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [*agape* – Godly love], which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Those are Godly characteristics and attributes that man must put on before he is given eternal life. God's character must become man's character. That takes place when God's characteristics are emulated by men – and they begin to resemble their Father in heaven. "Good fruit" has been produced in them. There is another set of Godly characteristics listed that when anyone has made them a part of themselves, they have begun to put on the mind of God:

Galatians 5:22-23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

God's character, epitomized by His Holy Spirit, is perfect and unchangeable. He determined that His Godly relationship with others would always be ideal and unspoiled in every way; always directed by His flawless, righteous character.

## **Plan of God**

The mystery of the Plan of God is revealed in the pages of the Bible. Sadly, this wonderful mystery is understood by so few people. The reason that few know what the Plan of God entails is because people do not **do or believe** what God says. They say things like, "You only have to have faith in Jesus," and in doing so they reject so much of what He came to reveal – and subsequently they remain in the dark. God's Plan remains a mystery to them. What was God doing before the beginning?

In order for anyone to have all the riches of a plethora of confidence in the greater knowledge of the mystery of God (Colossians 2:2), they must *do* the things Jesus taught because all the answers are hidden in the things Jesus revealed:

Colossians 2:3 In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The first act of God, of which we are aware, is this: In their brilliant Godly wisdom and love, God the Father and Jesus Christ came up with a magnificent Plan – a perfect Plan. They did this prior to the Genesis creation in what we might call the pre-Adamic and pre-angelic ages. God the Father and Jesus Christ decided that they would invest themselves in the greatest venture imaginable.

Before launching into their Plan, they made absolutely certain that it was perfect and infallible in every way. They took into account every possibility, and covered every contingency so that nothing what so ever would ever destroy their perfect Plan to bring mankind into their Family—the **Family of God** (Ephesians 3:14-15). They would create a mortal being with the ability of replicating itself; that would be capable of putting on Godly characteristics; that would ascend out of darkness; that would shine like the light of the stars of heaven (Daniel 12:3); and become spiritual relatives of the Father and His Son.

Their Plan was to open their close-knit God-Family to **others!** It was the most splendidly designed Plan conceivable! In what will remain forever the ultimate decision of God, they elected to include **humankind** in their **God-Family**.

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Because, God the Father and Jesus Christ loved one another before the foundation of the world (John 17:24), they did not see it as an intrusion to **invite us** into their Family. Their Plan is an expansion of their perfect love. For them, opening the God-Family to others was an act of sharing and giving of their Spiritual substance and very essence. They wished to share their Eternal God Life with an extended Family.

This mind-boggling concept—that we have been created to be like God, as His sons and daughters, was not an afterthought or a fallback notion—it was the **very objective** for all creation—that we might be filled with all the fullness of God!

Ephesians 3:19 To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge so that you might be filled with **all the fullness** of God.

That is an enormous statement, “That you might be filled with **all the fullness** of God!” Our little minds are completely incapable of being filled with all the fullness of God. We have to be **changed** a lot before that can happen!

Everything in this book about the Plan of God is based on the fact that God’s word (the Bible) is true, and that it is able to set His people apart from those who do not believe it (John 17:17). God’s people fully rely on Scripture to direct their course in life because the Bible is the foundation of Truth – and until a person believes it – he will be second-guessing God at every turn. But we are told by God that we do not need to guess.

Jeremiah 33:3 Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

### **God with Us**

With the Bible as our guide, the Plan of God comes alive in a way that is astounding. So much so, we find ourselves saying, “Why is it that everyone cannot see it?” The apostle John added greatly to the Plan of God narrative by explaining that before the physical creation of the universe there was a previous “beginning” (John 1:1-2). That beginning took place in the spiritual realm only.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God. He is God—always was—and always will be. His name is Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us** (Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 7:14).

Let’s look at some of the “behind the scenes” workings of God the Father and Jesus Christ before they launched into the masterpiece of creation that shows their handiwork. That masterwork is mankind – created with the promise of eventually taking on the very nature and image of God Himself.

Genesis 1:26 God said, Let us make man **in our image**, after our **likeness**.

God put together His Plan before the creation of spirit beings (angels), and prior to the earth’s first destruction, and prior to the creation of the first man—Adam.

God never intended for the angels to become His glorified children. They were created for the sole purpose of being ministering spirits.

Hebrews 1:14 Are the angels not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

## **Before Time Began**

Mankind was not an afterthought in the creation process, but the very means and basis by which God's Plan of reproducing Himself would be carried out. Man was designed with the capacity to be born of God – and for the very purpose of God bringing about the replication of Himself. God's Plan was completely refined and perfected before time ever began in the pre-creation period. In His wisdom, God considered every possibility so that nothing would ever destroy His perfect Plan of bringing us into the God-Family. David reflects on the unwavering flawlessness and purity of God's excellent Plan before He ever began to set things in motion:

Psalms 12:6 The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, **purified seven times**.

In this verse, purified seven times, is a phrase signifying God's Plan to be finished, and completely purified. Over and over silver goes through the purification process to get pure sterling silver. That is what God did with His Plan of creation before He ever began to enact it. While it was still on the "drawing table," God's Plan was perfected—before being inaugurated. Before He began His creation He had to be positive that all things would work together in perfect harmony until His Plan was complete. Writing to the spiritually mature Church of God, Paul contrasts the inferior intelligence of this world's rulers with the excellent manifold **wisdom** of God, and tells how superior God's wisdom has always been:

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 Howbeit we speak **wisdom** among them that are morally and spiritually advanced: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the leaders of this world, that comes to nothing: But we speak the **wisdom of God** in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained **before the world** unto our glory.

## **Works of Old**

Paul was inspired to share the fact with us that perfect Godly wisdom was utilized in His Plan before the world existed. The quintessential achievement of God was in conceiving and designing a being (man), and an enduring environment for him that would always be conducive to the development of good and righteous spiritual growth.

Psalms 104:24, 30 O Lord, how manifold are your works! In **wisdom** you have made them all. The earth is full of your riches... You send forth your spirit, they are created.

God refined His Plan from start to finish so that it would be absolutely perfect in every way—before He began! God's Plan is sure—it is coming to fruition. We see this process playing out so clearly in the Book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 8:22-23 The Lord possessed *me* [Godly wisdom personified] in the beginning of His way, before His **works of old**. I, wisdom, was fully implemented from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth existed.

Amazingly, God reveals that in His perfect wisdom, He Planned every move and eventuality – step by step – before He created the earth!

Proverbs 8:23-29 **Before the earth existed**. When there were no depths, I [Godly wisdom personified] was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were

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settled, before the hills came forth, I, Godly Wisdom, brought forth: While as yet He had **not made** the **earth** nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

When He prepared the heavens, I, Godly wisdom, was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: When He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth.

God did not begin His magnificent creation unprepared, but He tested, devised and purified every last detail before He ever started. Only then did God prepare the face of the earth for man to develop in the character, image and likeness of Himself. We cannot begin to imagine the incredible detail that God considered before He ever began the work of creation. Paul told Timothy that before creation, God's Plan specifically included man's salvation:

2 Timothy 1:9 [God] Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began**.

### **God Inhabits Eternity**

The first workings of God took place in the period before the beginning of time and space. God has existed eternally. He was around before *anything* else was around. By definition, that is our starting point, but we have to work our way back to comprehend it correctly. That is what we are doing in this chapter.

Isaiah 57:15 Thus says God, the high and lofty One that **inhabits eternity**, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

In this chapter, we begin long before man walked the earth. In fact we begin long before there was an earth, or even a universe. Everything we are able to detect, or know of, or perceive of had a beginning. But "something" had to come **before** every object, concept, design or idea we can possibly conceive of. Those who choose not to believe in an absolute First Source Originator (Creator God) are not thinking the progression of our existence through clearly.

It seems counterintuitive to our thinking that we must begin with *something*, but without a Primary Force or entity (God) *nothing* could exist. Those who disingenuously assert and accept that we do have *something*, like the universe, without a First Cause have presented an implausible hypothesis based in denial. For them it seems better to obstinately and foolishly deny the existence of a Creator God than to admit the obvious, which would consequently make them beholding to Him (Psalms 14:1).

As we have shown, there are bona fide ways for finite man to prove that an infinite **God exists**. Not only is the proof of God possible, it is imperative that we individually prove for ourselves that there is a God. We can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is real. Life is not spontaneous. Life does not come from non-life. All living things are the result of the reproduction of other living things – there are no exceptions. The very first life required a Life-giver. **Life is a proof of God**. It is wise that we individually prove 'God' for ourselves.

Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe that **He exists**, and that He rewards them that diligently seek Him.

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Even though God is spiritual He has shown Himself in His works of creation. All that is required is an honest and objective mind looking at His meticulous creation to know that our **Creator God exists**. Again, take the vast universe as an example. Where did it come from? It has not always existed because it would have burned up by now. The universe had a beginning. Before that *space* was empty. When there is nothing in space – it stays nothing. The nothingness of space was not explosive. It was not apt to become a Big Bang. Nothingness does not blow up into a universe with billions of billions of star filled galaxies and planets. Modern physicists want to surmise that you can tear apart the fabric of “nothingness” into matter and anti-matter. It is a well-known fact that Energy is equal to Mass times the speed of light squared. That means that energy and matter are interchangeable. Modern scientists have formulated how energy, mass, radiant light and time are functions of physical laws. That means that there is an incredibly enormous amount of energy stored up in every bit of matter.

And when you consider the mass of the entire universe, it goes without saying there was an unfathomable amount of energy involved in creation. To leave God out of the equation scientists must construe that nothingness must somehow be interchangeable with that which now exists. There is an unwritten law that states, when you have nothing – it stays nothing. **Creation demands a Creator – so creation is a proof of God**. Paul wrote:

Romans 1:19-20 God has shown Himself...in that the invisible things of Him from the **creation of the world** are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and divinity so that they are without excuse.

Even the godless evolutionists, who believe that life came about spontaneously, realize that the universe is subject to entropy—ever slowing downward in gradual decline. And yet, they persist, and take childish comfort, in believing that the universe evolved from a primordial and primeval nothingness. Cynics say that man created God in his mind, rather than the other way around, and that when man dies God ceases to exist.

Psalms 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is not one that does good.

### **A Temporary Universe**

Modern scientists have formulated how time, energy, mass, and radiant light are functions of physical laws. Energy as a component of matter is equal to the speed of light times the mass of materials, times the speed of light again! That means that there is an incredibly enormous amount of energy stored up in every bit of matter that Jesus created.

Everything in the universe is moving from its present order toward eventual collapse. Orbits of heavenly bodies, as well as the elemental primary constituents of matter, are degrading and will finally give way. For example, over time, uranium atoms decay slowly turning into lead. Yes, there is the constant conversion of energy to matter, and vice versa, but there is no new source of energy and matter.

And, yes, there are new stars forming in space, but they are materializing out of greater galactic debris from other deteriorating remnants. Even theories concerning black holes and vast amounts of dark matter cannot violate the first principle of thermodynamics which establishes that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. The total sum of energy plus mass of the universe remains the same. As sure as rivers flow to the ocean, and stones finally become the sands of the sea – the universe will erode away.

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Under the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), and looking forward to a new creation, the apostle Paul wrote of how this physical world in which we live would one day perish, giving way to something much more superb—which is the earnest expectation of all creation.

Romans 8:19 With anticipation the creation eagerly awaits the revealing of the Children of God.

Paul explains that our transitory and provisional universe was designed to yield to the hope of the resurrection into the eternal Plan of God:

Romans 8:20-21 The creation was made **subject to decay** and futility, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same **in hope**, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of decay into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It was necessary that a temporary physical dwelling be established wherein the Plan of God would be worked out to the full. In the same way that a child's spinning top begins to slow down, wobble and then topple over, everything in the universe is winding down. But, how did it come 'up to speed' in the first place? Remember, there was 'nothing' to come up to speed. By excluding a Creator God, scientists must theorize about things like, 'what' blew up in a Big Bang, and 'where' matter goes that gets sucked into black holes? Is it captured forever, becoming a part of an even more powerful black hole? Does it go out the other side of the black hole into an alternate universe? Where did the substance of our universe come from? The universe is not eternally old – there was a point where there was no space and no matter at all. When you start with 'nothing,' it stays nothing.

At creation God put a spin on every galaxy – indeed the entire universe. The physical universe is also going to topple over, but not until it has fulfilled its transcendent role leading to a spiritual future! Isaiah and Peter spoke of this eventuality:

2 Peter 3:10-13 ...The heavens shall **pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct and Godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens** and a **new earth**.

Isaiah 34:4 All the host of heaven shall **be dissolved**, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

This present world in which we live is not going to last forever. That is why we are told not to base our hopes on the things of this earth, but to look on the things above (Colossians 3:2). This present earth is going to vanish.

Psalms 102:25-26 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of your hands. **They shall perish**, but you shall endure: yea, all of them shall **wax old** like a garment; as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed.

## **New Heavens and a New Earth**

The children of God and the coming new universe have an incredible everlasting spiritual future! Isaiah prophesied about the same new creation that will be forthcoming:

Isaiah 65:17 For, behold, I create **new heavens** and a **new earth**: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Isaiah 66:22 For as the **new heavens** and the **new earth**, which I will make, shall endure forever before me, says the Lord, so shall your children and your name remain.

## **What was God Thinking**

God is real, and He does real things. What was God **thinking** before He began the creation— **before the beginning**? Let me add some perspective to this:

When I was a kid, I loved the funny papers. I would read them every Sunday morning. I liked the comic strip “Peanuts” created by Charles M. Schulz. Imagine for a moment that cartoonist Charlie Schulz is the god of his little comic world – a miniature society of young children featuring the characters Charlie Brown, Peppermint Patty, Lucy and Linus, a beagle named, Snoopy, among others. As he sat in his art studio at his drawing table He was able to determine the **beginning** of the story and the **end** of the story in each strip. Charlie Schulz created and drew the characters in, and gave them their individual characteristics.

In the same way, God looks down at His vast creation just as Charlie Schulz looked down on his comic strip. From a single perspective God sees the beginning and the end. He even determines what the beginning and the end are. God is gracious enough to tell us a lot about the end. That is what the Biblical glimpses on prophecy are all about. God says:

Isaiah 14:24 Surely, as I have **thought**, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed **so it shall stand**.

No one, or no incident, is going to prevent God’s will that has been set in motion.

Isaiah 46:10-11 Declaring the end **from the beginning**, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel **shall stand**, and I will do all my pleasure... I have spoken it, I will also **bring it to pass**; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

But dear reader please understand this: **Physical** things and **spiritual** things are as **different** from each other as a flat two-dimensional comic strip on paper is from living and breathing three-dimensional real life. Speaking of Himself, God reveals this about His creative acts, and the transient nature of the physical universe.

The creation that we see about us has a transcendent future that will endure forever after this physical universe will have passed away. The very name of God, “I Am,” denotes **His constancy**; God is what He has always been, and what He is, is what He will always be.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the Lord, **I change not**.

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Time and space were created by God together. Because space consists of more than two dimensions, we tend to think of a three-dimensional existence – but actually time is also a dimension. Space-time joins four-dimensional space into a single continuum. In the space-time continuity of General Relativity strange things begin to happen. For example, at extremely fast speeds the mass of an object increases incredibly. The point is this: Even when one considers many more dimensions (as mathematicians are inclined to do), God is not affected. Spirit is dimensionless – and God is Spirit (John 4:24). God, who created all things, is perfectly capable of intervening at any point and working His will—and His will is being done!

God's ultimate creation comes about in **dual stages**. Because we are flesh and blood it seems to us that physical comes first – and then ultimately, the spiritual. Scripture reveals, however, that the spiritual creation actually pre-dates everything physical. The physical is temporal, whereas the spiritual is eternal. God is interested in the **end product** of His creation, and that end product is spiritually created beings in the exact image of His Spiritual character.

### **Angelic Creation**

One of the first orders of business on God's agenda was the creation of legions of advantageous angels. We find that angels have not existed or lived forever in the past. Unlike God, the angels had a beginning. Speaking of the angels we read in:

Psalms 148:5-6 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and the **angels were created**. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

Unlike God, the created angels had a beginning. Paul confirmed this when he referred to the angels in this way:

Colossians 1:16 By God all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, **visible and invisible**, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

A great deal of God's creation is invisible – even within the physical realm. Air is invisible, as are the sun's light and radiation, gravity, the earth's magnetic field, and so on... It should come as no surprise to us that invisible things are very real. This verse, however, is primarily referring to the invisible spiritual creation. The dominions, principalities, and powers are angels. We know that they were created **before** the earth and universe (Job 38:4, 7).

Angels were created before God began the physical creation of this earth, the other planets, and the stars in the sky. Not being a part of our physical realm, angels do not die as men do – they are ageless (Luke 20:36). However, like with men, the character of angels was not fixed when they were created, but able to change, subject to their free will. Until the angels came to the point of recognizing and accepting Godliness as their way of being, they were fully capable of rejecting God's way and doing their own. So, in God's perfect Plan, He factored in the possibility of an angelic insurrection. God even had an alternative course of action in place to allow for interruptions, such as Satan's iniquity and the sin of Adam and Eve.

God the Father and Jesus Christ had done an immense amount of planning, preparation and application of Godly wisdom but they had not yet put their Plan into operation. The very first **act of creation** that God has revealed to us is that of the angelic heavenly host of spirit beings.

Psalms 148:2, 5 Praise ye Him, all His **angels**: praise ye Him, all His hosts. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commanded, and **they were created**. The invisible spiritual realm of the angels was created by Jesus before the physical creation was begun. Jesus made them and He sustains them. We are not told much about how God brought the angelic host into existence. We do not know if their creation was individually – one at a time as men come into being – or if God **suddenly** brought them all into existence in an instant.

## **Serving Spirits**

Hebrews 1:7 God brought forth His angels as spirits, and His ministering spirits [serving spirits] as a flash of lightening.

Man would know nothing of the invisible spirit world were it not for the fact that the angels are revealed by God in the Holy Scriptures. Angels cannot normally be perceived with the five senses. In a few instances and for His purposes, God has allowed angels to make a temporary changeover into our physical realm (Hebrews 13:2). When angels appear, they usually do so looking just like men (Daniel 10:16). However, God desires that mankind know of the myriad of angelic helpers He has created (Psalms 91:11). From the twenty-four spirit beings that surround the throne of God to all the host of heaven standing by God on His right hand and on His left (1 Kings 22:19, Revelation 4:4), they are ready to perform their special services in worshipping God and declaring His supreme holiness. Angels were created by God to serve Him and man. For the time being angels are superior to man.

Hebrews 2:7 God has placed man for a **little while lower** than the angels.

Jesus too, assumed that lowly subservient position while on earth. However, it is revealed that the **resurrected saints** will be superior to the angels just as the resurrected Jesus Christ, who is crowned with glory and honor, is superior to the angels today (Hebrews 2:9).

Jesus created a vast array of spirit beings. Individually, they specialize in a host of specialties. Thrones, archangels dominions, Seraphim, Cherubim, principalities, and powers are angelic designations of which we know very little. We do know they were all created by Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:16-17 By Jesus Christ were **all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

## **Jesus Christ Creator**

Scripture shows clearly how God the Father is the Creator God, and how He created all things through the Word – His Son, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:2-3 God the Father has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Jesus whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also **He made** the worlds. Jesus being the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

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We see here that it was through Jesus that God the Father made the worlds. Because it is so important to know, and for emphasis, there are many places in the Bible that reveal that God the Father created all things, including the vast universe, by and through Jesus. It is imperative that we understand what preceded the actual creation of the heavens and earth? Obviously, there was a great deal of Planning, forethought and interaction that went on between Jesus and His Father prior to His first creative actions.

A better translation of "worlds" is "ages." The Father created the ages through Jesus. The Bible speaks of "ages," and refers to the divisions of time, history, and culture from eternity past to eternity future. Without a physical universe, there would be no such thing as "time." We see that it was through Jesus that the Father "made the worlds." It is Jesus who created the pre-flood age, this present age, and He will also bring about the ages to come.

### **Bringing Many Sons to Glory**

It is Jesus Christ who is in command of, and restrains, the phenomenal forces of nature by supporting and sustaining everything by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Physical laws, whether Copernican or Quantum-Mechanics, operate well below and outside of the threshold of God's spiritual realm. All of the physical laws in the universe are subject to God and they are there to do His bidding.

They were set in motion for a purpose – and one purpose alone – and that is in order to aid in the development and completion of mankind as the eternal and glorious Children of God according to His Plan. From the very beginning God's intention was to bring many sons and daughters to share in His brilliant glory:

Hebrews 2:10 For it became [God the Father], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in **bringing many sons unto glory...**

That verse tells us that God has made it our destiny to be **glorified** spirit beings, just as they, God the Father and Jesus Christ are glorious spirit beings. His Plan is that we enter the Family of God forever more. The phrase "bringing many sons unto glory," means that it is God's Plan to make men into glorified spirit beings just as He is. And His children will be a part of His Family forever more.

That term, "glory" has to do with the future brilliant glorified state of those resurrected spirit beings who will have attained to everlasting life (Psalm 8:5). The very Plan of God from before the foundation of the world was and is for the Children of God to obtain **glorious eternal life**.

But, in order to do so each individual's character and image must be dramatically made over and greatly revolutionized to conform to the image of God. God is sharpening and perfecting His character in those who believe Him and humbly yield to His will. Notice the description of the glorious resurrected Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 1:3 The Son [Jesus Christ] is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His image.

God's Plan is to create full-fledged sons and daughters in His image as God-beings. As such, we will be born as spirit-life beings endowed with the same spiritual qualities of holy righteous character as our glorious brother, Jesus Christ, who has attained to glory through His resurrection.

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Hebrews 2:11-12 For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified **are all of one**: for which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them **brothers and sisters**, saying, I will declare your name Father unto my brethren.

God's Plan is to create mankind into fully matured sons and daughters in His image as God-beings with everlasting life. The resurrected saints will enter the Kingdom of God in the same way that Jesus did, by being glorified after death (John 17:5).

### **Godly Character**

Godly character must be built of free choice, developed over time, and shaped by pressure, until man comes to see the true ways of God, and to know that there is a penalty for sin (1 John 3:4). God created man for the supreme purpose of reproducing Himself. Notice how we are lumped into the same family relationship with Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:11-12 Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are **all of one**: For which cause Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, I will declare your name Father unto my **brothers and sisters**.

To be able to come out of **darkness** and into God's glorious **light** it is necessary that the distinction be understood of how God the Father created all things by His Son. The relationship and bond between God the Father and Jesus Christ represents ideal Godly love and complete harmony. The **spiritual concept** of the Plan of God was committed to Jesus to be turned into the present reality. Please notice the wealth of Scriptural evidence that positively testifies to the fact that Jesus is the hands-on Creator God:

### **All Things Were Made by Jesus**

Psalms 102:25 You laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work **of your hands**.

Everything that exists does so because Jesus made it so for His Father.

1 Corinthians 8:6 To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom are all things**, and we by Him.

Near and far, physical and spiritual – Jesus created them all.

John 1:3 **All things** were made by Jesus; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

For salvation's sake Jesus set aside His spiritual glory to become a part of this physical world which He had created (Philippians 2:6-7).

John 1:10 Jesus was in the world, and the **world was made by Him**, and the world knew Him not.

Colossians 1:16 For by Jesus Christ were **all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.

All that Jesus creates; He does so at the behest of God the Father.

Ephesians 3:9 God the Father **created** all things by Jesus Christ:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Hebrews 1:2 God the Father has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son... by whom also **He made the worlds**.

Jesus is the *Logos*, the Word, and all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

Psalms 33:6, 9 By the **word of the Lord** were the heavens **made**; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

The entire creation is subject to, and directed by Jesus who made it. There is a principle to consider: Just as an artist is to be more highly valued than his paintings, Jesus' life and existence is of greater worth than that which He has created. We will see later how Jesus was able to **lay down His life** in exchange for our salvation.

Hebrews 2:10 For it became Jesus, **for whom** are all things, and **by whom are all things**...

Acts 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Master of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.

Psalms 146:6 The Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that is therein.

The earth was created by Jesus specifically as a **home for mankind**. He did not create it to be a wasteland, but to be inhabited:

Isaiah 45:12, 18 The LORD says, I have made the earth, and **created man** upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded... For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that **formed the earth** and **made it**; He has established it, He created it not in a disorderly ruin, He formed it **to be inhabited**: I am the Lord; and there is no other.

Fundamental to the Plan of God is for His people to have a personal relationship with Him in His ever-increasing Family of God. When Paul wrote in Hebrews 1:3 that God upholds the universe by the word of His power, it means that Jesus Christ is guiding, supporting, powering and sustaining everything through the power and mightiness of His Spirit. Without His ever vigilant support everything would vanish in a split-second just like when matter and anti-matter come together and annihilate one another. Jesus is the ruler and the one who preserves all that exists. Not only did Jesus create absolutely everything – He upholds it and keeps it running.

## **Eternal Life**

The relationship and bond between God the Father and Jesus Christ represents ideal Godly love and complete harmony. They determined that their Godly relationship with others would always be perfect and unspoiled in every way; always directed by flawless, righteous character. Therefore it was necessary that creation consist of finite rather than eternal substance. God is eternal, and He is eternal Spirit. His character is perfect, fixed and good. Mankind, on the other hand, has not yet developed perfect righteous character, and is therefore subject to coming short of God's perfection.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God is not going to give His gift of **eternal life** to any who have not unequivocally chosen His way of righteousness; and with the help of His Holy Spirit rejected lawlessness altogether. It is God's Plan, that only with our willingness and submission to His sovereignty, will He infuse His holy righteous perfect spiritual character in us. While the gift of salvation is within our grasp, it is not determined until we have finished the race by enduring unto the end (Mark 13:13). How we run and finish that spiritual race has everything to do with how we exercise the true faith and the doing of it. That means that we are to be living that belief system that God has shown to us and called us to. That is why we are told to be **doers** of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).

We must be living it with every fiber of our existence! Those who refuse to walk the strait and narrow path will be allowed to perish (Matthew 7:13). That is why mankind is created with a temporal existence, because all men will not enter the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 7:14, 21 Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto Life, and **few there be** that find it... Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

At one point or another, each in his own order (1 Corinthians 15:23), God is sorting out those who will be like Him. First He makes us His conceived children, and if we are faithful to maturity, spiritual parturition, then we are invited into the eternal Family of God. God's children will hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

John 1:12 But as many as received Jesus, to them gave He power to become the **children of God**, even to them that believe on His name:

The universe, including mankind, was created with a Plan, and for a purpose. That purpose is to provide a suitable setting in which man is able to dwell and develop Godly character.

Isaiah 42:5 Thus says God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; He that gives breath unto the **people upon it**, and spirit to them that walk thereon:

The meaning of this verse shows that the purpose for which God created this earth was so that there would be a place for mankind to **live and flourish**. The ultimate goal of God's Plan is seen in the beauty and perfection that will be revealed in the eternal Kingdom of God.

### **Pre-history – Pre-time – Pre-everything**

Acts 15:18 Known unto God are **all His works from the beginning** of the world.

God knew absolutely **where** He was going with His Plan; **how** He was going to bring it about; and **what** He was going to achieve even before He began to enact His Plan. That is another really big statement!

Before there were any stars, sky, sun or earth below, God established His quintessential spiritual Temple in heaven. The holy places and things of God that we have seen on the earth are only replicas of the heavenly. God's Spirit is compared to a river flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb that brings life. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells (Psalms 46:4, Revelation 22:1).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Genesis 2:10 A river went **out of Eden** to water the garden.

God has revealed to us that there is a perfect spiritual **Eden** in heaven. The Garden of Eden replica on earth for Adam and Eve was only a physical facsimile of the real heavenly paradise (Ezekiel 28:13).

Revelation 2:7 ... To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

God has many other patterns which also reflect the reality of His Plan. For instance, Moses constructed the Tabernacle in the wilderness using the blueprints of heavenly Temple itself.

Acts 7:44 Our fathers had the **Tabernacle** of witness in the wilderness, as He had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the **pattern** [blueprints] that he had seen on Mount Sinai.

And there is the perfect spiritual **Temple** of God in heaven which is the master prototype or pattern from which Solomon's Jerusalem Temple was also built. The heavenly realities of the Tabernacle, the Temple and the Garden of God **pre-existed** even before the creation of the physical earth and universe.

Hebrews 8:5 There are priests... who serve unto the example and shadow of **heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle: for, See, says he, that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you on Mount Sinai.

Notice that Paul is telling us about the heavenly objectives, which pre-existed this earth's creation, which are the ultimate goal of the temporary earthly renditions we have known of.

### **Patterns in Heaven**

Hebrews 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns on earth of the things in the heavens should be purified with these Old Testament animal sacrifices; but the **heavenly things** themselves with better sacrifices than these.

When Paul speaks of 'heavenly things' there is an interesting Greek word used, *Epo-Uranious*, meaning **above the sky**. Known to the ancients before the time of Jesus Christ was the object we know as Uranus. It is the seventh planet from the Sun, and at magnitude +5.7 Uranus is barely visible to the naked eye on very dark nights. Uranus is named after the Greek mythological deity of the sky *Ouranos*. Uranus is the Latinized version. The element uranium derives its name from the same source. In short, Paul was referring to the **true heavenly things** which are able to reveal the Plan of God.

What we see in Hebrews 9:23 is that Jesus Christ, of necessity, was fulfilling the heavenly Plan of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). That is reality in the making! Jesus was completing and perfecting the Holy of Holies in heaven! The earthly Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple and the re-constructed Temple of Herod are all gone. They are not what Jesus entered.

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures [Greek *antitupon*, antitype in English] of the true, [the real]; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Exodus 25:8-9 God said, Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the **pattern of the tabernacle**, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye fashion it.

The Holy Place in heaven is not manmade with hands as the Tabernacle and the Temple were. Jesus Christ has entered the Holy Place in heaven itself in the presence of God the Father. Antitypes are merely the representations of the genuine article. An original type is the *real thing* – usually in heaven or the Old Testament that foreshadows something that follows. Types are often prophetic in nature.

Often, types in the Old Testament prefigure their greater fulfillment antitypes found in the New Testament. For example, the Passover lamb was a type of Jesus Christ.

We can understand how and why God's very real spiritual Temple in heaven is off-limits to sinful mankind. The patterns which are in heaven are indestructible, while the things on earth are simply physical examples of that which exists in heaven. God gave His prophets the plan or pattern from which to construct the Tabernacle and the Temple (1 Chronicles 28:19, Exodus 25:40). The patterns in heaven were in place **before the beginning**, prior to the creation of the physical world. God showed the blueprints to Moses for the construction of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings while he was on Mount Sinai.

Numbers 8:4 This work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the **pattern** [blueprints] which the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the candlestick.

When it was nearly time for Solomon to build the Temple, God gave David a roll of drawings showing every detail to be intricately and precisely followed. God gave David the **blueprints** of the heavenly temple and all its accoutrements so that David could pass them on to Solomon to build a stone and metal temple at Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 28:19 David said, the Lord made me understand **in writing** by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern [blueprints].

God had previously given Moses the same detailed **blueprints** for the Tabernacle:

Exodus 25:8-9, 40 Let them make me a Sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the **pattern** [blueprints] of the Tabernacle, and the **pattern** of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it ...And be sure that you build them after their **pattern** [blueprint], which was shown to you in the mount.

Please understand that all the holy things we have seen on earth are only **replicas** of the **spiritual reality** previously established in God's heaven.

## **Seven Main Steps in the Plan of God**

Specific successive steps in the Plan of God, over the span of time, are clearly referred to again and again in the Scriptures.

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the **ages**, periods of time and steps in God's Plan were thoroughly prepared by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

There are **stages** in the continuing progression throughout history of God's development of His Plan. In Chapter One we describe a major theme of the Bible: **Darkness to Light**. Then there are the **seven key stages** used in this book for the purpose of portraying the overall Plan of God. Each phase is described in-depth according to God's Divine Plan of Salvation for mankind:

Chapter 2 – Before the Beginning – Devising the Plan

Chapter 3 – Earth Renewed – Adam made in God's image

Chapter 4 – Fall of Man – Man sins and therefore must die

Chapter 5 – Fullness of Time – the Savior is sent to redeem man

Chapter 6 – Church Age – Many Saints called to glory

Chapter 7 – Millennium – God's Kingdom established on earth

Chapter 8 – Last Great Day – The Eighth Day – New Heaven and New Earth

The ascent of God's Plan continues in leaps and bounds toward its completion. Worldly theologians have come up with their own varying lists to describe and limit the development of stages according to the Biblical narrative – but they always miss the mark because they have rejected God's Holy Day Plan as revealed in Leviticus 23. They refer to themselves as dispensationalists. These dispensationalists have been taught that the Jew's feast days have been done away with, or nailed to the cross, or some such dismissal. However, they go off course because the Holy Days are the Feasts of the Lord – not the feasts of the Jews. When properly observed, God's Feast Days **hold the key** to understanding the consecutive stages in the Plan of God.

Leviticus 23:2 The Lord said, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them concerning **the Feasts of the Lord**, which ye shall proclaim to be **Holy Convocations**, even these are my Feasts.

A Holy Convocation is a commanded assembly of God's people for His special purposes. Since it is God who commands that His Holy Convocations be observed – perhaps the dispensationalists should reconsider their bias against the Feasts of the Lord, and follow God's lead to find out what they are all about.

## **Secret Mystery**

The Plan of God was a mystery from before the beginning, but when He came, Jesus declared that it was no longer to be hidden in secrecy, but shown to His spiritual brothers and sisters. However, Jesus deliberately concealed the meaning of the **mystery** of the Kingdom from those not being called to Christianity at that time. Jesus and His apostles revealed the mystery of the Kingdom of God unto the Church brethren. Paul said that the mystery of the hidden wisdom of God – which God ordained before the world unto our glory – was now available to the Church (1 Corinthians 2:7). God revealed Himself and worked with men in diverse ways during the early phases of His Plan, but He never revealed the mystery of His entire Plan until the era of the New Testament Church.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Matthew 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been **kept secret** from the foundation of the world.

1 Timothy 3:16 Without controversy **great is the mystery of godliness**: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This godless world has contrived its own inexplicable and nonsensical mystery about the nature of God consisting of three persons, which is found **nowhere** in the Holy Scriptures. It is totally made-up and its origin is in paganism. The strange thing is that most Western religions have made this artificial trinity mystery the test of orthodoxy and accepted doctrine for their faith. The sad thing is that this unintelligible fabrication blinds the minds of those who would know the truth of God. Most people have never heard of, much less understood the **mystery kept secret from the foundation of the world**. Paul tells us what the Biblical mystery actually is and to whom it is being revealed.

Colossians 1:26-27 The **mystery** which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but **now** is made manifest to His saints. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

### **Christ in You the Hope of Glory**

The glory of God is the brilliance, the magnificence, the power, the majesty, the greatness, and an unlimited host of indefinable attributes of almighty God. Our human language comes far short of being able to define the wonderful glory of God. And yet it is God's Plan that His people take on every characteristic that He possesses—even God-life ever more! Few people know Jesus and what He taught, and even fewer are willing to submit to His way of living. Therefore, the people of this world do not know God, and they do not know Jesus Christ.

As a result, most people in the world are blinded as to what God is doing. The world is oblivious to these wonderful revelations, and cannot comprehend them because their eyes have been closed for now. The mystery is revealed only to those whom God is calling to be His divine sons and daughters.

Few people consider that God is a personal God who is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). Few people ask themselves questions like: What is God doing? What makes God happy? When will God be finished with His present project? What is His Plan? Does He even have a fixed Plan in place?

Only God's people are able to know the answers to these questions because they have been revealed to God's apostles and prophets – and are recorded in the sacred Scriptures for those who have the eyes to see (Ephesians 3:5).

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.

Intellectually, those men in the world believe that they are able to discern as much as true Christians, but without God's calling and granting them repentance, the faith of Jesus Christ, and the motivating influence of God's Holy Spirit – they are not be able to live their lives according to the principles Jesus has laid before us.

## Dispensations in God's Timeline

A general definition of a Biblical dispensation is God's administration of a period of time in an appointed age. The word dispensation comes from the Greek *'oikonomia'* – which literally means "household management." As used in the Scriptures, *'oikonomia'* refers to the individual periods in the administration of the **household of God** (Ephesians 2:19). God worked in certain ways and revealed specific things at various times according to His Plan. We follow the Scriptures to observe the dispensations or **steps** in the **Plan of God** which are revealed through the meaning of the Sabbaths (pl) – weekly Sabbaths and also God's Holy Days – the Feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23). It goes without saying that if you are invited to an event and you show up a day late – you miss the entire affair. In the same way, God is deadly serious about the way in which He is worshipped and the lessons to be learned on His Holy Convocations. God regards the Sabbath Day to be the link – **the sign** – between Him and His people. The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying:

Exodus 31:13-14 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Truly my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is **a sign between me and you** throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you (set you apart from others). You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

### In the Span of Time

We find an example of God's self-revelation in the Book to the Ephesians. The Scriptures speak of past ages [*aion*], the present age, and the age to come.

God's Plan is to replicate Himself by developing **man-kind** into **God-kind**, placing us into the eternal Family of God. Paul describes the mystery of the Plan of God:

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the *sonship* of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...

We find here that God the Father decided in advance to make us His sons, sons of God, [Greek *uihothesia*, sonship in English] in His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He Planned to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.

Paul alludes to the yet future final time period when everything in the Plan of God will come to fruition. The entire work of God will be complete when that final step will have come to fulfillment. God will have brought many sons and daughters into His glory at the realization of the dispensation of the repletion and culmination of all the steps in God's Plan.

Ephesians 1:9-10 Having made known unto us the **mystery of His will** – [the Plan of God] – according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: That in the **dispensation** of the **Fullness of Times** (pl.) He might accomplish all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.

Again, Paul is saying that God will have completed His Plan by and through Jesus Christ – in the "Fullness of Times." When all things have been achieved in man, in heaven and on earth Jesus will return *everything* to His Father, so that God may be **all in all** (1 Corinthians 15:28).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God's blueprint Plan was fully devised before He began to initiate its implementation by His creation.

Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose [Greek *prosthesis*, a setting forth beforehand] of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Here in the Book of Ephesians the word "dispensation" is a reference to God's Plan – His active involvement and administration over time in bringing about His will. Dispensations (in the span of time) are the duration of specific periods of time. For example, some dispensations are periods of time in which man is tested with respect to his obedience to certain revelations of the will of God. Each dispensation is accomplished in order. The things that God brings about are not the same in every age, but are progressive, happening or developing gradually or in stages – proceeding step by step. They are interconnected major interventions to bring about His Plan of adding God-beings to His Family. But one thing that remains constant is God's Plan to bring us into a glorious eternal relationship with Him. God's Plan is a Plan of Salvation, a plan of resurrection to eternal life, a plan of glory and a plan of hope:

Titus 1:2 In **hope of eternal life**, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

God's Plan is sure. Step by step, God is resolutely moving forward in His Plan to bring many of His sons and daughters to glory in His eternal Family of God. From the beginning of beginnings, God's intent has always been to dwell with those who are His children.

Exodus 25:8 Let them make me a sanctuary; that **I may dwell** among them.

Leviticus 26:12 I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

### **Mankind is Ignorant and Blind to God's Plan**

The Plan of God remains a mystery to all of mankind—except those who have been called by God into His Church—because God's Plan for mankind is only revealed to those who have been privileged to receive His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which **God has prepared** for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Jesus made the distinction clear to His disciples of how He was revealing the **mysteries** of God to them and not to the people of the world just yet. That is why those who are uncalled are so confused about Jesus parables.

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto the disciples, Because it is given unto you to know the **mysteries** of the Kingdom of Heaven, but **to them it is not given**. [The Kingdom of Heaven is the Kingdom of God]

Even the prophets of old were not privy to the Plan of God and the mysteries of the kingdom, because Jesus brought that revelation when He came.

Matthew 13:17 Truly I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have **desired to see** those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

## **Key Steps of God's Intervention**

There are distinct steps in time of God's intervention in setting His Plan in motion. Always keep in mind that He is actively bringing His Plan to fruition. There are distinct periods or ages for establishing and overseeing the Plan of God as defined in the Bible. Jesus knew the end from the beginning because He is the Alpha and the Omega. He said:

Revelation 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The very reason that the Church of God is able to set the events of **God's Plan** in chronological order in this book is because so much of this knowledge has been imparted to us (Ephesians 3:3-5). When a person is keeping God's Sabbath Day holy; celebrating the Feast Days of the Lord; and obeying His Ten Commandments, God begins to **open their mind** to His Plan for mankind (Leviticus 23, Psalms 111:10).

### **Creator God**

In the beginning, there was only God the Father and the Word, who is Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

They were the only two beings that existed. God the Father is the eternal, glorious, supreme Creator of the heavens and the earth, the source of all life. God is a personal Spirit being, the epitome of love, wisdom, justice, power, goodness, and mercy. God is the Sovereign Ruler and sustainer of all that exists.

The relationship and bond between God the Father and Jesus Christ represents supreme Godly love and complete harmony. Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior, the divine Son of God, begotten of Holy Spirit. Born in the flesh of the virgin Mary, Jesus became fully human, and died for all. Jesus is the Messiah who will soon come again to establish His Father's Kingdom over all the earth.

### **Angels Interface between God and His Creation**

Before there was a physical universe, God created and began using a countless number of angelic spirit beings to regulate, oversee and communicate many of the variables in the physical world. Because the spirit realm surpasses our physical realm, angels are able to monitor and intervene wherever necessary in accordance to God's will. The angels of God even rejoice when one sinner Repents (Luke 15:10).

God called them messengers or angels, and they were designed to be beneficial serving agents or, "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14).

## **How Many Angels**

How many angels did Jesus create? When angels were created time had still not begun. There were so many design characteristics that needed to be calculated prior to creation in order to work perfectly the first time. Angels were the number crunchers that would oversee their myriads of individual calculations and projects for more than 10 million species. For example, even after it was decided that flying squirrels would eat pinion nuts, the air density had to be taken into consideration for their projected trajectories and right wing loading on the membrane between the front and back legs.

As an architect 'sees' his project before he starts the actual design and construction – angels had to 'see their projects' before God was ready to go ahead with His creation. Imagine the magnitude of vision and forethought required to bring God's creation into existence!

One more telling example: Angels programmed the butterfly's navigation system – their airborne control centers – giving them their "instinct" to return to the same bush their now deceased parents visited the year before on another continent. Those same butterflies also required a nectar gathering apparatus **before** the flowering plants were ever in the earth!

Genesis 2:5 Every plant of the field **before it was in the earth**, and every herb of the field before it grew...in the ground.

Interestingly, angels which cannot reproduce, are given responsibilities to interact with beings who can reproduce. Jesus tells us that the angels were not created with the ability to reproduce:

Matthew 22:30 In the resurrection men neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are **as the angels** of God in heaven.

The angelic spirit world is vast and varied just like the physical creation of seemingly limitless varieties of animals, plants, insects, and microbes. Just consider the immense number of species of birds, fish, warm and cold blooded creatures, trees, grass, ferns and lichens – the list would be staggering.

God's "ministering spirits" are also untold and manifold in number and variety. They were created for the purpose of carrying out God's directions especially for those who would eventually be heirs of salvation? (Hebrews 1:14) Jesus said that He was able to call on more than 72,000 angels at a moment's notice (Matthew 26:53).

## **Sons of God**

Angels are sometimes referred to as “sons of God,” because they are beings created by God, but **nowhere** in Scripture is there any indication or suggestion that their purpose and destiny was to be glorified beings in the Kingdom of God as man is destined to become. And yet, the angels celebrated to witness God’s handiwork. The very moment that Jesus finally set in motion all of the intricate designing and planning of this physical masterpiece of the universe, all the angels **rejoiced greatly!** Speaking of the angels as the morning stars and the offspring of God:

Job 38:7 The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Satan and his demons were included with the sons of God in an angelic conference:

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them (Job 2:1).

Man’s destiny includes eventually judging and ruling over angels. The eternal Jesus Christ, Son of God, is above and superior to all the creation He made. And yet He humbled Himself to be mankind’s Savior (Philippians 2:7-8).

Hebrews 2:9 We see Jesus, who was made a little while **lower than the angels** for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Even while in the flesh, God gave man dominion over His creation.

Hebrews 2:7 You made **man** temporarily lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, and didst set him **over the works** of your hands:

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue it: and have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Because of their spiritual state, angels are superior to fleshly mankind – but that will change for Church brethren at the time of the first resurrection.

1 Corinthians 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?

So God started by creating the vast angelic realm and then the immeasurable, physical universe – this earth, the sun, the moon and the billions of stars (Colossians 1:16). It is so expansively enormous that it is impossible to measure or comprehend its size.

The mission or responsibility of the angelic host was to employ all of the elements and forces that existed in order to establish a protected home for mankind to dwell in. The earth was the province of the angels to be developed and perfected by the angelic host in order to provide an advantageous environment in which mankind would flourish and prosper. Satan’s task was the development of the earth and everything that pertained to it. He was put on earth to tend it with the help of myriads of lesser angels. Before he was sent to earth, Satan had been trained in heaven before the very throne of God, and he had angels under his command. Jesus said:

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven **their angels** do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

## **Drawn by God**

Why did God create so vast a universe with so much power and so much potential? It was certainly created with a Plan, and for a purpose. Those men and women who have been **drawn by God**, and **called** into His Church, have been given the ability to believe in God's sovereignty, providence, protection, and goodness (John 6:44, 65).

Our calling is to walk through life with the Father and the Son, because through our relationship with them, their fundamental attributes and qualities will always be before us, which is how we will take on the character and image of God.

God created man for the supreme purpose of reproducing Himself. Carnal sinful man is not yet made in God's image because God has perfect divine character. Development of righteous spiritual character in man is a must for man to be in the likeness of God. It is God's Plan, that with our willingness, He will infuse His holy righteous perfect spiritual character in us.

As individuals, we have our part in developing Godly character. Righteous character is the capacity to discern what is right from what is sin, and to choose correctly by resisting the wrong and taking a stand for what is true. We cannot have Godly character without the motivation and power of God's Holy Spirit. And after that, to realize that spiritual character is a gift of God. Each and every one must overcome sin and cultivate Godly spiritual character during this lifetime in order to be born into the Kingdom of God!

## **Creation of Stars and Universe**

The creation of the vast physical universe took place billions of years ago.

Isaiah 45:11-12 Thus says the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker... I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, even my hands have **stretched out the heavens**, and all their host [the angels, stars, planets] I have commanded.

Clearly, God had a Plan and purpose in creating the earth with its wonderful climates, vegetation, rivers and lakes—and that objective was to create a habitat for mankind:

## **The Angelic Rebellion**

The archangel Satan was created perfect, beautiful and very powerful (Ezekiel 28:15). He was positioned at the very throne of God as one of His **covering angels**. There was no more important position than that held by Satan at God's throne in heaven. Jesus created him and placed him in that high place.

Ezekiel 28:14 [Satan], you are the **anointed cherub** that **covers** [the throne of God]; and **I have set you so**: you were upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire [in the heavenly Temple].

## **War in Heaven**

Because of the devil's rebellion against God there was **war in heaven**. The archangel Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his angels.

Revelation 12:7-9 There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The devil became the Adversary of God and man, and was cast down to the earth. Only two covering angels remained covering the throne of God – most likely Michael and Gabriel – the only two archangels named in the Bible (2 Chronicles 5:7). The Ark of the Covenant was fabricated by gifted artisans according to the pattern and blueprint of God's throne in heaven with only **two covering angels**.

Exodus 25:19-20 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, **covering the mercy seat** with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

Two cherubims of gold covered the Ark of the Covenant – one at each end of the mercy seat. Facing one another, they stretched forth their wings on high over the mercy seat – covering it!

## **Satan's Names**

“Satan” was not the original name of the evil being we know as the devil (Greek *daimonion*, lying false accuser). “Satan” means “Adversary.” “Lucifer” is not a good translation of the Hebrew *heylel* – a Pagan deity (Isaiah 14:12). The Soncino Chumash, a set of Hebrew Bible commentaries, has for *heylel*, “The morning-star (son of the morning) under the name of Istar was worshipped by the Babylonians...” Ishtar is Easter. We are not told what Satan's name was when he was created by Jesus Christ, but it was a beautiful name like the names of Gabriel and Michael. Satan forfeited the use of his right name by his dissent against God – and God never **mentions** his name again! Jesus calls him the devil. He is the very powerful spiritual being that led the revolt against God.

Jesus has qualified to replace and subdue Satan's rule over the earth but has not yet done so because Satan yet retains his power and authority over mankind (Matthew 28:18, Luke 4:5-6). Satan's evil influence is pervasive – like the air – it is everywhere. Satan is god of nothing. Paul is wise to make him only a **prince** of every bad attitude.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince** of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:

Colossians 2:15 Having spoiled principalities and powers, the fallen angels; Jesus made a show of them openly, **triumphing over them** in it.

Through His crucifixion Jesus stripped Satan and the demons of their power and authority, and openly exposed the demons making an example of them. Jesus gained victory over them all. When Jesus returns to this earth to establish His Father's Kingdom, He will have bound Satan for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Within God's word Satan is referred to in many different ways: In Genesis 3:1 we find the great dragon, that old serpent, who deceived mother Eve (Revelation 12:9). Satan remains "The prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); or "the prince of this world" (John 14:30, 16:11).

Paul calls the devil "the power of darkness." Jesus calls the devil "the wicked one" (Matthew 13:19). Paul calls Satan "the tempter" (1 Thessalonians 3:5). In Revelation 12:10 he is called "the accuser of our brethren." However, Paul refers to "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience" without mentioning "Satan" (2 Corinthians 4:4), because, it is God, Himself, who blinds the minds of the unbelievers and hardens their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, [that God] should heal them (John 12:40). Satan is "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Jesus identifies the devil in John 12:31 as "the **prince** of this world." Jesus says that Satan is a wolf that seeks to destroy the sheep of God (John 10:12). Peter says, "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan has **covered our world in darkness**, but Jesus will see him bound at His coming:

Isaiah 25:7 He [Jesus] will destroy in this mountain the face of **the covering cast over all people**, and the **veil** that is spread over all nations.

Luke 10:18 Jesus said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Ezekiel 28:13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God.

We also know that Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden on earth. They sinned, and that sin separated mankind from God (Isaiah 59:2). Man inherited death as a result of his sin. Death is not natural, but it can be overcome through Christ and His shed blood. It was necessary that God **reconcile the world** to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:19-22 It pleased the **Father** that in Him [Jesus Christ] should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to **reconcile all things unto Himself**; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.

All our days we must strive to maintain and build on that reconciled state with God the Father.

Satan was a magnificent being of the angelic creation... the most beautiful and brilliant of them all in fact – the highest in prominence. Satan was perfect at the time of his creation, but he was created with free moral agency; that is, he had free will and could choose for himself. God said that **Satan was perfect** and full of wisdom (Ezekiel 28:12):

Ezekiel 28:15 **You [Satan] were perfect** in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you.

## **The Adversary**

God started out in the spiritual realm by creating the vast angelic host to be His servants, and eventually the servants of man. And then God created the immeasurable, physical universe – this earth, the sun, the moon and the billions of stars (Colossians 1:16). It is so enormous that it is virtually impossible to comprehend its size.

Why did God create so vast a universe with so much power and so much potential? It was certainly created for a purpose.

As you and I would measure progress, God's Plan was moving along very well. Then something horrific happened! Iniquity, imperfection, sin, jealousy and rebellion were found within the angelic realm – horrible sin! It was a dreadful thing, but it happened before the character of those in the angelic realm was firmly established.

Satan, an archangel, sinned; thereby becoming **the Adversary**. He proved to be unfaithful to the Plan of God. He revolted and led one third of the angels into rebellion. Satan and the angels who followed him were originally created as holy beings capable of making their own decisions and choices. They could choose to stand for God's way, or they could reject it. They rebelled against God's way of love that is outgoing concern for the good of others. In doing so, those angels became demons.

Those demons rejected the way of humility, of love for their Maker, of giving, serving, cooperating, and sharing. They turned instead to Satan's way of lust and greed, of competition, bitterness and destruction. As a result, God has reserved for them darkness forever.

2 Peter 2:4 God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [*tartaroo*] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment...

Jesus subjugated the demonic powers, and will ultimately put them in their right place—to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (Jude :13).

Our earth was well on the way to completion when it was annihilated in the demonic battle that took place at the time that Satan attempted to seize God's throne. Satan forgot the principle of **light** that states: **Darkness** cannot encroach on light, while **light** dissipates darkness. That is truer in the spiritual world. Darkness could never win in a battle to dethrone God who is Light (1 John 1:5). Light shines in darkness; and the darkness **comprehended** it not (John 1:5). Satan could not understand how he could lose his battle against God.

Because of the restraints placed upon them, Satan and his demons can only go so far in taunting man. God has placed a **protective hedge** about His saints. Satan and his demons were referred to as sons of God when Satan presented himself before the throne of God in order to get permission to vex the ancient patriarch Job.

Job 2:1-2 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, where do you come from? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro **in the earth**, and from walking up and down in it.

Job 1:10 Have you not made an **hedge about him**, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Persecutions will come as God allows His people to build character, but God always make a way to escape, that His people may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). Satan desired to take Job's life.

Job 2:6 The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life.

### **God's Plan Not Obstructed**

Satan's rebellion and the ensuing war were unable to put a stop to the inevitable Plan of God. That is because God had an alternative course of action in place to allow for interruptions, such as Satan's rebellion and the sin of Adam and Eve.

God the Father and Jesus Christ had determined that their Godly relationship with others would always be perfect and unspoiled in every way; always directed by flawless, righteous character.

Though God did not directly reveal the entirety of His Plan of the expansion of the God-Family to him, Satan was brilliant enough to figure out a good part of the Plan of God.

Could it be that Satan – who was the most brilliant of all within the angelic realm – determined that he was not going to be relegated to being subservient to human beings? Perhaps in his pride he thought it too demeaning for someone of his stature. Satan rebelled against God, becoming the Adversary. Satan was not alone when he rebelled against God. One-third of his angels accompanied him and became demons in the process – which means that the other two-thirds of the angels remain loyal to God until this day. Even the good angels would not understand the full nature of God's Plan until Christ's work of redemption (Ephesians 3:10-11).

### **Iniquity Found in Satan**

Satan rebelled because of pride and jealousy. He could not accept God's goal to reproduce Himself through mankind. Satan figured out God's intention that once those human beings, who are made out of the dust of the earth, enter into the Kingdom of God and are transformed to spirit beings in the very Family of God – they would be above him. Satan was furious and incensed because it was he who wanted to be like God, or even 'God' himself.

Isaiah 14:13-14 For you [Satan] have said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the Most High.**

Satan wanted to be just like God – or better yet, he wanted to be God – in place of God!

## **Satan's demise**

Long before mankind existed, the planet earth was the location for the angels to provide a good home in which mankind could grow and develop. Satan was created by God to be a ministering spirit. He was an angel of the highest responsibility. Satan rejected what God had given him to do. We are shown Satan's demise:

Jude: 6 The angels which kept not their **first estate** [administering God's Plan on the earth], but left their own habitation [for the purpose of going to heaven to dethrone God], He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Those fallen angels are now reserved in everlasting chains under darkness – that is, they are the demons of darkness, still ruling on this earth, who are "chained" or held captive. There is no humility in Satan – only pridefulness.

## **The Fall of Satan and the Demons**

We find that Satan falls from his station at the throne of God to the earth because iniquity is found in him.

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Isaiah's implication here is that Satan is a false God - O shining star, son of the morning!

When Satan was a covering cherub in heaven with Michael and Gabriel, adorned with every precious gem, he was in the heavenly Eden—the Garden of God in heaven. The Eden of Adam and Eve was only a replica of the heavenly Eden. Satan was no longer adorned with precious jewels, but appeared as a serpent (Genesis 3:1-2).

Through the Prophet Ezekiel, Jesus said to Satan:

Ezekiel 28:13 You hast been in Eden the Garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that you were created.

So we see that Satan was brilliantly endowed with, not only unmatched intellect, but with incomparable talent, limitless expertise, every resource, including the capacity and the means to accomplish the task God set before him. But, Satan's pride overcame him and he sinned. He thought himself to be on a par with God the Father and Jesus Christ—or even superior to them.

## Satan Cast from the Kingdom of Heaven

Ezekiel 28:16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezekiel 28:17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will **cast thee to the ground**, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

It was Satan's plan to rival God Himself—but it was God's Plan to glorify His children in the Family of God (Hebrews 2:10). Satan was prevented from achieving his takeover of the throne of God and cast to earth. In His hate Satan reasoned that if he could not be God—nobody else was going to be God either. He set about destroying the preparatory work on earth that had already been done in creating a habitat for mankind.

## The Father of Lies

Beyond that planetary destruction, Satan introduced sin into the world of humans (John 8:44; Genesis 3:4) — knowing that sin would result in death to mankind (Romans 6:23). Satan hates the Plan of God. Jesus said of Satan:

John 8:44 ...He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and **the father of lies**.

## Bent on Destruction and Ruin

When Satan rebelled against God the earth was well on its way to becoming a habitation fit for mankind (Isaiah 45:12-18). However, Satan, in his hatred of God's Plan began to populate the earth with dinosaurs and mighty sharks – making the land and the sea unfit for man's survival. Pterodactyls with fifty foot wingspans ruled the skies. After all, Satan himself is described as a great dragon (Revelation 12:7). Finally, in a gigantic battle, asteroids from outer space wreaked havoc on the earth and its environment. Comets and meteorites bombarded the earth's surface until no life remained. Thick dust and gas covered the entire globe blotting out the sun. The ruined earth became a bizarre and isolated world of death and destruction. Everything was destroyed and in total darkness.

Genesis 1:2 The earth became without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep.

We end this chapter with the physical earth having become *tohu*, *bohu* and *choshek*. *Tohu* and *bohu* mean without form, and empty. But take notice that the Hebrew ***choshek*** means **ink-black darkness**. Satan's obliteration left the earth pulverized and trashed, and with his unique signature—**darkness**—covering the planet for a long while.

In Chapter Three we will see the face of the earth **renewed**. A prophetic Scripture describing the **re-creation** and the renewal of the surface of the earth can be found Psalms:

Psalms 104:30, You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You **renew** the face of the earth.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Earth Renewed**

#### **Re-Creation and Renewal**

The psalmist was inspired by God to record:

Psalm 104:30 Lord, you sent forth your Spirit, they are created: and you **renewed the face of the earth.**

We have seen thus far how God created the spirit realm before the physical creation of which we are a part. Long ago God brought about everything that we know of, and much more.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were **created**, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

It was such a vast and magnificent handiwork that man is still discovering and delving into the understanding of it. When there was absolutely nothing physical at all, no sea, no earth, no universe – and because God had not yet created even the basic building blocks of the universe to work with, He started from scratch – following, and never deviating from His Plan. He created the laws that govern the universe and everything in it; all of the elements, energy, and forces enough to construct all of the stars, galaxies, planets, sun, moon and more. Not only is man unable to duplicate His efforts, we cannot even fathom how God did it. God created all that exists.

Physically speaking, most certainly He utilized the services of countless and innumerable angels in perfecting the virtually incalculable details entailed in bringing about this beautiful home for mankind. Why else would the angels sing for joy at the sight of this magnificent creation (Job 38:7)? They greatly rejoiced because God had given them a superb part in it.

#### **Sudden Devastation**

God created life, and true to His Plan it was reproducible life. Myriads of extraordinary plant, animal and insect species flourished and propagated throughout the earth. Having begun to dominate the earth, some of the animals were of gigantic proportions. We find their relic evidence buried in the stratifications of the earth's multiple and varied layers. Much of it giving testimony to its sudden devastation and burial under massive stone debris which eons later would be providing the coal and natural gas that man uses today. It is not revealed in the Scriptures when and exactly how the Plan of God was interrupted but we are told that Satan and his demons revolted and were cast from heaven to the earth bringing about its near total destruction.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Revelation 12:7-9 War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his demons, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven, and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and **Satan**, which deceives the whole world: he **was cast out into the earth**, and his demons were cast out with him.

Luke 10:18 [Jesus said]: I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

As a result, catastrophic destruction swept the face of what had once been a wonderful earth—on its way to being an ideal habitat and environment for mankind to dwell in. Reflecting back on that chaotic event, Isaiah asks the rhetorical question:

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O *Helyel* [Satan], son of the morning! How art thou **cut down to the ground**, which didst weaken the nations!

Thus, the Bible gives geologist (with the ears to hear) the only plausible answer to their many theories. Only the Scriptures solve the worldwide geological phenomenon with which geologist are faced. And, since God's Plan included every possible contingency—God **renewed** the face of the earth.

God began revealing His eternal Plan of Salvation to Adam, the first man, and subsequently to Adam's son, Abel, who took his faith to the grave—the first martyr. The Plan of God was forgotten by mankind. Never the less, the Plan of God has been an ever-present influencing and controlling force throughout the history of mankind. Hidden and concealed from the world, God's purpose in creating the universe is again revealed to those He has chosen. But, the Plan of God has remained a hidden mystery to most. Even today, for the greater part of mankind, the concept of a Creator God is elusive—and His Plan to bring sons and daughters into His Family, even more obscure.

The entire universe exists for the very purpose of creating many men and women in the glorious image of God Himself. The heavens would not exist at all in the sky above except for the fact that God determined in His great expansive love to create man to be like Him. The words, "in our image," telling of man's ultimate destiny to be like God, must not be underestimated. Man in the **flesh** comes far short of resembling the supreme **spiritual** God. Man was created to be like God, but the process is ongoing.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, **Let us** make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Where Genesis 1:26 reads, "Let us," it refers to both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They are, in fact, two separate beings sharing one Spirit. The Father and Christ are a duality of beings—but not limited to two. The incredible truth of the Bible is that God has determined to replicate man into a multitude of Divine Family members.

## **Earth Renewed**

This Chapter on the renewal and re-creation of the earth begins at the second verse in the Bible:

Genesis 1:2 And the earth had become without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep.

That was when this earth was **darker** than ever. As we begin to see the earth being renewed, we first find the introduction of light as a symbolic elucidation of God's ultimate **Plan of enlightenment**:

## Plan of God - Darkness to Light

Genesis 1:2-4 The earth became without form [*tohu*] and void [*bohu*], and **darkness** [*choshek*] was upon the face of the deep... And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the **light**, that it was **good**: and God divided the light from the darkness.

We learned that *tohu* meant a desolate wasteland, and that *bohu* meant a shapeless devastation – but we did not reflect as much on “*choshek*” which means a **miserable darkness**.

There was an example of a miserable darkness at the time of the Exodus:

Exodus 10:21 The Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness [*choshek*] over the land of Egypt, even **darkness** which may be **felt**.

### The First Messianic Prophecy – Let there Be Light

Genesis 1:3 God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

This prophetic utterance by God is the first of many, many Messianic Prophecies in the Bible. “Let there be Light,” is a reference to Jesus Christ who would bring enlightenment and salvation to all mankind. Paul acknowledges the fact that God vowed to send a Savior prior to mankind’s existence.

Titus 1:1-2 ...Acknowledging the truth which is after Godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised **before the world began**.

1 John 2:25 And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even **eternal life**.

God created the earth in beauty and perfection. He created it to be inhabited.

Isaiah 45:18 ...God Himself formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, **He fashioned it to be inhabited**.

The meaning of this verse shows the Plan and purpose for which God created this earth was to **be inhabited** by mankind. His intention was and remains that there would exist a place for mankind to live and flourish.

In an attempt to thwart the Plan of God, Satan rebelled and devastated the face of the earth rendering it **uninhabitable** during the time span that takes place between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Perhaps in an attempt to make the world uninhabitable Satan had, through the manipulation and modification of the genetic properties of certain animals, bred fierce flesh eating reptile-like creatures. In any case, after Satan’s widespread destruction of the planet, God began to bring the earth to order—recreating the face of the Earth as we see in Genesis 1:2:

Genesis 1:2 ... And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Early expansive prehistoric animal development prior to the time of the diabolical destruction is abundantly evidenced by the earth's wide-ranging fossil record. God did not create the fossils as we find them today. They are the remnants of a myriad of early created life forms—like sea creatures and giant sharks that filled the oceans. The psalmist reflects on the period of time when the earth was entirely covered by water:

Psalm 104:6 Thou covered the foundations of the earth with the deep waters as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

Psalm 104:25 The great and wide sea is full of thy riches Lord, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

## **Fossil Record**

The fossils are also the remnants of the immense dinosaurs that later roamed the surface of the earth. Satan's extensive war brought about extinction and obliteration of early life on the earth. We saw in Chapter Two how the fossil record came into being at the time when Satan was cast out of heaven. Paleontologists have found many species of the earliest dinosaurs from 300 million years ago. Evolutionists try to base their fraudulent case on two points: Evidence of an ancient earth teeming with life, and a different world today. However, the Bible reveals that Divine creation following after a worldwide cataclysmic destruction is the correct explanation.

The fictitious theory of evolution is a feeble attempt to deny the obvious truth—that man's temporal life requires a **life-giver**. Ultimately, mankind needs the addition of spiritual eternal God-Life added to his temporal human existence. God's Spirit is His Life that He alone is able to impart to us.

God did not create the fossil record in the petrified form in which it is found today. Fossils exist as an early record of one stage of this earth's early development. Vast deposits of deceased plant and animal life accumulated in early geologic ages to become today's coal, petroleum and natural gas stores – providing the energy to fuel this present age before the return of Jesus Christ. Scripture provides for the record of the prehistoric ages in which God was instrumental in preparing the earth for the next step in His unrelenting, on-going Plan. Scientists define many stages from the earliest Paleozoic [Greek for 'ancient life'] to the Cenozoic [Greek for 'new life']. It was Satan's rebellion that necessitated God's re-creation of the face of the earth.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Psalm 146:5-6 ...God made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that is within them.

## **Spiritual Creation Comes to the Earth**

Genesis 2:2-3 On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and **He rested on the seventh day** from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and set it apart from the other days: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

**God does not need rest.** God rested as an example for man. The Sabbath is a part of God's **spiritual creation** with prophetic overtures for all time. On the seventh day, which was a Saturday, God rested from all His work of the **physical** creation. He set aside the seventh day for His **spiritual** purposes. God had to give man the seven-day week or it would not exist at all! The Sabbath was created as a day of physical rest and spiritual nourishment. It is the principal day to worship God. We find the prophetic prototype of God's little understood time schedule for His Plan in the beginning of Genesis.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In nature's heavenly bodies, we find the length of one **day** defined by the Sun. It being 24 hours for the earth to rotate one turn on its axis, we have the day. We find the length of the **month** defined by the moon with one revolution around the earth being a lunar month. The length of the **year** is defined by the stars as it takes 365¼ days for the earth to orbit the sun and return again to the same sidereal constellation. But **nowhere** in the universe do we find a reference for the length of the **week**! Where and how did all of mankind come by it? That is a telling question. Why did God give all of mankind the seven-day week? The answer is because it so clearly defines **His Plan** for us. The seven-day week, known by every civilization, is a microcosm of the 7,000-year Divine Plan. God has given mankind six thousand years to learn that he is utterly incapable of ruling himself in peace and order. The week is highlighted at its end with the Sabbath Day which is a **sign** between God and His people **forever** (Exodus 31:17).

Men have searched the circuits of heaven, but nowhere can the week be found. At the Genesis re-creation, mankind was given the **Sun** to mark the days, the **moon** to mark the months, and the **stars** to mark the years. But, where does the time period we refer to as the "**seven day week**" come from? Its origin is not to be found in the heavens like the day, the month and the year! God gave mankind the seven-day week with the Sabbath **at its end** because it is **not found in nature**. God had to give us His seven-day week or we would not have it at all! The seven-day week points prophetically to the seven-thousand year Plan of God.

2 Peter 3:8 ...One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

### **Seven-day Week**

Every race of man all around the earth recognizes the seven-day week because it was given **before** the great flood of Noah's day, and before the scattering of civilizations (Genesis 11:9). In fact, the seven-day week was assigned to man at the very time of creation. The world hates to admit where the week came from – and yet, everyone observes it, but there is no other source for the week – except God Himself! All around the earth, everyone's calendar is built around the week – without giving God the credit for its design and origin. The whole world goes by the **seven-day week** – but few know the derivation of it – fewer still, keep the seventh-day **Sabbath Day holy**. Jesus said unto them:

Mark 2:27 The Sabbath was made for man.

Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to **keep it holy**.

The Sabbath is the **memorial** that reminds us each week, not only of God's physical creation, but also of His incredible future **spiritual Plan** for mankind's future. We are able to see God's physical creation with our eyes. Yet, the seventh day Sabbath rest is a part of God's **spiritual creation** just as assuredly as His **physical creation** was on the other six days of the week.

There are few who understand that the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, or who believe that the weekly Sabbath rest is the promise of the prophesied one thousand year Kingdom of God on earth (Revelation 20:6).

The Sabbath is a **sign** that identifies the people with whom God is working. Paul referred to New Testament Christians as the **Israel of God** (Galatians 6:16):

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Exodus 31:14-17 Ye shall **keep the Sabbath** therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of **rest**, holy to the Lord... It is a **sign** between me and the children of Israel **forever**: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He **rested**, and was refreshed.

The Sabbath day is **holy time** because it was God, Himself, who set the seventh day apart from all the rest of the week. The Sabbath is Biblically commanded – by God. The Sabbath Day is the first picture we are given of the different epochs in the Plan of God’s spiritual creation.

The Sabbath Day was observed as a distinctive day by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and all the faithful New Testament Church of God members. The Sabbath Day was given for the very purpose of having God’s people come before Him in weekly worship and remembrance of His great Plan of redemption. God is the one who made the Sabbath holy. By resting on the seventh day, He “**sanctified**” it, setting it apart for a special purpose. After completing His work of re-creating the face of the earth and creating all physical life, including mankind, **God rested!**

God provides a brief synopsis of His Plan in the Book of Exodus. It is an astute picture of 6,000 years of labored hardship followed by a glorious 1,000 years of peaceful rest.

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and **rested the seventh day**: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, making it holy.

2 Peter 3:8 Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that **one day** is with the Lord as **a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day.

Psalms 90:4 For a **thousand years** in thy sight are but as **yesterday** when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

### **7000-year Master Plan**

In Chapter Four we will take a closer look at the sin of Adam and Eve—the fall of man, and how God has allotted 6,000 years for humanity to go its own way in order for man to learn the futility of his way of self-governance compared to the efficacy of God's guidance in the issues affecting mankind. God has allotted an additional 1,000 years of “rest” with Jesus Christ ruling over the affairs of man. God established His 7,000-year master Plan which began at the re-creation of the earth.

The seventh day of the week, beginning at Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is the Holy Sabbath of the Lord. On this day God directs us to rest from our physical labors and pursuits, and be spiritually invigorated and rejuvenated. God rested on the seventh day after creation, picturing, not only the weekly Sabbath rest, but also the millennial rest at the end of the first six thousand years of God's Plan for mankind. Jesus Christ always observed and kept the Sabbath Day holy as God’s Commandment calls for:

Luke 4:16 Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as His manner was, He went into the synagogue on the **Sabbath day**.

Acts 17:2 Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath Days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.

Deuteronomy 5:12 Keep the Sabbath Day to sanctify it, to keep it holy, as the Lord thy God has commanded you.

God is allowing man to work a prophetic six days—six thousand years, followed with His seventh-day rest—a 1,000-year Millennial rest.

## **The Millennial Rest**

Hebrews Chapter 4 shows a connection between God's rest on the Sabbath Day during the re-creation week and the coming one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, called the "Millennium." We will see more on the Millennium in Chapter Six. It is the story of paradise regained and set up on earth once again—with God's Kingdom being established over all the earth by Jesus Christ.

It follows that the other six weekdays of the re-creation represent the 6,000 years man has been on earth. God has a 7,000-year plan to bring humanity into His Family, and recorded history shows that we are at the end of man's allotted 6,000 years before the 1,000 years in which the earth will be returned to an Eden-like excellence.

It will be a 1,000-year peaceful rest that will follow this present age of human labor and futile struggle to master and govern the earth. Prophetically, the Millennium is compared with or corresponds to a "day" of the week.

In setting apart the seventh day Sabbath as God did, He defined the seven-day week and prophetically pointed to the **ultimate rest** for mankind – the millennial rest spoken of by the apostle Paul:

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into **His rest**, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Paul says that no one should miss out on God's prophesied millennial rest – shown by the weekly Sabbath Day.

Hebrews 4:3-4 For we which have believed, we ourselves are entering into the **rest**, as He said, "As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest...": although the works were finished from the **foundation of the world**. For he spoke in a certain place of the **seventh day** on this wise, And **God did rest** the seventh day from all His works (Genesis 2:2).

Then Paul pointed out that most of the Israelites who came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. They missed out on their "Promised Land Rest" because of their lack of faith – and yet, there remains God's promised rest.

Hebrews 4:5-6 And in this place again, If they shall enter into **my rest**. Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief (Numbers 14:23, 32:11, Deuteronomy 1:35):

Then Paul explains that this "rest" of which God speaks was not only that of the Promised Land as some supposed. King David spoke later of the "millennial rest," as being **yet future**. And since there was no Greek word to adequately express the concept of the "millennial rest," Paul had to coin a new Greek word – **sabbatismos** – used only here in the entire Bible. **Sabbatismos** means "a keeping of the Sabbath Rest."

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remains therefore a *keeping of the **Sabbath Rest*** for the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us endeavor therefore to enter into that **rest**.

Paul is saying to Christians that it is necessary to enter into the weekly Sabbath rest just as God did in the beginning. Because the Sabbath is from creation—and the Creator Himself set the pattern for man by resting on it—it has universal application for all mankind. The Sabbath Day is vital to man's well-being because it shows the greater ongoing spiritual creation of God reproducing Himself through the Children of God (1 John 3:2). More on this *Sabbatismos* thread later in this Chapter.

## **Garden of Eden**

Genesis 2:8 The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.

God planted a breathtaking garden, the Garden of Eden, making a place of beauty, tranquility and comfort for His children—a veritable paradise. The entire earth was not restored—only a relatively small portion dedicated for the purpose of God instructing man in His perfect way. The beautiful **Garden of Eden** was physically fashioned to be an exact replica of the spiritual Garden of Eden in heaven (Ezekiel 28:13).

## **Fish, Fowl, Cattle and Animal World**

Genesis 1:20-23 God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

## **Kind after Kind**

Genesis 1:24-25 God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the earth after his **kind**: and God saw that it was good.

## **A Strange Environment**

Genesis 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

God reveals details of His creation of the earth in intricate detail that we would never be able to figure out for ourselves otherwise. Before the creation God envisioned and perfected each and every aspect of what the physical creation would consist of. Consider the many types of grass that are extant around the planet. Before they were on the earth, they were in heaven being made completely free from faults and defects. Heaven is where the concept of pollination and cross-pollination were thoroughly analyzed in plant life before they were placed in earth's environment. It is God's design—not wild and

meaningless evolution. Cross-pollination for example allows for a grand diversity in species of grasses and plants—it had to be just right. Ask yourself, “Where were the plants of the field **before** God saw fit to **re-plant** them on the earth?” And, “How could these plants survive without cultivation and rain in due season?”

Genesis 2:5 And every plant of the field **before it was in the earth**, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

The earth’s atmosphere and climate were exceedingly different from what we find today. There were differences in air density, humidity and solar radiation penetrating to the earth’s surface, and there were subterranean seas in abundance (Genesis 7:11). We have all seen the fog in the cool of the morning and we have experienced dew so heavy that the ground was saturated. Evidently, that was the type of weather typical on earth prior to the flood. There was **never a rainbow** like the ones we observe after a summer shower today.

## **The First Rainbow**

Genesis 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

It was not the rain, but an enveloping water vapor that irrigated the foliage. That would all change when God sent the great Noachian Flood upon the entire earth for mankind’s iniquity. Both, the subterranean seas and the dense clouds in the heaven were released at the same time:

Genesis 7:11-12 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the **great deep broken up**, and the **windows of heaven** were **opened**. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

For the first time since re-creation the sun’s rays were able to break through the heretofore impenetrable clouds and split into the glorious colors of the rainbow. God set the **rainbow** in the sky in remembrance of His oath to never again flood the earth. God said:

Genesis 9:11-14 I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth. And, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my **rainbow in the cloud**, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the **rainbow** shall be seen in the cloud.

## **God Made Man**

It was a Friday – the sixth day of re-creation when God the Father by way of Jesus Christ made man. Jesus would not be known by the appellation ‘Jesus Christ’ for some 4,000 years – but nonetheless, the Father created all things by and through Him (Colossians 1:16-17). It is important that we understand that God the Father created **everything** by Jesus Christ—long before He became Mary’s flesh and blood son at Bethlehem (Ephesians 3:9). That is why John straightforwardly says of Jesus: “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

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It is here that God gives His specific purpose statement – His objective in creating mankind. Mankind is to be made glorious as God is glorious (Hebrews 2:9-10). Man is destined to be in the very same image and likeness of God Himself.

### **Adam made in God's Image**

Genesis 1:26-27 God said, **Let us** make man **in our image**, after our **likeness**: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His image, in the **image of God** created He him; male and female created He them.

A non-believer will read this verse and conclude that it is man who is anthropomorphizing God – ascribing man's characteristics to the Creator. They fail on two points: First of all, God is speaking here—not man. And secondly, these verses distinctly say that it is God who is assigning His image and likeness to man. Man is to become like God is – “we **shall** be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

These verses do not say that God looks like a man. He is not a physical flesh and blood human; *He is Spirit* (John 4:24). God created us to become as He is, not the other way around. Man is not yet completely in the image of God because this creation is an ongoing process. The Children of God are being created in the likeness of His own character image—wherein His standard of righteousness is being engraved onto our very beings. For this course of action to be beneficial, God gave men and women the ability and the freedom to choose, and yet all their choices are still subject to God's sovereignty. This Godly development will not be completed in us until the time of our resurrection and the return of Christ.

Philippians 1:6 ...He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Mankind was created to be in the image and likeness of God. But, man is mortal without the possibility of eternal life inherent in himself, except and until he receives the Holy Spirit of God with the laying on of hands at baptism. The very purpose of man's existence is to ultimately be born into the Family of God. Christians are already the Children of God, heirs of the promise, but not yet inheritors (Romans 8:17).

Ephesians 1:17-18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of glory**, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

### **Show Me Your Glory**

Isaiah 45:12 I have made the earth, and **created man upon it**: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

God did not create the earth in a state of waste, confusion and darkness. It became that way as a result of Satan's retaliation against the Plan of God which relegates the angelic world to that of ministering spirits.

Hebrews 1:14 Are the angels not all ministering spirits, sent forth to serve those [the children of God] who shall be heirs of salvation?

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God created **man-kind** for the very purpose of becoming **God-kind**. God is ultimate brilliance – such that if a man gazed on **God's glory** he would be eradicated.

Exodus 33:18-20 [Moses said to Jesus] I beseech you to show me thy brilliant splendor... **show me your glory**, [And Jesus said] You cannot see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

God radiates such brilliance that man cannot even come into His presence. But, He has created man to ultimately be changed into a comparable brilliance to His own – though man will never be equal to God's almighty attributes. Daniel speaks of how faithful mankind – the saints – will ultimately take on some of the radiance that God displays.

Daniel 12:3 They that be wise shall **shine as the brightness** of the heavenly expanse; and they that turn many to righteousness shall **shine as the stars** forever and ever.

Thus the creation of man was commenced in the flesh – with the ultimate goal and purpose of becoming spiritual beings with the character and image of God Himself. Man does not yet possess the strength of character, the glorious spiritual image, and the likeness of God, but he will! The Bible is the story of how God is bringing about His Plan to make man like Him.

### **Breath of Life in Man**

Genesis 2:7 The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a living soul.

God breathed life into Adam and he became a human being. This one statement entails so much. What is a human being, and what are his attributes? He is able to reproduce and replicate himself. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, but God does not have to step in and create a new life at every conception for every person. God breathed **life into mankind** – once and for all. It was God who created and placed that human **spirit in man**.

Zechariah 12:1 The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, says the Lord, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the **spirit of man** within him.

Job 32:8 There is a **spirit in man**: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding (38:36).

This breathing of life-giving breath into Adam was a singular event. God put the **spirit of man** in Adam – and he became a man. God instilled into Adam an extraordinary vital life force that established mankind above all the other animals (Genesis 1:26).

Job 35:11 God teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of heaven.

Only man-life is destined to become God-Life which is Spirit (John 4:24). After that initial life-giving action by God, all human life proceeded from Adam because God had created life in him as an inherent and essential attribute. Eve was not a new creation as Adam was. Eve was "*taken from man*" retaining that original, unique, "life" given to Adam by God. It is not necessary for God to create a "new life" each time conception takes place because life was passed from Adam, first to Eve, and subsequently to all mankind. We read:

Genesis 2:22 The rib, which the Lord God had **taken from man**, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

This **shared life concept** will take on much greater significance throughout this book as it is shown that God the Father and Jesus Christ share the same Spirit Life – and their Plan is to eventually have the great majority of mankind share in their **God-Life**. In the same way that husband and wife are **one flesh** (Genesis 2:24), God the Father and Jesus Christ are **one Spirit**.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (4) There is one body, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and **in you all**.

The incredible lesson of this book is that we too are destined to be of that same **one Spirit**.

## **Spirit in Man**

God has given man a human brain and fired it to life and reason—hence our **mind**. The human mind is the most complicated mechanism in the universe by far! Computers cannot feel, cannot be happy, cannot think, cannot fear, cannot envision life, let alone eternal life, and cannot love. Next to the human mind a computer is nothing more than a bucket of nuts and bolts. But, add to our mind the workings of God's Holy Spirit and what do you have? You have a **Child of God**. As children of God, every detail of our lives is intricately known by our loving Father. Indeed, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

Human beings have an intellect composed of a physical brain working in conjunction with a non-physical element – **spirit** – that God formed in us. The non-physical element is the component that the Bible calls, the **spirit in man**.

1 Corinthians 2:11 Who **knows** the things of a man, except by the **spirit of man** which is in him?

Romans 8:16 The Spirit [of God] itself bears witness with **our spirit**, that we are the Children of God:

It is difficult to put into words what this **spirit in man is**, but it defines who a person is. It is the non-tangible part of the mind which recognizes each individual's personal identity. We each have a unique identity that distinguishes us from all the rest of mankind. The spirit in man gives us self-awareness so that we know who we are. The mind, heart and spirit of man is his **knowing** and cognitive nature. The Bible utilizes the word heart as the seat of emotions of our very being. Heart is used figuratively for both emotions and intellect. God even speaks of His own heart in this figurative manner when He speaks of how the evil thoughts of man's heart grieve His heart (Genesis 6:5-6). God knows our heart and mind and thoughts (Psalm 139:1).

Psalms 44:21 ... God knows the secrets of the heart (Mark 7:21-23).

The **spirit of man** is not a conscious element of man—rather it is the human spirit which imparts the capacity, an additional dimension, to the human brain enabling man to reason, to think, to be aware of his own existence. Only man can write music, invent the heretofore unknown, and fulfill his dreams. Man has been given the ability to add wisdom to his human mind (James 1:5).

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Man has deemed himself “wise man” – homo sapiens. The spirit in man is an immaterial aspect of our being that records for us our performance. It is the conscious part of the mind that tells us who we are... who we deeply are to the very core of our existence. One aspect of the spirit in man is his personal individual conscience—the moral monitor of a person. The conscience is guided by the character of an individual. In actuality, the **spirit in man** is more the essence of **who we are** than the brain which can be seen and touched, for the brain remains after death – but **the spirit returns to God** who created it (Ecclesiastes 12:7, James 2:26). (Man does not have an immortal soul.)

Acts 7:59 They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, **receive my spirit**.

The spirit in man is equated to human breath, but there is much, much more to it than that. Man has an entire additional dimension that is absent in animals. The **spirit of man** distinguishes us from the animals in that we possess faith, but only because God granted it to us (Ephesians 2:8); we possess attitudes with God-like qualities like character and creative imaginations; imaginations that are able to be brought to fruition (Ephesians 3:20).

Genesis 11:6 The Lord said... this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from the people, which they have **imagined to do**.

### **Conscience**

A man's mind obtains and processes information giving rise to reason. Each man has a conscience which is transcendent to the human mind itself. The conscious reasoning mind of man is influenced by the conscience to exercise self-control.

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their **mind and conscience** is defiled.

The conscience is a personal record of moral behavior, freedom to choose, and exercise of free will according to informed values of right and wrong, pure and impure, good and bad, morality and immorality, lawful and unlawful, fair and unfair, and justice and injustice.

Romans 2:13-15 It is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles... show the work of the law written in their hearts, their **conscience also bearing witness**, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

The conscience develops as a person judges his own actions against his moral and belief system.

Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all **good conscience before God** until this day.

Acts 24:16 Herein do I exercise myself, to have always **a conscience void of offence** toward God, and toward men.

The conscience is violated when one does something contrary to his morals and beliefs. It is a person's conscience which bothers and convicts him.

John 8:9 They which heard it, being **convicted by their own conscience**, went out one by one...

The conscience can be dulled by frequent and exceeding abuse. It is as if the conscience is scorched or cauterized (Greek, *kauteriazō*).

1 Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their **conscience seared** with a hot iron.

A converted man's conscience has been purified and made clean by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a **true heart** in full assurance of faith, having our hearts **purified from a guilty conscience**...

A converted conscience will override and supersede the needs, influences and instincts of hunger, procreation, and even the very survival of the carnal flesh—yes, **even life itself**. Jesus said:

Matthew 16:25 Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever **loses his life** for my sake will find it.

## Character

Character is the ethical quality of an individual—the strength of his moral backbone. In a mature individual character becomes fixed—for good or for evil. “A man is only as good as his word.” There is a higher form of character that is being imbued in a converted person. It is holy righteous **Godly character**. Godly character is a Christian’s objective, though it is never perfectly achieved in the flesh. To attain to Godly character a person must be continuously instructed and shaped according to Biblical values and morality.

Acts 17:11 The Bereans were of more **noble character** than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so.

2 Peter 3:18 Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Godly character is life’s goal for those called by God. A man must be conquered by God. He must willingly yield his will to that of God. He must always choose God’s righteous way over his own personal desires and will. In that way, one becomes “like” God—with Godly character. He is obliged to learn what it means to “**lay down his life**,” just as Jesus did, and then daily and continuously do so (Romans 12:1). Then he will be taking on the very character of God.

John 15:13 Greater **love** hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life** for his friends.

God makes it perfectly clear that we must sacrifice our life for others as Jesus did for us—it is not an option:

1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the **love of God**, because He **laid down His life** for us: and we are **obligated to lay down our lives** for the brethren.

## Love

Man’s mind is differentiated from that of the animals in that to man is given the capacity to love in different ways: There is the love of a spouse. There is also a proper and good sexual love in marriage, and there is inordinate erotic love (2 Samuel 13:1-2). There is a *philadelphian* love with deep, abiding friendship and brotherly affection for others (Romans 12:10). And there is *agape* love, the greatest and ultimate of all types of love – Godly love.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God gave Adam and Eve brilliant minds – possessing attributes lacking in the remainder of the creation. To man is given the ability to consider the infinity of eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11). However, because we humans have minds that are finite, we are unable to grasp or explain the infinite. Man has a conscience, a free will and the ability to plan. The animals have none of these things. They have only instinct – their fixed pattern of behavior. They can perform only that which is programmed into them – like the aptitude to migrate or hibernate as the seasons change. Man possesses **character**, for good or evil; he possesses intellect, whether he uses it or not; he possesses wisdom that has the capacity to put on Godly wisdom (James 3:17); he possesses **free will** which is more difficult to reign in than the tides of the sea; he possesses feelings and emotions that bring smiles and tears; and greatest of all, he possesses the judgment of conscience that measures his works against perfection (1 John 3:20). The mind is not limited to the brain, but as we ascend to Godliness we find that the **spirit in man** is confined by the mind which is the receptor of inspiration, and which has the incredible faculty of being able to receive a token of God's Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5).

Ephesians 1:13-14 ...ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

### **What is Man**

It was King David who prayed for God to reveal to him the nature and purpose of man. Indeed, the Bible contains those answers for us today as well.

Psalms 8:4-6 **What is man**, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.

Man has a spirit in him, but he does not have an immortal soul or an eternal soul that goes to heaven or hell after death. Man does not possess eternal life because he is an unfinished creation. Without God as an integral part of man, the spirit of man is incomplete and powerless (Romans 7:18), (John 15:5). And while incomplete, the spirit in man is hostile, in opposition, and defiant toward God who made him—it cannot be otherwise (Romans 8:7). Paul wrote about the tendencies of the spirit in man without a Godly motivation:

Romans 7:23 I see another law in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

James, the half-brother of Jesus echoed that same sentiment about the wickedness of man being great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of **man's heart** was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5):

James 4:5 Do ye think that the Scripture says in vain, The **spirit that dwells in us** lusts after envy?

### **New Life**

The Plan of God includes the healing of that breach between the mind of man and the mind of God. God will join His Spirit to the spirit of man—forming a new creation. Whenever that takes place, the old spirit in man is no more, and a **new life** in God has begun.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creation**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

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At that point God puts **His way** into His children's minds, and writes them on their hearts (Hebrews 8:10). God's Holy Spirit, united with the spirit of man, enables man to keep the commandments, understand the Bible and those spiritual truths contained within it.

Paul spoke of how men are set apart from all living creatures by way of the **spirit in man** that God has instilled in him. That spirit in man makes him a natural man – a man with a human nature – higher than all the animals – God made him so.

Job 32:8 There is a **spirit in man**: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding.

It was at the time of the re-creation of man that Jesus Christ formed man of the dust of the ground, and blew with force into his nostrils the breath of life. Man became a living soul [being]. Jesus put His hand over Adam's mouth and blew into his nose as He administered the breath of life in a forceful exhaling of air into his lungs giving him physical life. However, that prophetic act of creating the **spirit in man** looks forward to the future Day of Pentecost when God will breathe into us **His Eternal Spirit**. At that Day, God will breathe into us, not the human breath of life, but the **Breath of Eternal Life** forever more.

Job 35:10-11 God is my maker, who teaches us **more than the animals** of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of heaven.

The **spirit in man** is man's link to God. Interfacing with God becomes possible – for the ultimate purpose of uniting with the **Spirit of God**. Paul elaborately explains how the interaction between natural man and God takes place:

### **Spiritual Discernment**

1 Corinthians 2:9-14 It is written in Isaiah 64:4, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the **heart of man**, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit of God searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For how is man able to know the things of a man, except by the **spirit of man** which is in him? Even so, no man is able to know the things of God except by the **Spirit of God**. Now we have received, not the **spirit of the world**, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the **Holy Spirit** teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man is not able to receive the things of the **Spirit of God**: for they are foolishness unto him: neither is he able to know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

### **Enlightenment**

Here, Paul has given us a brief synopsis of this Book on the Plan of God *from* Darkness to Light, in that we see how the **enlightenment** of man takes place. In short, the **spirit in man** allows us, not only to have a relationship with our Creator, but also to become **like** Him (1 John 3:2). In other words, we have become, or are becoming, one in mind and purpose. The spirit in man makes this possible as it says in:

1 Corinthians 6:17 He that is joined unto the Lord is **one Spirit**.

The Holy Spirit when united with the **spirit of man**, makes it possible for man to keep the commandments, understand the words of God and His spiritual truths contained within the Bible.

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After death, that which the spirit in man has become, our non-physical component, is what God remembers of our character, our thoughts and our frame (Psalm 103:14).

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

'Upward' means that God keeps perfect track and remembrance of every person's life. God has a perfect image of us in His mind, and He is able to not only restore us without a single physical molecule—but to even replicate us **spiritually**. God does not forget us, or any aspect of a converted person's make up, except for the sin we have repented of. After all, we are His precious creation. Paul speaks of the dead in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16) when he says to the brethren who will be a part of the first resurrection:

Hebrews 12:22-23 You have come... to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the **spirits of just men** made perfect.

In Chapter Five we will examine the conversion process wherein the spirit in man is enlivened by the Spirit of God making us Children of God.

### **Spirit in Man – Plus – the Spirit of God**

The natural man is only a stepping stone in God's Plan to make man into the very image of God. In a few people at this time, God is going over and beyond the natural man to elevate the human spirit above this mundane world by infusing in man's **human spirit** a token of **His Spirit**—which is ultimately to be born into the eternal Family of God in the Kingdom of God. Those who go through this transitional change become Children of God now just as assuredly as a babe in the womb is on his way to becoming a complete human being. It was Jesus who gave us this exact analogy:

John 3:5 It is an absolute truism that I say unto you, Unless a man be born of **water** [as an emerging fetus from its mother's Amniotic fluid] and of the **Spirit** [of God], he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

The King James translators had difficulty with the Greek word for Spirit – '*pneuma*,' because it is the exact same word translated as "breath." That is where we get our English word for a pneumatic tire—an air-filled tire with an inner-tube filled with pressurized air. Thankfully, many times in the New Testament, it is called "holy breath" which is correctly translated as Holy Spirit.

Mankind was given the ability to reproduce, thus propagating his human characteristics from one generation to the next. That facility to reproduce is a picture of the Plan of God. **God is reproducing Himself**, and He graciously gives us a part in the regenerative process. He gave man the gift of reproduction.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed the man and woman, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

This blessing bestowed on the family is a prophetic picture of God Himself. Paul tells us that it is possible to see the invisible hand of God in the creation of nature.

## **God's Family**

Romans 1:20 The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are created, even His eternal power and Divinity.

In this case, God is replicating Himself through mankind. That is the very reason He has established the proclivity in man to reproduce. God's Plan is to reproduce Himself by developing man-kind into God-kind, placing them into **His Family** – the eternal Family of God. Paul said it like this:

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole **Family in heaven and earth** is named.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are now in heaven – but Jesus is soon returning to this earth to establish His Father's Kingdom here. It is Man's destiny to ultimately become a part of **God's Family**. Those newly incorporated into the Family of God will initially, for one-thousand years, be reigning and ruling with Jesus **on earth**.

Revelation 5:10 Jesus has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign and rule **on the earth** [with Him].

Mankind is being created in the very image and likeness of God. The process of creation will continue until man has become spiritually like God and able to see Him as He is.

## **The Two Trees**

Genesis 2:8-9 The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the **Tree of Life** also in the midst of the garden, and the **tree of knowledge of good and evil**.

Many people still have a hard time grasping the tremendous significance of the two trees that stood in the Garden of Eden. There were two special trees in the midst of the Garden, and they possessed profound symbolic meanings. Adam and Eve had to choose between carnal nature with Satan as their father (John 8:44), and Divine Nature with **God as their Father**.

2 Corinthians 6:18 I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Adam and Eve chose the forbidden tree, and their choice brought about the **foundation of this present evil world**, which has led mankind to the type of knowledge that leads to suffering and death (Galatians 1:4). Adam and Eve chose the law of *sin and death* for themselves and their progeny (Romans 8:2). Godly knowledge would have led Adam to **eternal life**, instead of the temporary existence we now know.

Adam was incomplete when God created him. He was created needing another Spirit, the Spirit of God. This was freely offered to Adam through the Tree of Life. The Holy Spirit from God would have given man contact with God, and would have opened his mind to the comprehension of spiritual knowledge. Without the Spirit of God coupled with to his human spirit, man was limited to materialistic knowledge.

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What would have happened to Adam and Eve and their descendants had they taken of the Tree of Life? The Bible tells us how they rebelled and took of the forbidden fruit. They rejected the Tree of Life, and chose to take to themselves the knowledge of good and evil. They relied on themselves instead of God as the source of understanding and knowledge. In essence, Adam and Eve decided to choose for themselves what sin was. They rejected and abandoned God's law, which defines right and wrong.

Consider how different things would have been if Adam and Eve had taken of the Tree of Life. God would have ruled in their lives. There would have been no murder, violence or wars. There would have been no sickness or death. All people would have known happiness. There would have been peace everywhere between nations, groups, families and individuals. But Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed the explicit command of their Maker. What did God do as a result of their disobedience? Adam and Eve chose **human nature** for themselves rather than God's **spiritual nature**. They became unworthy to take of the Tree of Life. They were forced out—expelled from the Garden of Eden.

### **Expelled from the Garden of Eden**

Genesis 3:22-24 The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

God shut up the Tree of Life. He barred access to His Holy Spirit for 6,000 years to all mankind, except for those expressly drawn from this world for a special purpose. In the Old Testament Scriptures, we can see God using only a small number of individuals, the prophets, who wrote the first books of the Bible. This was the case until the coming of the second Adam, Jesus Christ!

1 Corinthians 15:45 So it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [Jesus Christ] was made a quickening spirit.

The first Adam had the opportunity of taking of the Tree of Life, obeying God, and thereby, replacing Satan on the throne of the earth. But Adam rejected his opportunity, making it necessary for Jesus, as a human in sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), to reject the "forbidden tree" and accept **the Tree of Life**. Jesus came to do just that – to qualify to replace Satan on that throne. In the Book of Revelation we will see that it was revealed to John that the **Tree of Life** shall be accessible for all nations of the Kingdom of God.

### **Tree of Life**

Revelation 22:1-2 He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the **Tree of Life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Adam failed to follow God. He rejected God and the laws of God. By rejecting God's way he lost his right to the Tree of Life. We must ask ourselves, "Do I follow God's way, keep His Commandments and worship Him in spirit and truth, or do I follow Satan's way, and worship according to the traditions of men?" Reading further in Revelation, we see that it is the right of those who keep God's Commandments to take of the **Tree of Life**.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that keep His Commandments that they may have right to the **Tree of Life**, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

God intended from the very beginning of His creation to make man into God-like beings possessing Eternal Life. For Adam and Eve first, and then their children, God placed a special Tree in the Garden of Eden—a Tree that represented the Life-giving qualities that only God Himself possesses.

## **Sinful Nature**

God in His loving kindness taught Adam and Eve how to choose His way of Life. To do otherwise would bring certain death, He told them. Adam and Eve were most brilliant – God made them so. God did not create mankind with a sinful nature – where did it come from? Adam and Eve lacked nothing by way of the ability to choose correctly. Their choice would not be only for themselves, but for those children born to them as well. When Adam and Eve sinned, their **nature became corrupt** (Ephesians 2:3), and that **sinful nature** was passed along to their children and their children’s children – and even to Jesus Christ (Romans 8:3).

Ephesians 2:3 ...We all had our conduct in times past [before conversion] in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others are.

Genesis 2:16-17 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof **you shall surely die**.

## **Deceptive Adversary**

We are introduced to Satan the Deceiver in Chapter 3 of Genesis. To Eve, he appears as a fascinating and brilliant being who is able to converse intelligently and eloquently (2 Corinthians 11:14). ‘Serpent’ (Genesis 3:1) is a figure of speech that emphasizes Satan’s unholy character – it does not indicate his appearance. Rather, he is angel-like in that he possesses advanced knowledge and wisdom. Eve appears to be neither cautious nor fearful of him, and yet she is entirely seduced by him (2 Corinthians 11:3). Adam should have covered for Eve, but he was not there for her (Ephesians 5:23). It is not revealed how Satan won over the confidence of Eve – except that Satan is described as the **deceptive adversary** of mankind (1 Peter 5:8). When Satan began with a distorted statement that meant she could eat of none of the trees, Eve firmly and sternly sets the record straight—“Yes we can!”

Genesis 3:1-2 Now the serpent [*nachash*] was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, has God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

Eve understood God’s instruction (Genesis 2:17) perfectly, but when she reiterates it back to Satan (Genesis 3:3) we are able to see that she has begun to equivocate and be ambiguous – because the Tree of Life is also in the midst of the garden. God had specifically said:

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof **you shall surely die**.

Notice the subtle way Eve says it differently:

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Genesis 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, **lest ye die**.

Satan said, "That is not so, You shall **not surely die**."

Genesis 3:4 "You shall **not surely die**," he said.

That is "**the lie**" of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and "the lie" of the **immortality of the soul**. Thus began the foundation of this evil world and the sinful nature of mankind.

## **Divine Institution of Marriage**

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**.

Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them **male and female**, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

According to God Marriage is between one man and one woman.

Genesis 3:20 Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was **the mother of all living**.

Very early on in the creation process God established the foundational relationship in which mankind was to propagate the earth – **marriage**. The prophetic route is developed throughout the Bible with God orchestrating the wedding ceremony between Adam and eve; then marrying Old Testament Israel; and then ultimately, we will see that Jesus Christ takes the spiritual Church as His Bride. The Lord showed Himself as Old Testament Israel's **husband** and foretold that He would one day soon enter into a **new marriage covenant** with Spiritual Israel. The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ will marry the resurrected Church.

Jeremiah 31:31-33, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new [marriage] covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an **husband unto them**, says the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Revelation 19:9 ...Blessed are they which are called unto **the marriage supper of the Lamb**. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

## **Christ and the Church**

Ephesians 5:31-32 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be **one flesh**. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning **Christ and the Church**.

Genesis 2:23 Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was **taken out of Man**.

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Adam and Eve were created in an innocent state. They had all the earth to themselves. They had no guilt or shame. Eve did not have her own body, and she did not have a mother. Everyone has a mother. Not Eve!

Genesis 2:25 Adam and Eve were both naked, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**.

Eve was of Adam's body. Eve came out of Adam's side – she was **of** his body. These words in verse twenty-three, “She is **bone** of my bones, and **flesh** of my flesh,” are the prophetic words of Adam as he took Eve to be his wife – prophetically pointing to the **marriage of the Lamb**.

Ephesians 5:30-31 For we are members of [Christ's] Body, of His **flesh**, and of His **bones**. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be **one flesh**.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**.

This is another Messianic Prophecy – and the first to picture Jesus Christ and the spiritual Church He will marry (Revelation 19:7-9).

For more on the Church, see Chapter Five – The Church Age, The Fullness of Time.

### **It was Very Good**

One thousand years before Jesus was born, young David, tending his father's sheep looked up at the starry sky and was inspired to write his inspired thoughts upon considering the magnificent stellar night sky:

Psalms 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; **what is man** that you are mindful of him, mere mortals that you concern yourself with him?

David realized that God, capable of creating such vast beauty and perfection, has included man as a part of His Plan. **It is a very good Plan**.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Everything that God had created was in harmony and synchronization with everything else. The whole of creation had been coordinated, sectioned and matched so that no one system would overcome another. The mightiest could live in accord and not be able to eradicate the weaker animals. Man's immune system was strong and resilient enough that no plague or illness would wipe man off the face of the earth. No unforeseen weather phenomenon would wash man away. God's Plan was sure and would not be deterred. The earth had been re-created to perfection, and to the extent that man was capable of replenishing the earth with man-kind, it would be so until God Himself was satisfied with the number of sons and daughters He would bring to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

2 Peter 1:3 According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath **called us to glory** and virtue.

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Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, **it was very good**. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

At re-creation God established the Sabbath and all that it means. The world has rejected God's Sabbath. Islam has moved to Friday. The Catholics and Protestants have moved their mode of worship to Sunday – anything to avoid the Saturday Sabbath. That is why the apostle Paul, writing after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was so explicit about the Sabbath Day, and the “**rest**” that it depicts, still remaining.

### **The Sabbath Remains**

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a keeping of the Sabbath rest for **the people of God**.

Remember that the Sabbath is a sign between God and **the people of God**. Reluctantly, secular history attributes the earliest known civilization to use the seven-day week to the ancient people of Israel – actually the Jews who were carried captive into Babylon.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are looking for the conclusion of the allotted time God has allowed for mankind to learn his lesson – 6,000 years – followed by the 1,000-year **millennial rest** when Jesus will rule from Jerusalem, making a total of 7,000 years. We are near the 6,000-year mark at this time. Peter has clarified it, and, the apostle John also hides this wonderful truth within his works – for those who have the eyes to see and ears to hear. In the Book of Hebrews, it is Paul who is comparing the promised “rest” of the Promised Land to the yet future “rest” that Jesus will bring with Him – the Millennium. Just before Israel arrived at the Promised Land, we read of that first rest in:

Deuteronomy 12:9 For ye are not as yet come to **the rest** and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God gives you.

The key point that Paul is making in Hebrews Chapters 3 and 4 is that so much of Israel did not make it into the Promised Land, and he warns the Church of God, just as David did, not to make the same mistake of not **believing**—and thereby missing out altogether on the promised millennial rest. Notice God's warning through His Holy Spirit of prophecy, where Paul is quoting King David's Sabbath sermon:

Hebrews 3:7, 11 Wherefore as the Holy Spirit said, **Today** [spoken on the Sabbath] if ye will hear His voice... So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest (Psalm 95:11).

Then, Paul explains that there are non-believers in the Church of God today.

Hebrews 3:15 While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Hebrews 3:18 And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His **rest**, but to them that **believed not**?

### **Belief or Unbelief**

If the people of the Church of God make the same mistake of **not believing** and not imitating the life of His Son, Jesus Christ in everything He taught and lived, they too will not inherit the promised rest of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34). It is not enough to be in a friendly congregation – there are many

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of those. It is not enough to be in a congregation that keeps the Sabbath – the Jews do that. It is not enough to be in a tithe paying congregation – there are Protestants who do that. It is not enough to be in a congregation that keeps the Holy Days – we do not have a corner on those either. Where are the compassion, mercy, reconciliation, and forgiveness – that define Jesus?

What is it that makes one a Christian living according to Godliness? How many attend Sabbath services for the purpose of provoking all the others to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)? How many could define Godly love – or good works for that matter. How many are actually laying their lives down daily as Jesus Christ gave us example? How many even know what that means to **lay down their lives** (Matthew 16:24-25)? How many know how to overcome Satan (Revelation 12:11), and then set out to prevail over him? That is what “**believing in Jesus**” means. In a red flag warning, Paul says we must be anxiously on guard:

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear [be on dire alert, on our guard], lest, a promise being left us of **entering into His rest**, any of you should seem to come short of it.

The “rest” of which Paul is writing here is not a reference to the Promised Land of former times (Deuteronomy 12:9), but to the millennial rule of Jesus Christ when the entire earth will enjoy the peace and rest of the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 4:3 For we which have **believed** do enter into rest [speaking specifically of the 1,000-year millennial rest], as He said, As I have sworn in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works [six days of creation] were finished from the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 4:4 For He spoke in a certain place [specifically in Genesis 2:2 it says that God rested] of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh **day** from all His [six days of] works.

This “day” will be fulfilled at Christ’s intervention and it will last a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). The millennial “rest” was designated at the foundation of world. It has always been a part of God’s 7,000 year plan. The Sabbath Day is the weekly reminder of God’s millennial rest. God’s Plan is sure. There will be a number of resurrected Christians who will reign and rule with Jesus in the one-thousand year Millennium (Revelation 5:10).

Hebrews 4:6-7 Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter into the **rest**, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, He pointed out a certain day, saying in David, **Today**, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Let’s go back to that Sabbath service where King David was preaching on this exact same subject – the millennial rest. David’s sermon was given long after so many Israelites died in the wilderness for their unbelief. David is intimating that the millennial Sabbath rest was not fulfilled when the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land.

Psalms 95:7-8 For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of his hand. **Today** if ye will hear His voice. Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

As we continue in Hebrews 4, we find where the King James Translators, because of their lack of understanding the point Paul was making, failed to translate ‘*Jehoshua*’ correctly.

Hebrews 4:8 For if [**Joshua** is correct] had given them rest, then would he [David] not afterward have spoken of another day.

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Joshua's rest in the Promised Land had not fulfilled the prophesied rest – because David (who came later) spoke of the rest still **being yet future**. Paul is saying that if Joshua had given them “the prophesied rest” in the Promised Land, then David would not afterward have spoken of another day's fulfillment of that 1,000 year millennial rest yet to come. Paul reiterates that same point:

Hebrews 4:9 There remains [yet to be fulfilled] therefore a rest [again, the Greek had no word for the seventh-day Sabbath rest, so Paul coined a new word – ‘*Sabbatismos*’ – a keeping of the Sabbath] to the people of God. [Paul is speaking specifically of the weekly Sabbath which points to the 1,000 year millennial rest.]

In the book of Hebrews, the "millennial rest" of 1,000 years is termed a "Sabbath rest," [*Sabbatismos*] by Paul.

The Moffatt translation of the Bible is even clearer for Hebrews 4:9. It says: "There is a **Sabbath-Rest**, then, reserved for the people of God."

Moffat goes on in verse 10, “For once a man enters His rest, he rests from work just as God did.” The picture that God has given us is of six days of labor - followed by one day of rest. God established the seven day week as a picture of His entire Plan for mankind becoming Children of God.

Hebrews 4:10 For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

Those who are privileged to enter into the millennium will have ceased from their own works—which were 6,000 of mankind's disobedience to God.

Hebrews 4:11 Let us be eager therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same **example of unbelief**.

It was a horrible example: Nearly all of those Israelites who left Egypt in the exodus died in the wilderness of Sinai. The exceptions were Joshua, Caleb and the youngsters under 20 years of age (Numbers 14:29-38). We see that example here:

Numbers 26:64-65 Among these there was **not a man** [left alive] of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness.

The seventh day is mentioned as a type of the peaceful rest – a 1,000-year rest – that will follow this present age of human labor and futile struggle to have its own way, apart from God. The Millennium, then, is compared with a “day” of the week. The world is oblivious to how very near the beginning of the millennium is now. They do not believe every word of God, so they end up reading over so many important markers.

John the beloved apostle is meticulous in the way he presents the timing of events in his Gospel account – which differs from Matthew, Mark and Luke's synoptic Gospel accounts. In fact, John writing so late – nearly 100 AD – had time to really put events in a right order. Keep in mind that we are talking about how the millennium corresponds to the 7th day.

As the Millennium begins, Revelation 19 shows us that Christ will have taken His Bride, the Church. Jesus will wed His bride just prior to the beginning of that 7th day so that she will ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

## **Seven Prophetic Days**

Over and over, the Sabbath is **hidden** in the Scriptures, but **revealed** to those who have eyes to see. John's Gospel account utilizes the Sabbath and the Holy Days during Christ's public ministry as his basic outline. Why is John numbering these days in this manner? Notice what John's time-line reveals. John surreptitiously inserts this same picture of **seven prophetic days** that David and Paul made mention of. **Count the days** in this section of the Book of John:

John 1:21 John the Baptist was asked if he was Elijah? And he said, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. [Day number 1]

John 1:29 The **next day** [That would be day number 2.] John sees Jesus coming unto him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God,

John 1:35 Again the **next day** [That would be day number 3] after John stood, and two of his disciples;

John is keeping meticulous track of the time...

John 1:43 The **day following** [That would be day number 4] Jesus would go forth into Galilee...

Just for a reference point, Jesus' public ministry was approximately 2,000 years ago at approximately 4,000 years after creation – or day number 4 in God's 7,000 year Plan. Going into Chapter 2 in John's account we now add another three days - coming to day **number 7**. And surprisingly we find a **marriage** – just like we have seen associated with the 7,000 year Plan of God.

John 2:1-2 And the **third day** there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus **was called**, and His disciples, to the **marriage**.

Please note John's similar wording here to his wording in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 19:9 He said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are **called** unto the **marriage supper** of the Lamb.

This mention of marriage is by no means a coincidence, but the wonderful truth. Jesus marries His wife as a prelude to the Millennium. This is a picture that after 6,000 years the true believers will be caught up to the Father's throne to take part in the wedding of Jesus Christ and the resurrected saints. John is writing in this furtive manner for the same reason that Jesus taught this way when He said,

Matthew 13:11 It is given unto you to know the **mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.

John had learned that little didactic and informative method by studying Hosea the prophet. Again, Jesus' public ministry was approximately 2,000 years ago. We are very near to the day of the **better** resurrection—that of the Church brethren—the saints (Hebrews 11:35). From the time of Jesus' public ministry to His return is approximately 2,000 years, or **two prophetic days**. From the time of the Lord's public ministry to the return of Jesus Christ is two-thousand years. Compare this to Hosea's writing:

Hosea 6:1-2 Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After **two days** will He revive us: in the third day **He will raise us up**, and we shall live in his sight.

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Yes, as we begin to enter the **third day** – the third one-thousand year **period** after the Lord's public ministry "**He will raise us up**" in the better resurrection—the resurrection of the Saints.

Some useful dates to use when studying the relative chronology of the Bible:

Creation: approximately 4,000 BC

The flood: approximately 1,650 years after creation of man, or 2350 BC

The date of the Exodus: 1,446 BC

Christ's birth: 5 BC

Christ's last Passover and Crucifixion: 30 AD

It is interesting that when archeologists try to push the dates on man's origin back into antiquity – they have a very difficult time pushing the **written word** back to 6,000 years ago. Ancient Cuneiform writings of the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia date back to no more than 3,500 BC. Contemporary historians recognize that thoughtful writing has existed for no more than 6,000 years, and that most of the world's languages extend only to the post-flood era.

### **6,000 Years is Nearing Completion**

Mankind's "week of 6,000 years" is nearly complete, and God's Sabbath rest of 1,000 years will soon be here. God has a way of inserting time and events unbeknownst to man, so it is wise not to depend on man's dates. God's people are told to watch and to stay close to God at all times.

The Personal Correspondence Department of the Worldwide Church of God sent out this letter (even from the days of the Radio Church of God):

"Now notice your Bible. Many Bibles are complete enough to contain chronological charts showing that human life was created slightly more than 4,000 years before Christ. And almost another 2,000 years have elapsed since – making nearly 6,000 years of human civilization to date. In other words, the trend of world events is now proving we are very near the time the Scriptures have always said Christ will return – when the probability of world destruction would become a reality (Matthew 24:22). Six thousand years of human history have almost been completed. Here, then, is proof – double proof – that Christ is coming in our generation!

"The common assumption that man has lived on earth countless tens of thousands of years is an idle dream. Reason disproves it. Each new archaeological discovery aids in disproving it. True SCIENCE disproves it! Strange as it may seem, the theory of man's evolution is not only unproved, but irrefutably disproved when we understand the facts.

"The apostles did not fully understand this PLAN OF GOD when Christ was yet on earth. They thought the kingdom would be established in their day – after only about 4,000 years of God's plan had been completed. But before they died, the apostles knew God's plan. Peter said: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [of Christ's coming] . . . but is longsuffering..." (2 Peter 3:9). God is patient. He has refrained from intervening in world affairs for nearly 6,000 years. Why?

"Because He will not intervene until humanity is forced to cry out to Him for fear of self-extermination. Recall that the day of Christ's intervention and rule is compared to "a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). Peter also says the same thing – that a day in God's plan is as "a

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thousand years,” and “a thousand years” of human civilization is as ONE day in His planned week of SEVEN 1,000-year days (2 Peter 3:8).

“Peter knew that Christ would intervene shortly before the close of 6,000 years of human struggle and slavery – that God would send Jesus Christ to set up His government to rule during the seven-thousand-year period – a millennium of peace, a sabbatical rest!

“How marvelous that in our day, at the very time that 6,000 years have almost elapsed, the world is threatened with extinction of life. And Jesus Himself said that when we see this taking place HE WOULD COME AGAIN!”

### LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT

Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.

This book is a compilation of Biblical knowledge that has come to be understood by a few in these last days—making it a gold mine of Revelation for the last generation of God’s people before the return of Jesus Christ. God reveals a great deal about Himself in the Scriptures – and this is what we now recognize to be the best interpretation of God’s Plan. As always, when proven wrong by the Scriptures, we will gladly revise our understanding to the knowledge of the truth (2 Peter 3:18). We know that there is so much to add to our understanding of the **present truth** (2 Peter 1:12).

Knowing what God has revealed about Himself aids our relationship with Him greatly. The prophets of old were given only a small portion of the greater picture that Jesus Christ was revealing to His disciples and to the Church of God today. Jesus told His disciples:

Luke 10:24 I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things **which ye see**, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Most of what is known about God the Father was revealed by Jesus and further explained by Paul:

Matthew 11:25-27 Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast **revealed them unto babes**... All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

God’s Church is to learn from those who have gone before us. We are to learn from the fall of Adam and Eve. Their fall is our heritage – but one legacy from which we are to escape. Chapter Four of this book is about the wrong choice made by Adam and Eve and the resulting world of **darkness** brought on man by their disobedience.

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness **have seen a great light**: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

# Chapter 4

## Fall of Man

As we continue into another Chapter, the Plan of God continues to pass as a parade of exquisite floral-decorated floats right before our very eyes. Like in the Tournament of Roses Parade, each float is more glorious than the other, with the Grand Marshal's elegant place of honor at the finish. Bright and spectacular arrays of delicate flowers, on the first of each January, beckon a cold country to Pasadena, the Crown City of Southern California's unique celebration of the festival of springtime flowers and sweet-scented orange groves. But there is one float that is difficult to understand; the **Fall of Man** somehow does not seem proper and fair in an otherwise splendid procession.

How can a **loving God** visit the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation and beyond (Deuteronomy 5:9)? As we approach the half-way point in this book we should briefly review where we've come to so far in the Plan of God. This Chapter covers the period of time from the sin of Adam and Eve, to close of the Bible's Old Testament. It is our purpose in this volume to chronicle the epoch events revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. We began with the self-Revelation of God the Father and Jesus Christ when they were all alone. Then the Bible reveals their concept of expanding their close-knit Family—as they made the decision to replicate themselves. As they took steps to initiate that idea into reality, countless ministering spirits were created and prepared for service. Next, God filled the cosmos with the ever-changing universe of suns, stars, galaxies and multiple millions of seemingly isolated superclusters of galaxies—and this one exceptional jewel—the Earth.

Brilliant scientists in their study of the chronology of the universe are still debating whether or not the cosmos will continue to expand forever or collapse upon itself. They cannot figure out how galaxies are contained in their orderly spiral forms because there is just not enough gravitational pull to hold them together. Anticipating these inexplicable dilemmas, Paul explained that it is necessary for Jesus Christ to **continuously sustain** the physical universe until the end:

Hebrews 1:2-3, 10-12 The Son of God, by whom also He made the worlds; being the brightness of The Father's glory, and the express image of His person, and **upholding the universe** by the **word of His power**... The heavens, the works of thine hands, **shall perish**; but you remain; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a cloak you shall fold them up.

Paul and Peter, explaining the transient nature of this mega-universe, tell us what is going to take place at the conclusion of the physical creation:

2 Peter 3:10-12 ...The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and **shall pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

God's Revelation to John and Isaiah tell us that the end of this present universe there will be a great collapsing and spiraling in upon itself:

Revelation 6:14 All the host of heaven shall vanish, as a scroll when it is rolled together (Isaiah 34:4).

## **Hope and Faith**

Of course and more importantly, God has revealed to His servants how His Plan will ultimately come to fruition. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter Eight of this book. With the physical realm having come to an end, the new spiritual and eternal Kingdom of God will become fully established.

The Kingdom of God and our part in it are central to God's Plan. God has a resolute determination to carry out His Plan to the full—He will not be dissuaded. Man's **hope and faith** is that most all of mankind will be saved from eternal death (1 Peter 1:21). However, like with Satan and the demons, only the most recalcitrant and unrepentant will go into the oblivion of the raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 1:13).

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth**, wherein dwells righteousness.

Revelation 21:1 I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

But, this is getting way ahead of the story. After the creation of the earth was well on its way, there was rebellion and iniquity found in one-third of the ranks of the angels—resulting in great devastation upon the face of our planet (Genesis 1:2). After Satan brought ruin, destruction and darkness, God set out to renew the face of the earth and create man in it. Adam and Eve in their innocence and naiveté were instructed by their Creator God to look to, and trust in Him as the source of all Godly wisdom. Indeed, it was Jesus Christ who taught them His way of Life. In this chapter we will take a closer look at the sin of Adam and Eve—the downfall of man, and how God has allotted 6,000 years for humanity to go its own way in order for man to learn the futility of his way of self-governance compared to God's guidance in the issues affecting mankind.

## **Choose Your Father**

The magnificent Garden of Eden contained two trees; a very spectacular tree, the Tree of Life, and another tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were in the pristine Garden with a choice to make. They had been given free will and the ability to choose. They were supposed to choose **God** as their **Father** by eating of His **Tree of Life**. Had they chosen God as their Father, they would have been choosing to live forever.

Adam would have first ruled the earth, and eventually all creation. To rule the universe, man must possess the character to always be able to choose in a Godly manner. The question was, "Would man choose God to be his Father or would he choose Satan to be his father?" Jesus said:

Matthew 5:44-45 I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be **the Children of your Father** who is in heaven.

Paul reiterates that it was what the Tree of Life would have provided—God's Holy Spirit—that makes us the Children **of God**.

Romans 8:14 As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Children of God.

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Being **Children** of God leads to eternal life because God has become their Lord, Master and **Father**. Adam and Eve were supposed to single out God as their Father by choosing to eat of His Tree of Life, but instead, they followed Satan's lead and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose **Satan as their father**. Being **children of the devil** leads to death. Jesus said:

John 8:44 Ye are of **your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

This deceived world of today continues to look to its father, Satan:

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

It may have been when Satan first realized that it was God's Plan to create **divine sons and daughters** that he first attempted to destroy the solar system and the earth within it (Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:9). God does tell us that everything on earth became devastated, annihilated and dark (Genesis 1:2). It was afterward when God subsequently renewed the face of the earth and created mankind. Continuing with His Plan, God planted a breathtaking garden on earth, the Garden of Eden, making a place of beauty, tranquility and comfort for His children. That magnificent garden contained two trees; a very spectacular tree – the **Tree of Life**, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

### **Tree of Life**

Genesis 2:7-9 The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the **Tree of Life** also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The Tree of Life, representing everlasting life, was an integral part of God's Plan. God would have had Adam and Eve freely choose Him and His way. They were alone in the garden when Satan came to them. Through the Tree of Life, God was offering mankind the way to **eternal life** as members of the Divine Family of God. Mankind was not created to die—just the opposite. It was God's Plan that man become like Him, and **live forever** in the Kingdom and Family of God. God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate of the forbidden tree:

### **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**

It was God who instructed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He said,

Genesis 2:17 Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof you **shall surely die**.

There was a momentous choice set before Adam and Eve. God allowed them to choose their family tree—by deciding for themselves who **their father** would be. God presented the choice of **life or death** to them. The Fall of Man resulted in – not only his eviction from the Garden of Eden – but the assurance of death (Genesis 2:17).

## **Satan's Lie**

This was the choice set before Adam and Eve. Choosing the fruit of the Tree of Life would have ultimately resulted in obtaining eternal life. Choosing of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would result in death. Satan prevailed with Adam and Eve. Choosing the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil did not result in eternal life as evidenced by the billions of graves scattered everywhere around the world (Genesis 2:17).

Genesis 3:4-6 The serpent said unto the woman, Ye **shall not surely die**. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Adam and Eve were not created with an **immortal soul** possessing everlasting life. That myth had its source in Satan's lie, "You shall not surely die." Satan's lie to Eve was the origin of the false doctrine of an immortal soul that lives on forever. The truth of God is the exact opposite—he who sins **will die** (Romans 6:23, Genesis 2:17). Sin brings, and warrants death. Man is not an immortal soul, nor does man possess an immortal soul.

## **Satan Vows Eternal Life to Sinners**

Genesis 3:4 The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall **not surely die**.

God had warned Adam and Eve that **death** would be the result of defiance of His rules (Genesis 2:17). Satan shrewdly cast doubt in Eve's mind by intimating that God did not want her to be as intelligent as He is. Satan feigned that he was only looking out for Eve's best interests—while all the time he was bent on her ultimate destruction. Satan reasoned that by obliterating Adam and Eve's potential to become children of God, he was ultimately thwarting the very **Plan of God**.

When Adam and Eve took of the forbidden tree, Satan reasoned that he had effectively interrupted and terminated the Plan of God—which is to bring many sons and daughters into the glorious Family of God.

God told Adam and Eve that they would **die** if they ate of the forbidden tree. (Compare Genesis 2:17 and 3:4). God created man to live – not die! Scripture tells us that Satan the Devil was a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan was already here on earth when Adam and Eve were created:

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was **cast to the earth**, and his angels were cast out with him.

## **The Fall of Man**

In their innocence, Adam and Eve were given a choice to make. Had they chosen the **Tree of Life**, they would have received God's Holy Spirit which leads to eternal life. The "Fall of Man" is a misnomer because Adam and Eve did not fall from a high and lofty position which would have been the receiving of God's Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life. They never **attained to life everlasting** in the first place. We know what we mean when we speak of the Fall of Man although we do not find that specific wording the Bible.

The Fall of Man usually refers to the **sin** of Adam and Eve. However, that phrase implies that man had reached his incredible potential – from which he fell – which is not the case at all. It would be more correct to say that Adam and Eve met their temporary demise when they ate of the forbidden tree. They took of the tree of the knowledge of good **and evil** – which leads to death. In that sense they fell from what they could have been. Adam and Eve never received God's Spirit.

God had fully intended that Adam, Eve and their children have a direct and **personal relationship** with Him. The Lord God was present and **dwelling** in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8). Face to face, God had fully instructed them in His way of truth and light. They chose incorrectly:

Genesis 3:8-10 Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God **walking in the Garden** in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you? He said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Satan wanted Adam and Eve to fall as **he had fallen**. Adam and Eve will be raised on the Last Great Day and have God's Spirit poured out on them for the first time – providing their opportunity for salvation that comes to all men just once (Joel 2:28, Revelation 20:11). Had Adam and Eve taken of the Tree of Life – and then sinned – that indeed would have been the Fall of Man. God did not let that happen:

Genesis 3:22 The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, **and live forever**.

During the flood, the Garden of Eden ceased to exist on earth. The beautiful Garden of Eden had been physically fashioned to be a facsimile of the **spiritual** Garden of Eden in heaven. God reminded Satan of long lost days:

Ezekiel 28:13-16 You have been in **Eden the Garden of God**; ... You are the anointed cherub that covered [the very throne of God]; and I have set you so: you were upon the **holy mountain of God**; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire... and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane **out of the mountain of God**.

Satan's fall from heaven is everlasting – there is no Savior to restore him to the heights or pinnacle from which **he fell**.

Luke 10:18 Jesus said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning **fall from heaven**.

## **Innocence Lost**

Because of sin, Adam and Eve were too embarrassed and ashamed to face God. Sin had **separated** between them and their Creator. The good news is this: There is a great overriding theme throughout the Bible telling how that breach between God and man can be reconciled.

Isaiah 59:2 Your **iniquities** have separated between you and your God, and your **sins** have hid His face from you.

Adam was not willing to stand up to Satan in defense of God's way of life. Eve was led astray by Satan the serpent (1 Timothy 2:14). God intended that Adam meet Satan head-on and replace him as ruler of the earth, but Adam lacked the **strength of character** to do so. Had Adam taken of the Tree of Life and triumphed over Satan, he would have saved his wife, Eve, and become the savior of the world! Adam failed to overcome Satan and save his wife, but Jesus overcame Satan and has become the Savior of the world—beginning with the Church brethren (John 16:33, Matthew 4:1-11).

God the Father has restored the way to the Tree of Life through His Son, Jesus Christ. God dwells with His Children – but Adam and Eve turned away from that relationship (John 15).

## **I Will Walk Among You**

When Adam disobeyed God he brought condemnation upon himself and his entire family. God had called out to Adam in a close personal way, "Where are you?" God desires a people with a like-spirit with whom He can dwell. God chose the sons of Jacob—the children of Israel—to be a special people with whom He would walk, just as He had walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Deuteronomy 7:6-11). Shortly after delivering the children of Israel from their Egyptian captors God said to Moses:

Leviticus 26:11-12 I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And **I will walk among you**, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

## **God Dwells with His People**

King David pledged to God his desire to build a **Temple** wherein **God could dwell** with His people:

Psalms 132:3-5 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, an **dwelling place** for the Mighty God of Jacob.

God allowed Solomon, David's son, to build a "House for the Lord." Though the Temple was the grandest edifice on earth Solomon wondered how God could **dwell** therein:

1 Kings 8:27, 30 Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this **dwelling place** that I have built?

In Chapter Five we will see that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ dwell within the converted people of God. It will be at the end of this book in Chapter Eight that we find the ultimate fulfillment of God's Plan to **dwell with His saints**. John records:

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Revelation 21:3 I heard a great voice out of 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 shall be with them, and be their God.

Exodus 29:45-46 **I will dwell** among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may **dwell among them**: I am the LORD their God.

Zechariah 2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and **I will dwell** in the midst of thee, says the LORD.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...You are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them**, and walk in them; and **I will be their God**, and they shall be my people.

Revelation 21:3 ...The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.

When God declares that He desires to **dwell with us**, it does not connote only living in close proximity to one another. It means to share life's best moments together. My fondest memories of my early childhood come from the times the family came together at my grandparents' home for Thanksgiving Day. WWII was over, and the 'boys' had come home from the sacrifices and separation of having been overseas. There was a **profound** sense of belonging that derived from the heartwarming gathering. I fit in, and was accepted and loved like everyone else. All my aunts, uncles and cousins were animated and talking all at once in elated sharing of kinfolk news. In the kitchen, the turkey was being basted with its own juices, the dressing was sizzling, and the sweetened foamy egg white meringue topping on the banana pudding was turning golden brown in the oven. The sweet aromas wafted throughout the house – bringing me to the point where I thought that I would soon starve to death if we did not eat soon. The grown-ups were not as anxious to sit down at the extended table in the dining room as we kids were.

When we were all finally seated, and before my grandfather carved the turkey, we each bowed our head in unison and in thanksgiving to God for His bountiful blessings. That was more than seventy years ago – and it remains my fondest memory of childhood. When God says, 'dwelling together,' He means something more like that.

Psalms 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is interesting to note that the first meaning of the Hebrew word for dwell *yashab* is sit down. This is what Jesus had in mind when He **sat down** and spoke of the coming Kingdom of God, and His great desire to eat with us in that setting. (Luke 22:14-16). At that time, we will fully be in each other's hearts and minds.

John 14:17, 23 ...**He dwells with you**, and shall be in you. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come unto him**, and make our abode with him.

In the New Heaven and New Earth, it will be that way—eternally.

## **The Tabernacle and the Temple**

The purpose of the Tabernacle and the Temple was so that God could demonstrate to physical Israel His desire to  **dwell** with His people. God told Moses:

Exodus 25:8-9 Let them make me a sanctuary [Tabernacle]; that I may  **dwell among them** . According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

The Tabernacle was portable so that God could dwell with Israel during their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. The Temple on the other hand was a permanent sanctuary for God at Jerusalem in the Promised Land. Solomon said of the Temple:

1 Kings 8:13 I have surely built thee  **an house to dwell in** , a settled place for thee to abide in forever.

At first the Temple is referred to by various names, “a house to dwell in, the house of God, a house for the sanctuary, the house of the LORD, etcetera.” King David charged his son, Solomon:

1 Chronicles 28:10-12 Take heed now; for the LORD has chosen you to build  **an house for the sanctuary** : be strong, and do it. (11) Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, (12) And the  **pattern of all that he had by the Spirit** , of the courts of  **the house of the LORD** , and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.

This “pattern” that was to be followed meticulously, was the plan and the blue prints of the heavenly Temple wherein God the Father has His throne covered by the two cherubim. The spiritual implications of God’s throne and Temple in heaven are mind boggling in their implications (1 Peter 2:5). Certainly eye has not seen not ear heard... We will see more about the heavenly Temple and the throne of God in Chapter Eight.

## **Messiah Comes**

Those called out of the world to be saints today must follow Jesus’ example and also  **overcome** Satan if they are going to be in the Kingdom of God ruling with Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:21 To  **him that overcomes**  will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as  **I also overcame** , and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Because of Adam’s failure, God issued the first Messianic prophecy of the Scriptures telling Satan that he would be vanquished:

Genesis 3:14-15 The Lord God said unto the serpent, [Satan], I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed [Satan’s children] and her seed [Jesus]; it shall bruise your head [Luke 4:8], and you shall bruise His heel.

It was necessary that Adam and Eve, and thus all of mankind know that God would send the Savior who would defeat Satan and be the  **Deliverer** of mankind. Yes, Jesus the Messiah would ‘bruise Satan’s head’ – inflict a debilitating wound, meaning that Christ would conquer Satan. But Satan would only “bruise His heel,” meaning that crucifixion and death could not  *hold* Jesus because of the power of the resurrection.

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The bruise to the heel of Jesus Christ indicates that Satan's assault would only have a temporary effect—until God the Father brought Jesus back to life with exceeding great power (Ephesians 1:17-20)—but Christ's bruise to Satan's head shows that he will be rendered ineffective for all time. This is the first Messianic Promise of the Savior, Jesus Christ, Who would deliver us from sin.

Paul calls Jesus Christ, who is able to deliver us from sin and give eternal life, the **second man Adam**:

1 Corinthians 15:45-47 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living being; the **last Adam** [Jesus Christ] was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural [Adam]; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the **second man** is the Lord from heaven.

### **father Satan**

This Genesis 3:15 prophecy speaks of the resulting hatred that exists between Satan and the woman – and the hatred that the **children of Satan** have toward Jesus Christ—who is the progeny of Mother Eve. There was enmity, hatred and hostility between the serpent and the woman because it is Satan's aim to destroy mankind from the Plan of God—from becoming the eternal Children of God. Jesus explained that those who reject God's way have Satan as their father:

John 8:42-44 Jesus said unto them, If **God were your Father**, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me... You are of **your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father you will do.

**God's Holy Spirit** was available to Adam and Eve but they rejected it—thereby cutting mankind off from God's presence (Isaiah 59:2). The Tree of Life represents the spiritual component missing in mankind's nature, which is the very "Life" of God. Had Adam and Eve chosen the Tree of Life, God Himself would have been the **Patriarch of mankind's family tree**. Instead, they chose Satan—making him their father (John 8:42-44). The relationship between God and His creation was broken. Only the Messiah could restore man's relationship to God.

Every human being has sinned on his own account! Everyone is responsible for, and guilty of his own sins. Adam failed to overcome Satan. Adam's failure allowed Satan to remain in power over this earth.

### **Prince of this World**

The sin of Adam and Eve brought the following consequences: First, it cut mankind off from the Tree of Life and secondly, it brought the death penalty on all human beings (Genesis 2:17; Hebrews 9:27; Romans 6:23). Now mankind is incessantly bombarded with Satan's **nature**—that of an evil attitude **through the air**. Paul demonstrates that Christ has provided Christians with the protection of His air-raid shelter:

Ephesians 2:1-2 You have been saved alive, who were as good as dead in your trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince** [Satan] of the **power of the air**, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:

Man's nature must be changed from a **carnal sinful nature** to be able to share in the very nature of God – divine nature. Paul tells us that before conversion...

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Ephesians 2:3 ...We all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others are.

How are God's converted people able to be on such a different wave-length than that which the multiple billions of people all around the earth are tuned into? The answer is that no one is able to know the things of God except by the Spirit of God. The natural man of the world is unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are absurd to him – he is utterly unable to understand them because they are [only] spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Satan is responsible for the human matters of this world—**death**, war, crime, disease, famine, violence, vengeance and hatred. Jesus calls Satan the deceiver, the **prince of the world** (John 14:30, 16:11, Revelation 12:9).

Until a person is called by God, had his mind opened, and been empowered by God's Spirit - he yields to his **carnal human nature** and is totally unable to submit to God's way:

Romans 8:7 The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

However, with conversion, man begins to change and move toward God.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

### **The Tree of Life is Still Offered**

The Tree of Life is about God's Holy Spirit. Without God's Spirit being imputed to a man, it is impossible for him to understand spiritual knowledge which is spiritually discerned. Paul tells us:

1 Corinthians 2:14 The worldly man is unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are nonsense unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Like a man with one eye; he thinks that he sees everything a two-eyed man sees—and yet there is a dimension missing. God is not creating man for this physical realm – but ultimately for the eternal spiritual realm. Mankind is being created to eventually be made into the image of God—and God is Spirit (John 4:24). God is in the process of bringing us to fullness and completion. We do not yet possess His eternal spirit Life. Mankind is being created to be in the Family of God – not with human life – but with God Life. Jesus promised:

Revelation 2:7 ... To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The converted saints of God's Church are the only ones who are able to come to the truth vis-à-vis God's Spirit. Vis-à-vis is a French phrase that means "as regards," but interestingly, it also means "face to face," as in, *the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend* (Exodus 33:11). Therefore, God's Spirit makes a real relationship with Him possible. Because we are yet fleshly beings we cannot see God the Father or Jesus Christ. However, John reveals that we will see God as He is.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are now the Children of God – but there is more to come and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as he is.

Paul tells the Church brethren that they have only a partial knowledge at this time, but like Moses, they too shall see God face to face (1 Corinthians 13:9-12), and a genuinely close relationship with God changes us to be like God. After we die we will not retain our flesh and blood bodies, but in place of our physical bodies, we will be changed into Spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:44). The physical body will see corruption [rot] in the grave (1 Corinthians 15:42, 50). It will be only the part of us that has put on Godliness that will be resurrected by His Spirit that dwells in you.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him [God the Father] who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.

God's eternal Spiritual Family is open to all those who live by His Spirit. That is man's destiny – his incredible human potential – to be like God. God's Family is not a closed family unit of three persons as Satan would have us believe, but many are being called into God's glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Most importantly, it is necessary to understand what God's Holy Spirit is. The Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden represents God's Spirit – God's Life – God's Family tree – even His eternal Life.

### **Messianic Prophecy**

In the same way that destruction followed the angelic rebellion, destruction also followed the sin of Adam and Eve. They were thrust from the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, it constituted the **foundation of this present evil world**. The Plan of God again suffered a temporary impediment, and it came at a great cost: God the Father would have to willingly yield up—that is literally sacrifice His Son. Jesus would have to die—in order for man to have access to eternal life (Revelation 13:8).

Galatians 1:4 [Jesus] Who **gave Himself** for our sins, that He might deliver us from this **present evil world**, according to the **will of God** and our Father.

Acts 2:23-24 [Jesus], being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be held by death.

1 Corinthians 15:21 For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead.

Our entering into the Kingdom of God is what the Gospel is all about. All hope was lost when Adam and Eve rejected the way to eternal life. The promise that life eternal would be available to mankind once again is what the Gospel is about. Life eternal can take place only in the Kingdom of God. That is why Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.

### **God So Loved the World**

John 3:16-17 God so loved the world, that He delivered up His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

God the Father and Jesus Christ knew that only a sacrifice of Godly proportions could save mankind. Together they each agreed to make that **inestimable sacrifice**. God the Father would yield His Son to be slain, and the Son would give His life. Only Jesus Christ – the Creator of all things – was worthy to pay the price of all iniquity. He who creates something is always worth more than that which he made. God the Father and Jesus Christ determined to make this necessary sacrifice before they commenced with the creation of mankind – **before the foundation of the world** ensuring that even Adam and Eve along with all their descendants would be covered by Christ's sacrifice.

Ephesians 1:3-4 God the Father has chosen us in our Lord Jesus Christ **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:

1 Peter 1:19-21 [We were redeemed] with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained **before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Hebrews 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the **foundation of the world** (*kosmos*); but now, once at the end of the ages (*aion*), He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

## **Before the Foundation of the World**

When Adam and Eve sinned they established for mankind a nature of sinfulness, ushering in an entirely new age. Thus began what is referred to as the foundation of this present evil world (Galatians 1:4). There is a difference between the foundation of the *kosmos* and the foundation of the planet. *Kosmos* means all that makes up the world with its inhabitants – as when Jesus said of the people of God, "You are the Light of the *world*." (Matthew 5:14)

Ephesians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He has chosen us in Him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:

2 Timothy 1:9 God has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to **His own Plan** and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before time began**.

God's Plan of Salvation for mankind was instituted in the very beginning – well **before** man sinned. The sin of Adam and Eve necessitated the coming of the Savior to vanquish and replace Satan so that God would ultimately be the Father of mankind.

The Bible is replete with clear-cut illustrations of the Plan of God having been inaugurated prior to mankind's existence—its inception having been established before man sinned at the **foundation of the world** (*kosmos*).

John 17:5, 24) O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was... Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for you loved me **before the foundation of the world**.

## **Jesus Slain From the Foundation of the World**

At the point in time when Adam allowed Satan to become **his father** the nature of this present evil world was established. That "nature" was the **foundation of this present evil world**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The “foundation of the World” is not a good thing because that is when everything went awry. Because of Adam’s failure to choose the Tree of Life, Jesus would have to come and save mankind. He would have to be sacrificed and die in order for man to be able to live eternal life. Jesus is:

Revelation 13:8 ... The Lamb **slain from the foundation of the world**.

When God created Adam and Eve He presented them with a most important decision to make—their future fate. “Which **family tree** would they choose to be a part of?” They chose the wrong family! That terrible decision cut them off from the Spirit of God, His **divine nature** and Eternal Life. Adam and Eve took on **Satan’s nature** for themselves and their children. All mankind was complicit with Adam and Eve, being in their loins when they sinned (Hebrews 7:10). And, in the same way, all children were also de facto evicted from the Garden. The sin of Adam and Eve **separated** them and all their offspring from God the Father. Man’s relationship with his Creator was severed and broken.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have **separated** between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

The age-old question then became, “How could sinful man be restored to a right relationship with his Creator?” Man was entirely incompetent to deliver himself from sin. For example: A murderer is totally unable to restore the life of his victim—he cannot pay for his sin.

Only God the Father, by giving up His Son as a sin offering in the form of sinful flesh, could condemn sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

In order for man to be able to disown Satan as his chosen father, the Son of God had to take on the **nature of man** so that man might partake of **God’s divine nature**. God the Father promised to send His Son—the Messiah through whom He would reconcile the world **unto Himself**—becoming their Father, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Corinthians 5:19).

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the **divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

## **Fully God**

The Plan of God is for man to become God. The concept is not new. Peter spoke of man’s taking on the glory of **divine nature** (2 Peter 1:3-4). Early apostate theologians liked to put big names on straight forward Biblical concepts—like “Deification” and “Theosis.” The Trinitarian, Athanasius of Alexandria, wrote of Christ, “He was incarnate that we might be made God.” The problem is that the true nature of God was not understood by those false religious leaders. When both the Nature of God and the Plan of God are understood, it is correct to say that God became fully human so that humans would become **fully God**.

Philippians 2:6 Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was **made in the likeness of men**: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying of Jesus, “You shall call His name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, **God with us**” (Matthew 1:20-23). Jesus Christ set aside His Godly glory and took on our human nature (John 17:5).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise **took part in the same**.

Romans 8:3 What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son [Jesus Christ] in the likeness of **sinful flesh** [human nature], and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

### **Sin Enters the World—Man Must Die**

Genesis 3:5, 7 God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil... And **the eyes of them both were opened**, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Yes, **their eyes were opened** to greed, lust, hate and the effects of sin. Adam and Eve rejected God. This step in the Plan of God begins to show where mankind is without God. Whereas God withholds no good thing from us (Psalm 84:11), Satan costs us everything – even our life. Therefore, we are in need of a Savior. Without a Savior, mankind would be eradicated from the face of the earth forever. That is the ultimate result of sin.

### **The Plan for the Ages**

The knowledge of the Plan of God has not been made known to the great throngs of the children of Adam and Eve all around the world—they remain in the dark. The only understanding that their minds are capable of comprehending is strictly limited to what they can ascertain through their five senses. However, God has **revealed His Plan** to His Children through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). We have seen earlier how God communicates His Plan to His Children by way of the responsive spirit He has given only to them. The great mass of humanity is able to read these Biblical words and still not grasp God's incredible endeavor which is the on-going Plan of God.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit of God bears witness **with our spirit**, that we are the Children of God:

That is why the **Plan of God** is known to only a scattered few true believers on the earth today. Throughout these past 6,000 years of man's existence only a relatively few people have been called into God's spiritual creation—which begins with the receiving of a token or earnest of God's Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Genesis Chapter One records the chronicle of the period or action covering the Plan of God having to do with the earth's splendid renewal, and re-creation—and establishment of man in his innocence.

As surprising as it may seem, man was created as an incomplete person. There is a missing dimension that needs to be added so that man can properly control his thoughts and the actions they produce. That is because God has made it necessary for man to want to be in His Family. Man has an integral part in developing in himself the fear of God. As created, there is an element lacking in man's thinking, an element that needs to be added to man's heart and psyche so that man can properly control his thoughts and the actions they produce. The Bible reveals that God has promised to give His people the knowledge, understanding and the power of His Holy Spirit to rightly manage and control how to think, feel and behave. With God's Spirit man is enabled and even desires to choose correctly – having the rebellious spirit of the human mind restrained and brought under control by the Holy Spirit to the mind and will of God.

## **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**

There was another tree—a second unique tree—that was also set significantly in the center of the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:9). Adam and Eve chose to partake of the fruit of the **tree of knowledge of good and evil**. Their eyes were immediately opened (Genesis 3:7). They embarked on a lifestyle of self-assurance, self-pleasing, self-righteousness, and self-gratification. They became selfish and self-centered. The fruit of that tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise—that is, giving them the knowledge of good and evil. They were capable of being generous on occasion, but that after having provided for their own security. They chose to bless themselves rather than depend on the blessings of God. Adam and Eve became what we see in man today—**human nature**—a mixture of good and evil.

## **Godly Character**

Man was given complete freedom to choose for himself. Would man choose to be the Children of God or the children of Satan? Without **Godly character**, Adam and Eve took of the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. As a result—man would surely die. Adam and Eve had been warned, but they chose to rule this world by their own wiles instead of looking to God for proper direction. A terrible set of events were set in motion—beginning with their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. To our human mind, this stage in the Plan of God seems like a terrible setback. These past six-thousand years of war, disease and death are enough to convince anyone that our original parents chose incorrectly. God in His wisdom knew that man must endure trials and tests in order to be able to build righteous **Godly character** (Hebrews 12:6). The most important spiritual accomplishment for man in this life is the development of Godly character. It is only through God's Spirit that Godly character can be developed.

It is a truism, "The hottest fires produce the finest steel." The greatest struggles are able to produce the best quality of character in a man. God tests the moral fiber, backbone and mettle of a man. Genuine refined character is forged in the fires of adversity, and stoked by the sacrifices of intense pressure, hard work and difficult decisions. Formidable character cannot simply be wished for, desired or handed down from father to son. The sons of empire builders and business moguls hardly ever fare as well as their magnate fathers—because they have not endured the hardships. The apostle Paul certainly understood that **strong character** could not be created out of thin air, so he thanked God for the character building opportunities He sent:

Romans 5:3-4 ...We glory in our sufferings also: knowing that hardship produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope:

At some point everyone must be tested and tried; not for the purpose of being broken but to grow ever stronger. Before anyone can enter the Kingdom of God they will be tested but not consumed.

Isaiah 43:2 When thou pass through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame consume you.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested over and above what you are able to bear; but will with the trial also provide a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

God will know the measure of every man and the quality of his character. Indeed, that is why Satan will be released for a short time after the Millennium—in order to try and test the character of those who have had life so easy (Revelation 20:7-8).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Adam and Eve's sin was a big turning point in the Plan of God, but before launching into their Plan, God the Father and Jesus had made absolutely certain that their Plan was perfect and fail-safe. They had contingencies for every eventuality. The Father and Jesus had an alternative course of action in place to allow for interruptions, such as the sin of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 2:16-17 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou may freely eat: But of the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof you shall surely die.

### **Human Nature**

The Garden of Eden contained two trees; a very special tree, the Tree of Life, and another tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of these trees would determine the very **nature of mankind**. Which would Adam and Eve choose? Paul explains that Eve was deceived and utterly seduced by Satan:

2 Corinthians 11:3 I fear, lest by any means, as the **serpent beguiled Eve** through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Eve had been wrongfully convinced by Satan that she would not die.

On the other hand, Adam as the head of his family unit, made a conscious and intractable decision to disregard God's clear directive which determined his nature and resulting death. Adam did this not only for himself, but for his offspring as well:

1 Timothy 2:14 **Adam was not deceived**, but the woman being thoroughly deceived was in the transgression.

The resulting **human nature** defined mankind's characteristic being and way of thinking, feeling, and acting. Human nature is **not good** – only God is good (Matthew 19:17). As a result of partaking of the wrong tree, mankind's nature became self-serving, natural, animalistic, carnal, sensual and mortal. Had Adam and Eve chosen of the Tree of Life their nature would have become a **Godly nature**. God's divine nature is caring, selfless, generous, gracious, sacrificing, forgiving, and merciful. Human nature, though being capable of occasional acts of decency, is an ungodly nature. Jesus described man's sinful heart this way:

Matthew 15:19 Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Man has a human spirit which has been imparted to the human intellect. The human spirit enables man to reason, to think, thereby separating man from the animals which have no conscience. With conversion, the **human spirit** becomes infused with the **Spirit of God**, and that person becomes a Child of God.

Adam and Eve were created dispassionate and not predisposed to good or evil. They were not inclined one way or the other. God instructed – even commanded – man in the right way to go. But at the same time He allowed Adam and Eve their own self-determination through the process by which they made the choices that would control their own lives.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Set before Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were two trees from which to choose. Had they chosen the Tree of Life, and what it represented, it would have led to the development of a “Godly nature” in them. They would have looked to God in confidence. Even while they were in the flesh with its human foibles, weaknesses and limitations, they would have cultivated Godly characteristics including kindness, self-denial, empathy, compassion, and the willingness to serve others to the point of laying down their life in self-sacrifice. The natural tendency of their progeny’s thinking, feeling, and acting would have been to **do good**. Peer pressure between siblings would have been positive.

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, **let us do good** unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

James 2:8 If you fulfil the **Royal Law** according to the Scripture, You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself, ye do well.

The Father’s calling to salvation and gift of His Spirit brings about the “conversion” of an individual from his “human nature” to a nature desirous of being Christ-like. The story is much bigger than that. Had Adam covered the sin of Eve, and stood up to Satan, he would have overcome and qualified to rule this earth in righteousness. But Adam did not do so—and that called for a second and spiritual Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

Romans 5:19 As by [Adam’s] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of [Jesus] shall many be made righteous.

Jesus, the second man Adam, **overcame human nature** being obedient to God. We saw that Jesus Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh [human nature], and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). Jesus was tested and tried on every point that man can be tempted—yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 ...Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are, yet **without sin**.

Had Jesus sinned on a single point He would have died for His own sin—just as the first man Adam did. But Jesus **grew in Godly character** by obeying God, and by suffering and striving against human nature—the same pulls of sinful flesh common to all mankind.

Hebrews 5:8 Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered.

## **What is Man**

King David asked a most philosophical question relating to the fundamental nature of mankind. “What is Man?” David prayed:

Psalm 8:4 **What is man**, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou deal with him in a caring way?

## **Sin**

Only God the Father and Jesus Christ now possess eternal life. But, God has created man for the purpose of obtaining everlasting life with Him. It is however a gift from God that is based on certain contingencies. All **sin** must be repented of and taken away through the blood of Jesus Christ and God's forgiveness. Sin is against God and His perfect moral code that brings peace to the entire universe. In no way does man somehow possess the "right" to tarnish or detract from the glory of God.

1 John 3:4 Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law**.

When man disrupts that perfect balance by interjecting disorder and disruption into God's perfect order, he becomes worthy of death (Romans 6:23). That is because human beings are totally unable to restore and repair the damage sin has brought about. If we murder—we cannot restore life. Saying, "I'm sorry," does nothing to reinstate a life. Only the perfect life of Jesus Christ—worth more than the entire universe created by His hand—can forgive sin and restore life.

John 5:26 As the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself.

Jesus willingly sacrificed His life and substituted His life for ours so that we might be saved alive from the death we so deserve. It is only that life of Jesus Christ that is able to set us free of our debt of death and bestow salvation upon us sinners. The question we must answer is, "What must be done that we might obtain this precious gift of everlasting life?"

## **The Temptation**

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Jesus Christ instructed Adam and Eve in the things of God. Adam and Eve were in turn to instruct their children. We have seen that the Tree of Life represented the spiritual component missing in mankind, the very "Life" of God. Mankind was not created with eternal life inherent in him, but with a relatively short-term mortal life. Man does not have an immortal soul. Through the Tree of Life, God was offering mankind the way to eternal life as members of the Family of God. Satan turned his ongoing assault against Adam and Eve. "What better way to get back at God than to destroy His Plan to expand His Divine Family," Satan calculated. Satan hates God, the Plan of God, and the Children of God—the very means by which the expanded Family of God is being brought to fruition. Satan's tactics are exposed in his cunning deception and temptation of Eve.

## **Paradise Lost**

In the Book of Genesis, we see that God had everything set up so perfectly for mankind – for happiness – for immunity – for health – for reproduction – for sustenance – for longevity – for sustainability – and for fulfillment.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was **very good**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

But when Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited their very lives, their wonderful home—and they were ejected from the idyllic Garden of Eden. They were also blocked by God’s angels **from** returning.

Genesis 3:22-24 The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He **drove out the man**; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.

The inability of Adam and Eve to sustain their life style in the Garden of Eden was passed down to their descendants. Nothing man-made has any lasting sustainability. Every nation grown great, which was seemingly impervious to being conquered, has ceased to exist. They may seem immovable for a little while—but all is vanity.

Isaiah 40:17 **All nations** before the Lord are as nothing; and they are counted to Him as less than nothing, and vanity.

Peoples and nations throughout history have all seen their civilizations and societies collapse and come to nothing. Adam and Eve were convinced that they could go on forever in the Garden of Eden, but they lost it all. The billions of people on earth at the time of the flood did not believe for a second that they had need of Noah’s ark to carry them over flood waters. They were washed away. Where are the great nations of yesteryear?

Ancient Nineveh did not think that anyone could penetrate their mighty defensive walls and conquer them. The Shang dynasty, and multiple Chinese dynasties, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Israel, Persia, Judah, Greece and Rome, with its many restorations, all thought they would prevail. Where is the British Empire today? The United States of America believes that it cannot be toppled.

The very Temple of God that Solomon built was destroyed, and the subsequent Temple of Herod was also torn down. Judah and Israel went into captivity. They thought to themselves, “The Temple, the Temple, we have the Temple to look to; and God would never take that away.” (Jeremiah 7:4)

Israel went into foreign captivity, and Judah also one-hundred and twenty years later for idolatry and Sabbath breaking (Ezekiel 20:21-24). Recently, Japan and Germany were both defeated – they were wrong in their estimations that they would rule the world. An end-time system of religion and political power, Babylon the Great, will also fall down in complete and utter ruin (Revelation 18:2).

Revelation 14:8 ... Babylon **is fallen**, is **fallen**, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Late last century, many in the Church of God believed that they were impervious to failing. And yet, the Worldwide Church of God fell – and great was the fall thereof. Today, in the Church of God, many also believe that they are impervious to failing.

If mankind were to die out completely, the Plan of God would be spoiled—but God’s Plan is sure. Man became needful of a Savior because sin has brought the death penalty. God knew from before the foundation of the world that mankind **would need a Savior** (Revelation 13:8).

## Plan of God - Darkness to Light

Jesus says that the time is coming when, "I will pour out my Spirit upon **all** flesh." All mankind will have the opportunity for eternal salvation (Joel 2:28). God has given mankind six thousand years to learn that man is unable to run things properly on this earth. After that, Jesus Christ will return and establish His Father's Kingdom over all the earth for a thousand years.

The vast majority of the people in the world today have never heard about the Plan of God. God has set in place a 7,000-year master Plan, which began at the re-creation of the earth, about 6,000 years ago. In fact, the seven-day week was assigned to man at the very foundation of the earth.

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote about the first 6,000 years:

"Man built his world on self-sufficiency without God. God set in motion a Master Plan for accomplishment of His purpose, consisting of a duration of seven thousand years. Satan was allowed to remain on earth's throne for [only] the first six thousand years. God purposed that man must learn his lesson, and come voluntarily to accept God's way and character. For nearly six thousand years mankind has been writing that lesson. But even at this late hour he has not yet learned it. He has not yet given up on his own self-centered way and come to accept God's way to his ultimate happiness."

(Herbert W. Armstrong "Mystery of the Ages" 1985)

Man falls on his face over and over again. Of course the world does not understand what is taking place because it does not know about the seven thousand year Plan of God. God provides a brief synopsis of His Plan in the Book of Exodus. It is an astute picture of six thousand years of labored hardship followed by a glorious 1,000 years of peaceful rest. That is the time when Jesus will rule over all the earth.

Exodus 20:11 In **six days** the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and **rested** the **seventh** day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, making it holy.

### 7,000 – 6,000

God established His 7,000-year master Plan which began at the re-creation of the earth. The Church of God has always believed and taught that the earth is billions of years old, but when Satan rebelled the earth became *tohu*, *bohu*, and *choshek* – without form, void and dark. The Earth was certainly not created by God in worthless disorder and darkness, but it was made as a beautiful habitat for humanity.

Isaiah 45:18 Thus said the Lord who created the heavens; God Himself that **formed the earth** and made it; He has established it, He created it **not in vain**, He formed it to be **inhabited**.

During Christ's ministry the apostles did not understand the 7,000 year plan of God. After His death, they believed that Jesus would imminently establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Luke 19:11 As [the disciples] heard these things, He [Jesus] added and spoke a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because [the disciples] thought that the Kingdom of God **should immediately appear**.

The disciples were wrong about Jesus returning immediately to set up His Father's Kingdom. Even after Christ's death and resurrection – the apostles did not immediately understand...

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Acts 1:6 When they [Christ and the apostles] therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou **at this time** restore again the Kingdom to Israel?

Peter and John's writings show that later the apostles better understood the thousand year Millennium to come. Then, the New Testament Church was able to understand the 7,000-year Plan of God and the symbolism of the creation week, the seventh day Sabbath, and God's Holy Days.

The early church came to understand that when God re-created the face of the earth in seven days it was a prophetic picture of the Plan of God. They realized that the first six days of the week showed that God allotted 6,000 years for humanity to go its own way in order for man to learn the futility of his way. Then they understood that the seventh day – the Sabbath – pictured God allotting an additional 1,000 years of “rest” when Jesus Christ would begin ruling over all the earth. God rested on the seventh day after creation, picturing, not only the weekly Sabbath rest, but also the **Millennial rest** at the end of the first six thousand years of God's Plan for mankind (Exodus 20:11). With the seven-day week clearly in mind, Peter wrote:

2 Peter 3:8 ...One day is with the Lord **as a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day.

### **Man's Nature Changed to God's Nature**

With Christian conversion, our human nature, our sinful heart, our devious mind is reigned in—brought under control and led by God's Spirit (Romans 8:14). But the world is not yet convinced that it needs to repent and turn back to God. Only with God's direct intervention can a man come out of this present evil world. Satan has bound this world and blocked man's mind from receiving the glorious Gospel truth. Paul revealed how truth is able to change man's carnal nature, but God hides the Truth from **unbelievers**:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 If our Gospel be **hidden**, it is obscured to them that **are lost**: Those whom the God of this world has **blinded** the minds of them which **believe not**, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (John 12:40)

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.

This world does not resemble God's beautiful Garden of Eden at all. Take a snap shot of today's society – and what will you find? Widespread hate, poverty, ignorance, immorality, crime, war and misery, confusion, deceit, anger, pride, hate, foolishness, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy, rebellion, disobedience—**lawlessness**. Satan is doing his dirty work. He influences people toward hate, anger, selfishness, violence, competition, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, murder and deceit. Therein is the origin of hate and enmity against God.

Romans 8:7 The carnal mind is **hateful toward God**: for it is not subject to the **law of God**, neither indeed can be.

In the Old Testament Jeremiah was shown how utterly dishonest human nature is—everyone walking after the imagination of his evil heart (Jeremiah 16:12).

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Paul puts it this way:

Romans 3:23 For all have **sinned**, and come short of the **glory of God**.

Jesus spelled out the proclivities of man without the influence of God's Spirit when He said:

Mark 7:21-23 From within, out of the **heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, malicious motivation, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within [carnal nature], and defile the man.

God makes it abundantly clear that the very **nature of man** must be changed. But how can that momentous change be brought about? The answer is that man must put on **Godliness**.

2 Peter 1:3 According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath **called us to glory and virtue**.

## **Savior**

Satan's triumph over Adam and Eve brought about an impending destruction of mankind and a disruption in the very Plan of God. God's Plan is to replicate Himself through mankind. Why did Satan's deception of Adam and Eve mean that Christ had to be born? The Savior had to be born because mankind would have been eternally lost—cut off from God—had not Jesus come to earth and allowed Himself to be sacrificed. Jesus died to pay the penalty of man's sins which began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Without His death – we would still be in our guilt. We would not be reconciled to God the Father. But, we are saved by Jesus Christ's life (Romans 5:10). Adam and Eve's demise necessitated a Savior of mankind who would not only qualify to replace Satan, but who would redeem—buy back—Adam, Eve and their children who had come short of salvation.

God's Plan for mankind included the necessity of a Savior—a Redeemer of mankind—to buy man back into a restored relationship with his God. It was **sin** that came between man and God, and ruined man's perfect relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2). Paul explained to the Galatians that mankind would have to be **retrieved and saved** from the inherent weakness of its humanity before people could become God-like. Jesus came to this earth to be sacrificed unto death and raised unto Life in order for mankind to be reconciled to God the Father after making the wrong choice in the Garden of Eden. In Chapter Five we will examine the Scriptures to find what God tells us about the **Fullness of Time** when His Son would come to this earth as man's Savior to make us Children of God.

Galatians 4:3-7 When we were children in bondage under the elements of the world the **Fullness of the Time** came, God **sent forth His Son**... to redeem them that were under the [penalty of the] law, that we might receive the son-ship of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a **Child of God**; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

## **1,000 Year Life Span**

God originally designed the lifespan of the human body to be **one thousand years** on an ideal earth. Had Adam and Eve not sinned they would have lived a millennium—followed by their resurrection. But, the introduction of sin into the lives of Adam and Eve took its toll and began immediately to erode man's lifespan. The Bible tells us that Adam lived 930 years, Seth 912 years, Methuselah 969, and Noah lived 950 years. Sin took its toll and they died just short of the one-thousand-year mark. In addition, the flood of Noah's day changed the weather and atmosphere. After the flood, the environment of the earth became vastly different (Genesis 9:12-14). We find that after the flood Shem's lifespan decreased to only 600 years (Genesis 11:10-11). God has preserved those numbers for us. Gathering from his life-span, the ancient devout Job most likely lived between the time of Noah's flood and the calling of Abraham. Job lived to be approximately 250 years old. After the flood God allowed the **lifespan of man** to rapidly decrease by 90% in about ten generations—from nearly 1000 years down to less than a hundred years.

## **The Plan of God is to Reproduce Himself**

God is creating perfect holy and righteous character, like unto His own, in His true called out ones [*'ekklesia'*]. His Plan includes our being spiritually born into His eternal Family. Right now, those who are converted are only begotten and not yet born into everlasting life—but are already counted as God's children and heirs with Jesus Christ.

At baptism, a Christian becomes a child of God – possessing the Father's name. God shows us the process of becoming a child of God the Father.

2 Corinthians 6:18 I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

A Christian baptism includes: Baptism **into the Father's name**, baptism into Jesus Christ's name (same name), and baptism into the Spirit (same spiritual life as God – "God is Spirit." (John 4:24).

As Christians, when each of us began our physical life, we acquired our **dad's last name** or **surname name**. In the same way, at our baptism and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit we began to put on God's spiritual life. As a new son or daughter of God, we spiritually acquired our **Father's name** (1 John 3:2). We became Children **of God**. The night before He died, Jesus prayed for us to be guarded and protected in the **Father's name**. Jesus asked of His Father:

John 17:11 Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, **keep through thine own name** those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

1 John 3:2 **Now** we are the **Children of God**.

## **Godly Character**

God prepared the face of the earth for man to be able to develop into the express image, divine nature, character and likeness of God. This step is necessary because Godly spiritual character cannot be created by decree or edict. Godly character must be built of free will. It must be desired and developed over time, and shaped by pressure, experience, trial and choice—until a man comes to see the true ways of God, and to know that there is a penalty for sin.

Genesis 1:26 God said, Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness**:

In the process of building Godly character, corruptible man puts on the image and likeness of God so that he may be resurrected into God's immortal Family (1 Corinthians 15:53).

1 Corinthians 15:49 As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the **image of the heavenly**.

When Paul says that we will also bear the image of the heavenly, he is speaking of the first resurrection when we will no longer bear the image of 'human nature,' but instead be given a 'divine nature' deferentially similar in Spirit and character to that of God (2 Peter 1:4). Notwithstanding, the Godly attributes of wisdom, holiness, power, etc., will eternally exceed our station in His Kingdom. This will take place when God's Spirit with exceeding great power changes us at our resurrection (Ephesians 1:19).

When all is said and done, there will be nothing physical remaining of the former man. Nothing will remain of man except the Spirit of God that has been ascribed to the spirit in man. God is elevating the human spirit by infusing in man's character a token of His Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5). We are instructed to become perfect and complete just as our Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). To reign and rule throughout the Millennium with Jesus Christ, we must possess the character to always choose in a Godly manner (Revelation 5:10). God in His wisdom knows that man must endure trials and tests in order to be able to attain to righteous Godly character. God is reproducing His goodness and character in us – and that is what will remain – forever!

## **Secret Plan of God Revealed**

Matthew 13:34-35 All these [parables of the Kingdom] spoke Jesus... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been **kept secret** from the **foundation of the world**.

Jesus here is making known His thoughts from the **beginning**; words He had inspired David to write some one-thousand years earlier.

Psalms 78:2-4 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings **of old**: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God the Father has revealed His long held secret Plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ. God in His wisdom knew before the heavens and earth were created that man would not be able to live a perfect life—but be a sinful being. Without God's Spirit in him, man would be utterly incapable of remaining faithful to God. So God knew that it would become necessary to send a Savior who would atone for the sins of mankind that he might be delivered from the penalty of sin. The Savior would become the atoning sacrifice that would pay for the sins of the world. It was a foregone conclusion that one day—in the **fullness of time**—Jesus, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, would be sent to the world to die for the sins of mankind.

### **Wickedness of Man**

Genesis 3:7 The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Man's innocence came to an abrupt end necessitating the requirement of deliverance. "Salvation" was needed by man – and man's salvation was also required for the Plan of God to succeed! Mankind, except for a comparatively small righteous line of men who walked with God, and called upon the name of the Lord, went against God until that hopeless way of life resulted in the great flood that wiped man from the face of the earth – save eight souls (Genesis 4:26, 5:22, 7:1).

Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the **wickedness of man** was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

After the flood man's nature remained still evil...

Genesis 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of **man's heart is evil** from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.

All of mankind still possesses sinful human nature. God is calling some out of the world and given them a measure of His Spirit. God's Spirit coupled with conversion and character is able to subdue the tendencies of the flesh. Paul spoke of the ongoing struggle to overcome our carnality:

Romans 7:14-15 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

So, how can a Christian prevail against who and what he is? Paul answers:

Romans 7:24-25 O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank **God through Jesus Christ our Lord**. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Yes, it is Jesus Christ who delivers the one who is a Christian—the one who has become **a new person with a new nature**:

2 Corinthians 5:5, 17 Now He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the **earnest of the Spirit**... Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, **all things** are become new.

## **The Temporary Creation**

Peter quotes Isaiah saying that even **this earth** and **the heavens** will roll up as a scroll and cease to exist:

Isaiah 34:4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:

2 Peter 3:10-13 The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (11) Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be** in all holy conduct and Godliness, (12) Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth**, wherein dwells righteousness.

Brethren, these things are not meant to terrify us. Sometimes the Church brethren are living in abject fear – thinking that these things will befall us. The Father will not let any of these things touch His precious children.

Psalms 91:10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.

We have an impenetrable wall of protection around us – provided by God.

Luke 21:17-18 You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

## **Garden of Eden Closed and Vacated**

Genesis 3:22-23 The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: (23) Therefore the Lord God **sent him forth** from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

## **Man Cast Out**

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim, and a **flaming sword** which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.

That impassable barrier to the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life meant that not only could Adam and Eve not return to the Garden of Eden, but their children and their children's children were also denied access to the Tree of Life as well. The Tree of Life would have opened man's mind to the Plan of God. All mankind was thus deprived of God's Holy Spirit until a **Savior** would open the way. Paul gives us one of the lessons that we should take away from Adam and Eve's experience. In the same way that their disobedience kept them out of the Garden of Eden, man's sin excludes him from God's Kingdom:

1 Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the Garden of Eden God had freely offered the prospect of eternal life to Adam and Eve. When they sinned, not only was the potential of eternal life removed, death was insured. The concept of death was hard to grasp, but when Cain killed Abel his brother, the realization of death began to set in for Adam and Eve. God revealed the religious practice of animal sacrifices and offerings in worship to Himself. Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God – Cain's was not (Genesis 4:4-5).

Genesis 4:8 Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

With Abel's murder, the consciousness of death occurring became not only evident, but inevitable **for everyone**. There are no graves in the Garden of Eden—only life.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; therefore **death passed upon all men**, because all have likewise sinned.

The children of Adam and Eve began to fill the earth. The righteous line extended from Seth to Noah (Genesis 4:25) while the offspring of Cain were banished (Genesis 4:11-14).

### **Iniquity Comes to the Full**

Genesis 6:5-7 GOD saw that the **wickedness of man was great** in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (6) And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. (7) And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for I regret that I made them.

God's regret was that the crooked course of man was not in accordance with His Plan to bring many sons and daughters to glory. The world, both man and beast, was being entirely ruined! It was so off course that it was about to derail any future restoration of a society with which God would be able to draw His flock. The destruction of the earth's surface had become necessary – and we will see in Chapter Six of this book that another destruction is imminent—**all flesh** will die, except a small number for God's purposes!

Genesis 6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for **all flesh had corrupted His way** upon the earth. (13) And God said unto **Noah**, The end of **all flesh** is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

### **Great Flood**

Genesis 7:4 God said, I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

The earth was **full of sin**, iniquity and every kind of violence. God promised Noah that he and his family would not be destroyed in the great flood. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and thy entire house into the ark; for thee have I seen **righteous before me** in this generation." (Genesis 7:1) Satan's influence on the world resulted in the great flood. God protected Noah and his family from the flood waters, and from an even greater threat – Satan himself. Satan's greatest desire was to destroy all mankind; and thereby cut short the very Plan of God of bringing many sons and daughters into the glory of His Kingdom.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the same way that God would put a **hedge of protection** around Job (Job 1:10), He acted to restrain Satan's powers so that he could not destroy the last eight people enclosed in the ark. Jesus dogmatically laid the law down to Satan and the demons that they could not unleash their evil powers on mankind until the time of the end.

1 Peter 3:18-20 Jesus Christ went by the Spirit of God and preached unto the [demon] spirits in *tartarus*; (20) Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God **waited in the days of Noah**, while the ark was being built, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The Devil and the demons have had their power curbed on this earth until the time of the great tribulation when Satan's wrath will be released in a drastic way such that no one would be saved alive – except for Christ's intervention to save the chosen elect (Matthew 24:22, Mark 13:20).

### **Blameless and Upright Job**

The Book of Job gives evidence that there were men who lived righteously and uprightly after the flood. Before God called Abraham He worked with Job in a very special way. Job is possibly the oldest book in the Bible. Job's lifespan places him just about half-way between the flood and Abraham's day.

It is hard to say exactly when Job lived because he is not in the direct righteous line of the Patriarchs—yet lived a life of righteousness. He possessed and understood the things God had revealed up to the eleventh chapter of Genesis. The account of Job's life discloses a treasure trove of faith, culture and scientific data for that interim period. Amazingly, Job even understood the extent of God's Plan shown by the **resurrections** (Job 14:14).

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was **perfect and upright**, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

But Job lost sight of God and the fullness of His sovereignty. He accused God of being unfair and unjust. In his own mind, Job's attitude placed him above God by denying that He had the right to deal with Job as He saw best. Because he did not know God, Job justified himself rather than justifying God (Job 32:2).

Though it was Satan who brought all the sore trials on Job, God is the one who ultimately allowed the torment of his loss of family, business and health to take place so that Job could learn the spiritual lesson of God's sovereignty and benevolence. Job could rightly say to his friends that God had touched him (Job 19:21). Job's trial and chastening bore good fruit. God loved Job. Job was not entirely righteous at the time the book begins. The very reason for Job's trial was because God knew that Job could and **would do even better!**

It is God who reveals that Job was eventually righteous (Ezekiel 14:20). God in His infinite wisdom intervened in Job's life in order to further the process of Job's **spiritual growth**. After suffering affliction, and in **endurance**, Job's resulting righteousness shows that God patiently waited for the precious fruit of conversion in his life.

James 5:11 ...You have heard of the **endurance of Job**, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

## **Spirit Realm**

The Book of Job shows human nature at work – until God intervenes and supplants that lethal course by His Spirit. Speaking of the earth and the visible creation, the Book of Job speaks of a past time when the entire **angelic realm** worked and labored together in unison and close harmony:

Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof;

The answer of course is that it was God who fashioned all the physical universe—and the angels witnessed that creation.

Job 38:7 When the **morning stars** [angels] sang together, and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy?

God started by creating the vast **angelic realm** before the creation of the physical universe – this earth, the sun, the moon and the billions of stars. Each angel was imbued with an individual aptitude, capacity to perform, and specific talents with which to support and advance the Plan of God—even to the furtherance of mankind as ministering spirits.

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all **ministering spirits**, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

## **The Promise to Abraham**

With the Promise to Abraham, God established the **Old Testament Church**. Jesus Christ is called both Prophet and Messenger to the Church in the Wilderness.

Acts 7:37-38 ...A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear. This is He, that was in the **Church in the Wilderness** with the Messenger which spoke to Moses in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Ancient Israel, except for a few chosen people, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets, did not have a reconciled relationship with God the Father. Israel had not receive the Spirit of God. God chose Israel to be a very special people unto Him (Deuteronomy 14:2):

## **Covenant Sacrifice**

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: (2) And I will make of thee a **great nation**, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and you shall be a blessing: (3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curses thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 12:7 The LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your children will I give this land:

About ten years later, when Abram was about eighty-five years old, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. During the dark portion of Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib, God showed Abram the nighttime stars in the sky and **promised** him innumerable descendants:

Genesis 15:5 [God] brought [Abram] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and **count the stars**, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Abram, (he was not named Abraham until the advanced age of 99), asked God to **assure him** that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him, seeing that he had no children yet. God stipulated the provisions of the **Sacrificial Covenant**, making it clear that He would not deviate from its terms. God **promised** Abram, with an incontrovertible oath, that he would become a great nation (Genesis 12:2, 7). Then God promised Abraham that he would become a father of **many nations** (Genesis 17:5). Was it possible for Abram to grasp the full spiritual aspects of Genesis 15:5? Just so we do not miss the implication here – Paul spells it out for us in Galatians 3 – that these future children are not all Abraham’s physical children – but they also include all those who become **spiritual** children – through Christ.

### **One Seed—Christ**

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his **seed** were the promises made. [God] did not say, “And unto seeds, as of many; but **as of one**, and to thy seed,” **which is Christ**.

The one seed, the spiritual offspring of Abraham, is Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Galatians 3:29 If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, **and heirs according to the promise**.

Abram showing some trepidation because he yet remained childless at an advanced age, and remembering God’s prodigious promise which was remarkably great in extent, asked God how He was going to perform His promise (Genesis 12:7):

Genesis 15:2, 8 Abram said, Lord GOD, what will you give me, seeing I go childless... whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

The **Covenant of Promise** to Abram was ratified by God with a **Covenant Sacrifice**. We will see in Chapter Five how Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of His life provided the ratification of the New Covenant.

Jesus Christ asked Abram to prepare a sacrifice on Passover afternoon in preparation for the **Covenant Sacrifice**. It was the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of the year at the same time of day that Jesus would die on Passover Day. The 3 pm time of Christ’s death on Passover Day coincides perfectly with the sealing of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15, and upon which the New Covenant is based:

Genesis 15:9-10 And [the LORD] said unto Abram, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

Known historically as a "covenant between the parts," the parties to such a ritual would both **pass between the parts** of severed animals. In so doing, they were stating that if one (or both) of them broke the covenant agreement, they should likewise be put to death (Jeremiah 34:18-20).

In this case however, Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, was showing that **He alone** would take the penalty upon Himself—by the **sacrifice of Himself**—for mankind’s sins. That is why, as we will see, Abraham did not pass between the pieces—only God passed between the parts of the animals. Thus in this ceremony, our Lord and Savior pledged His own life to guarantee the fulfillment of that Covenant!

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This sacrifice which Abraham prepared, those slain animals, corresponded to, and symbolized **Jesus' body**, who was the ultimate sacrifice killed on Passover, and the One who made the Covenant. Notice that the timing is progressing into the **next day**, because according to God's clock the day comes to an end at sunset – and a new day begins at dusk just before the stars come out.

Genesis 15:12 And when the **sun was going down**, a trance-like sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of profound darkness fell upon him.

We will see that this takes place on The **Night to be Much Observed**. It's meaning is The **Night to be Much Replicated** (Exodus 12:40-42). Abram's deep sleep corresponds to, and symbolizes Jesus death and burial in the tomb as the Night to be Much Observed begins. The Night to be Much Observed marks the beginning of the First Day of Leavened Bread which begins at sunset.

Genesis 15:17-18 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that **passed between those pieces**. In the **same day** the LORD **made a Covenant** with Abram.

What Abraham saw was like a bright blast furnace – a brilliant shaft of light that passed through the sacrifice (Isaiah 62:1, Daniel 10:6, Exodus 19:18)! Jesus Christ made a very emphatic point of passing through the pieces of the Sacrificial Covenant. This was that oath by God Himself—the Covenant Sacrifice. Jesus said in effect, "I will give my life to bring this Covenant to fruition." Abib 15<sup>th</sup> had arrived—it was the Night to Be Much Observed and the beginning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6). The **Feasts of the Lord** are rich in symbolism and meaning of which the world is blind—and they are commanded assemblies for the Children of God.

It was none other than Jesus Himself—who appeared as a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. We find in the New Testament that Paul explains the extreme importance of this **Sacrificial Covenant** – and how it was made:

Hebrews 6:13 When God made **promise to Abraham**, because He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself.

Jesus stood in the breach when He passed between those sacrificial pieces of Genesis 15:17 and said in effect, "I will shed my blood and die, as these dead animals at my feet, to pay the price of the broken covenant." God and Abram were close enough friends, that he was made to understand that complete justification of man would require the life of One greater than everyone being justified—which could only be the Creator. When Abram witnessed this phenomenal spectacle – **he believed!!!**

The God of the Old Testament made the unilateral Sacrificial Covenant, and later as Jesus Christ in the flesh, He became the Paschal victim of that sacrifice. Jesus, in passing between the pieces of the sacrifice, prophesied His own death – in order to bring all men to salvation.

The Children of God gained their victory over sin on the exact **selfsame day** – it marks the point of salvation – victory over bondage and over death as Jesus was laid in the tomb just as The Night to be Much Observed began.

The Sacrificial Covenant was the sign or miracle that Jesus would surely keep His oath to Abraham to provide him with children that would be in number as the stars in the sky and the sand of the seas.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

We find a number of examples where God made an **Eternal Covenant** that He alone could fulfill the terms thereof. Another time was the occasion when Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Again, it was rich in prophetic meaning in that it foreshadowed God the Father offering His Son, Jesus Christ in sacrifice. Again, God **swore by Himself**:

Genesis 22:15-18 The Messenger of the LORD [Jesus Christ] called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, (16) And said, **By myself have I sworn**, said the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: (17) That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; (18) And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice.

### **Night to Be Much Remembered**

This Night of Solemn Observance is often replicated and repeated in the Plan of God because it is a most important time to God. Abram met with Melchizedek king of Salem as Passover began with the arrival of Abib 14<sup>th</sup>. One thing the Church brethren have come to understand is the precise timing of Biblical events as they are performed by God. God does things in a precise manner in order to emphasize His great Plan of Salvation. Note the Passover symbols used by Melchizedek:

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and He was the Priest of the most high God.

Paul compares Jesus to Melchizedek—because Melchizedek was none other than Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 7:1 This Melchisedec, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

### **Replications of the Night of Solemn Observance**

The beginning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6) pinpoints an important time when very special things are accomplished on the “**selfsame day**” in order to lay emphasis on the great **Plan of God**. Because of their great significance they should be studied by all who seek to understand the Plan of God:

- 1) The same day the LORD made a Covenant with Abram (Genesis 15:18).
- 2) Israel went out of Egypt on the same exact night! (Deuteronomy 16:1).
- 3) Israel entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10-11).
- 4) Jesus was laid in the tomb (John 19:31, 42).

Exodus 12:41 It came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the **selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:42 It is a **Night of Solemn Observance** unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD **to be observed** of all the children of Israel in their generations.

## **Covenants**

Our God is a God of covenants. In addition to this most important covenant with **Abraham** (The unilateral and unconditional **Sacrificial Covenant** that Abram witnessed in Genesis 15:18) showing that all nations on earth would be blessed physically and spiritually through him, there were many other types of covenants that God made in the Old Testament. Some of them are:

The **Rainbow Covenant** with which God promises not to destroy all flesh from the face of the earth with a flood (Genesis 9:9-17)

The **Covenant of Race and Grace** made to Abram (Genesis 12:1-3)

The **Covenant of Peace** (Numbers 25:12; Ezekiel 34:25)

Ezekiel 37:26 Moreover I will make a Covenant of Peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

**The Circumcision Covenant:** Circumcision was a physical sign or token of the covenant that God made with Abraham. Circumcision on the eighth day signified that the person had entered into the Old Covenant with God. Circumcision set apart the Israelites giving them a national identity—making them the people of God. The world remains confused because of the lack of distinction between **Israel** and **Judah**—the Jews. Israel consists of all twelve tribes, whereas the Jews constitute only **one** of the twelve tribes. It is important to know who **Israel** is when the Bible uses that term. The Bible is written about the people Israel and God's intervention and interaction with that nation of people. The Bible says little about the modern state of Israel; do not be confused. For the most part in the Scriptures, other nations – gentile nations – are mentioned as they come into contact with the people of Israel. This single fact makes it impossible for most people to understand prophecy. (Genesis 17:10-11)

The **Marriage Covenant** between God and the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:8, 24:3-8). (See below)

The **Sabbath Covenant** telling that the Saturday Sabbath is a **sign** of God's people (Exodus 31:12-17).

## **Circumcision of Your Heart**

A **New Covenant** with God requires – not physical circumcision of the flesh – but spiritual **circumcision of the heart**, spirit and attitude (Romans 2:25-29). This was always true – even in Old Testament times. Forgiveness of our sins comes about through the Covenant. When God calls us into a covenantal relationship with Him, we take the action of belief and repentance. God's Covenant is graciously and mercifully made with those whose transgressions are passed over by God (Romans 3:21-26).

For true Christians, the taking of the Passover symbols celebrates the fellowship and peaceful abundance we now enjoy with God because of His Covenant. Christ's sacrifice late on Passover day both sealed the Covenant and fulfilled the meaning of the Day of Atonement—cleansing from sin. We enter into the Covenant and receive His forgiveness at our baptism, and we renew our vow annually at the Passover Footwashing. If we return to a life of sin – we break the Covenant.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Colossians 2:11 In [Christ] also ye are circumcised with the **circumcision made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Deuteronomy 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.

Deuteronomy 30:6 The LORD thy God will **circumcise your heart**, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou may live.

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and **take away the foreskins of your heart**, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

It is the **circumcision of the heart** that converts a person—placing him under the terms of the New Covenant—with the promise of eternal life.

## **The Marriage Covenant**

At the time of the Sacrificial Covenant that God made in Abram's presence, God prophesied that Israel would go into Egyptian captivity and eventually be delivered.

Genesis 15:13 The LORD said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall **serve them** [in bondage]; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

Shortly after Jesus Christ, God of the Old Testament delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity [the Exodus] He proposed marriage to the people of Israel. Just like today when people enter into a marriage vow they respond by saying, "**I do.**"

Exodus 19:8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken, **we will do.**"

On that first Pentecost at Mount Sinai, after being delivered from Egypt, God established the Old Covenant with Israel when He gave them His Ten Commandments. It was a Covenant built to provide the physical blessings of prosperity and security for an obedient developing nation. Later, Jesus would again on a future Pentecost inaugurate His **Spiritual New Covenant** which would bestow the better promises of eternal life and Godly glory.

Hebrews 8:6 Now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a **better Covenant**, which was established upon better promises.

Exodus 24:3-8 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said **we will do.**" And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said **we will do**, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the **Covenant which the LORD has made with you** according to all these words."

Exodus 24:9-11 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and **they saw the God of Israel**: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink [the Covenant meal].

Today we would “sign the marriage license,” but the Marriage Covenant the LORD made was ratified [“signed in blood”] when Moses sprinkled the blood on the people. God looked at His Old Marriage Covenant with ancient Israel as a **marriage covenant** or **vow** between Him and Israel. Jesus was the husband and Israel His wife. God said to Israel:

Jeremiah 3:14 ... I am married to you.

Jeremiah 31:32 ... I was an husband unto [Israel], says the LORD.

Ezekiel 16:8 Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my garment over you, and covered your nakedness: yea, I swore unto you, and **entered into a Covenant with you**, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

### **Apple of God’s Eye**

Choosing Israel was a prophetic picture of God choosing and marrying Zion, His Church, whom He protects and establishes through His Eternal Covenant. Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament chose Israel as His very special people. The love of God for Israel can be heard in God’s voice:

Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will **obey my voice** indeed, and keep my Covenant, then you shall be a **very special treasure unto me above all people**: for all the earth is mine.

Zechariah 2:7-8 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon. For thus says the LORD of hosts; After the glory has he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that touches you touches the **apple of his eye**.

Deuteronomy 7:6-11 [Israel,] You are an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a **special people** unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (7) The LORD did not set his love upon you [Israel], nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: (8) But because the LORD **loved you**, and because He would **keep the oath** which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (9) Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which **keeps covenant** and mercy with them that **love Him** and keep His commandments to a thousand generations. (10) And repays them that **hate Him** to their face, **to destroy them**: He will not be slack to him that hate Him, He will repay him to his face. (11) You shall therefore **keep the commandments**, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

### **Blessings and Cursings**

God made a simple and straight forward proposal to His people Israel. He would **bless** them for **obedience** because He wanted them to be His very special treasure above all people (Exodus 19:5). But, if Israel became **unfaithful** and disobeyed the terms of their marriage covenant, God would remove their blessings, hold them in contempt – resulting in vilification and **curse**s. (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28).

**God is holy**, the people He chooses for Himself must also be holy, a Godly principle that continues within the New Covenant. God says:

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1 Peter 1:15-16 In the same way as He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conduct; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (Leviticus 19:2)

As God lives by the highest of standards, so must His people live by high standards as an example to the rest of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). God fully intended Israel to be a light to the world, a beacon set on a hill as well (Deuteronomy 4:5-8).

### **Israel – A Chosen Nation**

The word 'holy' means set aside for God's spiritual purposes. God gave Israel His basic **Holy Law** – ten words or rules as to how man was to live so as to be a holy people (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5). Speaking to the Christians – spiritual Israel – Paul wrote:

Romans 7:12 The **law is holy**, and the Commandment holy, and just, and good.

God also gave Israel His **Holy Days**. That is because, God's Holy Days, more than anything else, define and illustrate the **Plan of God** – from Passover to the Last Great Day. For example, Jesus' sacrifice and life are the meaning and fulfillment of the LORD'S Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5).

Jesus kept all the Feasts of the LORD, and He charged His apostles to teach all nations – not just Israel – to observe everything He had commanded them to do. (Matthew 28:20). The Hebrew text shows that a Holy Convocation is a required observance because it is a **rehearsal** in preparation for a distinct event in the **Plan of God**.

Leviticus 23:4 These are the **Feasts of the LORD**, even Holy Convocations.

Though the world commonly refers to these Holy Days as “feasts of the Jews,” in order to excuse their avoidance of God's command to observe His Feast Days as Holy Convocations, a discerning reader will note that they are indeed Feasts of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 14:2 You, [Israel], are an **holy people** unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD has chosen thee to be a very special people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

God chose the **Nation of Israel** to represent Him to all the peoples of the earth. God gave Israel every benefit—promising to fight their wars, to make them wealthy nations, to protect them from illness, to bless their crops and herds, and to multiply their population as the **stars in the sky** and the sand of the seas (Genesis 26:4).

Psalms 19:1 The [stars in the] heavens declare the glory of God; and the night-sky shows His handy-work.

Psalms 147:4-5 The LORD counts the number of the stars; He calls them all **by their names**. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding **is infinite**.

It was God who set the sun, moon and stars in the heaven with their precise movements:

Genesis 1:14 [On the fourth day of re-creation] God said, Let there be lights [sun, moon, stars] in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for **seasons**, and for days, and years:

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We understand that the sun, along with the background stars, gives us the sidereal year – the orbital time period of the earth around the sun, but why does the Scripture read, “Let them be for seasons?” This word **seasons** in Hebrew is *moed*. It is not a reference to the seasons of summer, spring, winter, and fall. Rather *moed* means “appointment times.” God is saying, “Here is how you set your calendar dates.” God’s **appointed** Holy Days teach us **what is important to God**.

The Bible gives us God’s Sacred Calendar. It is based on a **solar/lunar** yearly timetable because the Scripture reads, “Let **them** [the sun, moon, stars] be for **seasons**.” In an effort to distance themselves from God’s **Sabbath**, the “*Christian*” world changed their day of worship to **Sunday**, and the world of Islam moved theirs to **Friday**. In the same way that the world adopted a strictly **solar** calendar, while Islam espouses a precisely **lunar** one.

*Moed* means appointment times, and by extension it includes the place of meeting and the congregation with whom God has set the solemn assembly. *Moed* is commonly translated ‘feast,’ as in Feast of the LORD, but it has nothing to do with a banquet or a meal of fine cuisine which is a different Hebrew word (Isaiah 25:6).

Leviticus 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the **Feasts of the LORD**, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are **my** feasts [*moed*].

To correct a common misconception, these Biblical Feast Days are not the feasts of the Jews, feasts of Israel, or feasts of the Church of God, but clearly, **Feasts of the LORD**. God is saying in effect, “I will meet with you at this time and at this place.” Showing up **early or late** is not man’s prerogative.

God’s Plan for man, and God’s Sacred Calendar are almost unknown. They are a mystery to most. More than anything, God’s Plan – from beginning to end – is ultimately divulged to those who **observe** and appreciate the meaning of God’s **appointed** Holy Days. Each of the Feasts of the LORD is being precisely and prophetically fulfilled according to God’s schedule.

God first set the sun, moon and stars in the sky to indicate the specific timing of His meetings with us. God said, “Let them be for seasons [*moed*]” – that is God’s divine meeting schedule. Even before God attributes light and heat to the sun, or the moon to rule the night (Genesis 1:16-18), God established the sun, moon and stars to mark His **Holy Convocations**.

And, for those who have been taught that somehow God’s Feast Days have been done away with – please note that when Jesus Christ has established His Father’s coming Kingdom over all this earth – The Millennial rule of Christ – He will insist that everyone keep His **appointed times** with Him. Please note that for emphasis God repeats this **three times** – so that even the most adamant cannot deny it:

## **Drought and Plague Upon Those Refusing God's Invitation**

Zechariah 14:16-19 It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that comes not up to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**.

More than any of God's other **Holy Days**, the **Feast of Tabernacles** is the **appointed time** of the Millennium—the greater harvest of spiritual fruit.

God knew from the very beginning that the Nation of Israel would in due course **fail** to live up to God's standards because they did not have **His Spirit**. God warned the nation of Israel:

Deuteronomy 4:5-9 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. (6) Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this **great nation** is a wise and understanding people. (7) For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? (8) And what **nation is there so great**, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (9) Only **take heed** to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.

## **Great Cloud of Witnesses**

The apostle Paul referred to the many saints of the Old Testament as so great a cloud of witnesses, for whom God's promises were far in the future (Hebrews 11:13). They all died in the faith, not having received the promises which shall be fulfilled very soon. The Old Testament is replete with Godly lessons and prophetic messages pointing to the coming of the Messiah. Consider the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses – and the list goes on. Suffice it to say that all these preceded the coming of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. Their lives, and their lessons learned are important to Christians today.

The Old Testament has not been done away. In fact, the only weakness in the Old Testament was in those who heard and did not believe (Romans 8:3). That fault was **with the people who** lacked God's Spirit, not with the Old Covenant itself. Paul compares the Old Covenant with the New:

Hebrews 8:7-8 If that **first covenant** had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For **finding fault with them**, He said, Behold, the days come, says the LORD, when I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

## **Captivity**

During the reigns of King David and his son King Solomon, the tribes of Israel became a unified Kingdom. Israel became the most powerful and wealthy nation on earth because of God's blessings. Israel then soon forgot the true God and their covenant with Him. Ultimately, Judah and Israel were invaded, conquered, captured and deported from the Promised Land because of their **Sabbath breaking and idolatry** (Ezekiel 20:21-24). God was indignant that they would violate the Sabbath and turn to foreign gods. God used the Assyrian Empire first, and then the Babylonian to inflict His punishment on Israel and Judah. God said:

Isaiah 10:5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

The great majority of the exiled Israelites never returned to their homeland. The House of Israel was carried away captive to Assyria, and the House of Judah to Babylon. Only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and a part of Levi returned to rebuild the destroyed Temple. In the Millennium a **remnant** of Israel will return to the land of Canaan and begin to repopulate the earth.

Isaiah 11:16 There shall be an highway for the **remnant** of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 49:12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the **North** and from the **West**...

After being carried away captive, the ten tribes of Israel no longer had a homeland or a national identity and became "lost."

## **The Lost Ten Tribes**

"The Lost Ten Tribes" is actually a misnomer. God had prophesied where they would go, and who they would become. Certainly, God's promise to make the children of Abraham a great nation and a company of nations was not forgotten by Him (Genesis 35:11). Knowing who and where modern Israel is today is very important because it is a big factor in the **Plan of God** coming to fruition. We find that the English speaking peoples today are the descendants of ancient **Israel**.

From their land of captivity, the tribes of Israel migrated northward at first, passing between the Black Sea on the west and the Caspian Sea on the east. Today that region comprises Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. On the northern border of Georgia there are the Caucasus Mountains. Crossing the Caucasus Mountains, Israel migrated **northward and westward** into Europe (Isaiah 49:12). As a point of clarification, though the Russians are Caucasians, they are not Israelites. Rosh, Meshech and Tubal are indeed Caucasians but definitely not in the lineage of blessing. God gives us the clear distinction:

Ezekiel 38:2-3 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

The European peoples have been known for many centuries to be descended from the Caucasians. Circumcision is an identifying characteristic of the Israelites – and it is still widely prevalent today (Genesis 17:10). The great migration of Israel to the **north and west** of the Promised Land was by no means by happenstance or accident—it was by the hand of God that they were being sifted (Amos 9:8-9):

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The might, wealth and influence of the English speaking peoples of the British Empire and the United States of America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a direct result of God's promise to Abraham to make of him a nation and a company of nations (Genesis 17:5)

1 Chronicles 17:9 [God says] I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in a place their own, and shall be moved no more (2 Samuel 7:10).

Hosea tells us that the tribe of Ephraim did not form covenants with the Assyrians, but went where the east wind blows—that is westward (Hosea 12:1) In fact Ephraim, and a substantial portion of Manasseh, went as far as they could go in that westerly direction until they came to England. God had **promised** King David that he would never lack a descendant to sit on the "Throne of the House of Israel" – so that the Messiah could be a son of David (Jeremiah 33:17). We read in the New Testament that is exactly what has taken place:

Acts 13:21-23 Israel desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. (22) And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, **a man after mine own heart**, which shall fulfill all my will. (23) From this man's seed has God according to **His promise** raised up for Israel a Savior, Jesus: God raised up for Israel the Savior—Jesus" (Acts 13:22-23).

### **I Will Put My Spirit Within You**

Israel did not perform according to its marriage vow with God. Israel profaned God's Holy Name continuously. God is faithful to keep covenant, in spite of Israel's **stony heart**. But to do so, requires a tremendous change be made in them—they must be cleansed and have a new **heart of flesh**. That requires God's **Holy Spirit** be in them.

Ezekiel 36:22 Therefore say unto the House of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for **mine holy name's sake**, which you have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. (23) And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. (24) For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

(25) Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) **A new heart** also will I give you, and **a new spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the **stony heart** out of your flesh, and I will give you an **heart of flesh**. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (28) And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and **ye shall be my people, and I will be your God**.

## **Modern Israel**

The Plan of God required that He choose Israel – a family of people – wherein He could place His love and keep the oath which He had sworn unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God continues to reveal His faithfulness to Israel—even modern Israel today. Because modern Israel has spread around the world to the British Isles, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, America, and more, they too will go through the same defeat and devastation that their forefathers experienced. The Jewish people in the Middle East are also a part of Israel—as **one of the sons** of Jacob (Genesis 29:35, 46:8-12). Prophecy is dual – and modern Israel is about to be vanquished and go into captivity. That includes the English speaking peoples of the former British Empire (including Canada, Australia, etc.) and the United States and its possessions. Already the foreigners are powerfully getting up **very high**. There are powerful spiritual forces influencing western governments to accept the world of Islam. As the British Members of Parliament, and the US Congress become more and more godless, our nation's enemies will gain the upper hand. Millions upon millions of Muslims are now weakening western values and culture in the pursuit of their long held goal of obliterating the unbelievers in Muhammadanism—the doctrines and practices of the *prophet* Muhammad as set forth in the Koran. Indigenous westerners are being overtaken in their own lands by non-western immigrants because God is withdrawing His blessing from these peoples!

The English-speaking peoples are decreasing as Islam increases in Israelitish nations. There is effectively no tolerance of other religions in any of the Arab League states. The Mohammedan religion calls for ultimate jihad against all who are not of their religion.

It is clearly stated in the Koran, “Kill the infidels if they do not become Mohammedans. They must be put to fire and sword.” America has been dealing with Muslim extremists going back to Thomas Jefferson in 1786 when they attacked American shipping on this basis (Library of Congress, Original Sources).

Deuteronomy 28:43-44 The stranger that is within you shall get up above you **very high**; and you shalt come down very low. He shall lend to you, and you shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and you shalt be the tail.

Deuteronomy 28:49 The LORD shall bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand.

God will be showing modern Israel that He keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). Ancient Israel did not believe God – and neither does modern Israel, but God's word is sure. Because modern Israel disregards His Sabbath and turned its collective back on God, which is idolatry, here is God's prophecy:

Deuteronomy 28:48 Therefore shall you serve your enemies which the LORD shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He has destroyed you.

Every man would be wise to ask himself where he will be when the lights go off and the water stops running?

## **Better Promises**

Ancient Israel was unable to live according to the way of the Lord because they lacked God's Spirit which would have given them a heart of flesh. It is still the same today; modern Israel lacks God's Spirit. The only fault with the Old Covenant is that Israel did not have the heart to live it (Hebrews 8:7-8). Jesus is the mediator of a better [New] Covenant, which was established upon **better promises** [the promise of eternal life] (Hebrews 8:6). It is better covenant because it is able to be kept by a Spirit led people—unlike the Old Covenant which **could not be kept** by ancient Israel nor modern Israel today. We will see in Chapter Five that Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, has remedied that weakness and shortcoming for the saints of the Church of God (Romans 8:3).

God knew that ancient Israel was unable to keep their part of the marriage covenant – even though when asked, “Do you take...” they said, “I do.”

Deuteronomy 5:27 ...Moses, whatever God says to you, we will hear it, **and do it.** (28) And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spoke unto me; ... they have well said all that they have spoken. (29) O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

Jesus is coming again a second time – and soon! With the first coming of Jesus Christ everything changed! It became possible for the Church brethren to be reconciled to God the Father who granted them repentance, and the faith of Jesus – who bore our sins (Isaiah 53:11). And most importantly, with a measure of God's Spirit, a new heart enables a true Christian to **keep covenant** with his Maker – and receive the **promise** of eternal life.

Acts 2:38-39 Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) For **the promise** is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

# Chapter 5

## Fullness of Time

Jesus Christ arrived on earth in the **fullness of time**. The Plan of God is on a definite time schedule. God is working in so many ways for His Plan to unfold at precisely the correct time. The most momentous point in the **Plan of God** for mankind was the necessity of the Savior being **born a man** to redeem mankind. Paul revealed to the Galatians that Jesus Christ the Messiah—the **Anointed One**—was the fulfillment of God's promises. Jesus is of the lineage of David and the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The Father knew when it was the exact time for Christ to appear:

Galatians 4:4-5 When the **fullness of the time** was come, God the Father sent forth His Son, made of a woman, accountable to the law, to redeem them who are subject to the penalty imposed for not keeping the law, that we might have the full rights of God's Children.

In this Chapter we are examining the Holy Scriptures to find out what God tells us about the **Fullness of Time** when His Son, Jesus Christ the Redeemer, first came to this earth as mankind's Savior. We are so privileged to know the Plan of God which has been revealed to us so clearly in these latter days. The world, not knowing the Plan of God remains in the dark – not understanding so much of God's word in the Bible. There is a veil over their eyes so that they might not see, and their foolish hearts are **darkened** (Romans 1:21):

John 12:40 God has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted...

Jesus came 2,000 years ago in order, not only to deliver us from sin, free us from captivity, and exchange His life for ours in payment of our sins, but to **enlighten** us, reveal God the Father to us, and make us Children of God. Jesus said:

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the **light of the world**.

God has provided His Church brethren with so much knowledge and understanding in these last days that it is terribly foolish not to try to avail ourselves of all His wisdom and expand our horizons so that we may **walk in the light** with Him.

2 Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a **light that shines in a dark place**, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Most people profess to know and love Jesus. The problem with that is the 'Jesus' they confess is not the Messiah of the Holy Scriptures. The world is wrong on almost every point that they believe with all their heart. The Jesus who died for the sins of the world was not resurrected in a beautiful **Easter** morning sunrise event (1 John 2:2, John 20:1, 1 Kings 11:33). Jesus did not nail the Ten Commandments to the cross to do away with them. He did not die on Good Friday, and He was not born anywhere near December 25<sup>th</sup>. The spirit of **Christmas** is a strong beguiling spirit that entices and binds the heart of those who are being led away from the pure light of the Gospel. The true Jesus established the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest and spiritual rejuvenation—not the venerable Day of the Sun—**Sunday** which harkens back to an early idolatrous practice of sun-worship (Exodus 31:13, 17, Ezekiel 20:12, 20, Jeremiah 8:2). Jesus did not teach that man has an **immortal soul** that goes to **heaven** after death (Ezekiel 18:20). Jesus of Nazareth did not teach those bold myths. The list goes on and on, but the question is, "Why do people believe in a mythological Jesus?" It is because the **glorious light** of the real Jesus Christ has not shined out of **darkness** into their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6). In short, they do not believe the Bible—the word of God. Jesus tells us that condemnation is upon those who do not believe Him:

John 3:19-21 This is the condemnation, that **Light** [Jesus Christ] is come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than **Light**, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil **hates the Light**, neither comes to the **Light**, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that does truth comes to the **Light**, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

It is a shame that those people who are the primary beneficiaries of God's promised blessings to Abraham accept those pagan belief systems and try to introduce those numerous corrupt traditions into their relationship with God—making the word of God of no effect (Mark 7:13). As a result of moving away from God, Britain's and America's blessings of wealth and national hegemony will be rapidly dissipated. Scripture continues to combat a world of idolatries. Traditions that overshadow the truth must never be allowed to override the holy and pure word of God. Jesus came to **enlighten** mankind:

John 12:46 I am come a **light into the world**, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in **darkness**.

### **Jesus of Galilee**

Human life **began in Galilee** for Jesus when He was conceived nine months before being born in the fall of the year on the outskirts of Jerusalem at Bethlehem (Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:26). His chosen apostles were men of Galilee (Acts 1:11). Jesus concluded His life's work, also at **Galilee**, when He gave the eleven apostles commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 26:32, 28:7, 10, 16). Jesus sent His men into the world with the **light** of the glorious Gospel to eradicate the **darkness** of those who were spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Isaiah had prophesied that the **Messiah** would come from **Galilee** and deliver the nations from **darkness into the light of God** (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Isaiah 49:6 ...I will also give thee for **a light** to the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Matthew understood the significance and fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and recorded it in his Gospel account:

Matthew 4:12-17 When Jesus had heard that John [the Baptist] was cast into prison, He departed into **Galilee**; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim (Genesis 49:13): That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations; the people who walked in **darkness** saw **a great light**; and to them which dwell in the region and shadow of death **light is sprung up**. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus sometimes visited the coastal town Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene. There was a synagogue there. Magdala is a fishing town at the foot of Mount Arbel, the most prominent landmark on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee – only a brisk two hour walk from Capernaum where Jesus resided during His public ministry.

Matthew 15:39 [Jesus] sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Magdala means tower—like a lighthouse, but Isaiah was not alluding to a lighthouse that guided fishermen back home on moonless nights when he said, “the people which walked in **darkness saw a great light**.” He was referring to that **great Light—Jesus Christ**.

## **The Promise and the Light**

This Chapter Five is about the **fullness of the time** – the point in history when **two themes** in the Plan of God converge in Christ. The **Promise** of the Messiah—was realized in the **Light** of the world. In the days of Jesus and His apostles, the promise was greatly anticipated. Paul spoke of it:

Acts 26:6-7 ...The hope of the **promise** made of God unto our fathers: Unto which **promise** our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.

Jesus is both the **Promise** and the **Light**:

Acts 13:23 ...God according to **His promise** raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus.

Little did the world understand the momentous turn of events set in motion by the coming of the Lord. The beloved apostle John tells us that the world of Jesus' day was not able to grasp the significance of the appearance of Jesus Christ. And, little of Jesus' teachings are understood yet by the world today—they simply do not comprehend Him.

John 1:4-5 In Him was life; and the life was the **light of men**. The **Light** shone in **darkness**; but the darkness comprehended Him not.

John, the disciple beloved of Jesus, reveals the theme of the New Testament to be **Darkness to Light**. John wrote his Gospel much later than the synoptic writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke, bringing to light much eye-witness insight about the life of Jesus that was little understood immediately after the death of Christ. Jesus promised that through the working of God's Spirit 'all things' would be recalled and revealed to His apostles (John 14:26, 19:35). Speaking of Jesus, John wrote:

John 1:9 He was the **true Light**, which **lights** up every man that comes into the world.

There is no separation between Jesus and His Father. Jesus said, “He who has seen me, has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Therefore God the Father is also **Light**. John is speaking of God the Father here:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 John 1:5-9 This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that **God is Light**, and in Him is **no darkness** at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and continue to walk in **darkness**, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we **walk in the Light**, as **He is in the Light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ **His Son cleanses us from all sin**. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

### **God's Throne is Unapproachable Light**

We are instructed by Paul to 'lay hold on eternal life,' because:

1 Timothy 6:16 [Only our Lord Jesus Christ] ...has immortality, dwelling in the **light** which **no man can approach unto**; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting.

1 John 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the **darkness is past**, and the **true light** now **shines**.

While He was yet with them, just before He died, Jesus warned His disciples of the perils of this dark world:

John 12:35-36 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while **the Light** is with you. Walk while you have the **Light**, lest **darkness** come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he is going. While ye have **light**, believe in the **light**, that ye may be the **Children of light**.

### **Promise of the Messiah**

We learn from the apostles that the blessing to come on all nations is ultimately eternal life through Jesus Christ—the **Messiah**. God said:

Genesis 12:2-3 I will make of you Abram a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in thee shall **all families of the earth be blessed**.

Genesis 22:15-18 The angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven... and said, By myself have I sworn, said the LORD... in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Paul pointed out that 'seed' here is singular – indicating that Jesus Christ the Messiah would be the **offspring** of Abraham – and be a blessing to all nations.

Galatians 3:16 To Abraham and his seed were the **promises** made. He did not say, and to seeds, as of many; but **as of one**, and to thy seed, **which is Christ**.

To the world this singular event, a four-thousand-year-old oath to Abraham, is obscure and seemingly insignificant (Luke 1:73). Here we are 2,000 years after Christ's first coming – and only a scant few can see the **Plan of God** unfolding. We are inheritors of this **promise** – not only of lands and nations of people, but of a blessing—**eternal life**. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus in the **fullness of the times**.

## **Everlasting Covenant**

Hebrews 6:13 When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself.

Jesus, the God of the Old Testament promised Abraham and us, his spiritual descendants:

Genesis 17:7 I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be a God unto you, and to your descendants after you. (Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:18)

The Church of God brethren are heirs of this **everlasting covenant**. Paul put it this way:

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 ...All things are yours; ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

This Chapter **is not** a reiteration of the life of Christ in the Scriptures but a glossary of illustrations where we find Jesus **bringing light to a dark world**. There are many renditions in print of the many fulfillments of Messianic prophecies in Christ's life – especially those concerning the torture and crucifixion of Jesus. "Excruciating," comes from the root word for crucifixion. No work of man could begin to do justice to the story of the life and death of Jesus.

John 21:25 There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

## **Unto Us a Child is Born**

A Savior became necessary because mankind's sin brought the death penalty upon him (Romans 6:23). Adam and Eve's sin meant that Christ had to come to earth. Without a Savior all mankind would have been eternally lost. Jesus Christ came to earth and allowed Himself to be sacrificed to save mankind from its sins. **God's Plan** is for all humanity to be as He is in all righteous character—in mind and spirit. Because Adam and Eve cut themselves off from access to the Tree of Life—which is God's Holy Spirit, Jesus would have to once again make God's Spirit available to mankind. Before God could pour out His Spirit on a new people, their sins had to be taken away by a sacrifice.

No amount of man's physical sacrifices could take away the penalty for sin (Hebrews 10:4). It had to be a **perfect sacrifice** of more worth than all the world. Only Jesus was more valuable than everything He had made (John 1:3). God the Father offered up Jesus Christ in sacrifice, who in turn willingly offered His own life's blood for the sins of the world.

John 3:16 God the Father so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Sin is rebellion against God. Nothing man could ever do on his own would have been sufficient to mediate between himself and God. A **mediator**—a go-between is required because God cannot even look at sin (1 Timothy 2:5). God will not tolerate sin or injustice—not for a moment. The Prophet Habakkuk declared of God:

Habakkuk 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and you cannot look on iniquity.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

There was nothing wrong with the Old Covenant promises God gave to Israel. Israel of old was to become a great and blessed **physical** nation—a showcase to the world (Deuteronomy 4:6-7). But to the brethren of the Church of God are given exceeding great and **better promises** of the Kingdom of God and eternal Glory forever more—the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:10, Jeremiah 31:33).

Hebrews 8:6 Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the **mediator** of a **better covenant**, which was established upon **better promises**.

Through Christ's mediation, the Children of God become heirs of God—heirs of the Kingdom of God and eternal Glory.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the Children of God: And if Children, then heirs; **heirs of God**, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

The Feast of Pentecost represents the establishment of the New Covenant Church with the coming of the **promise of the Father**—God's Holy Spirit, which He has given to us (Acts 1:4). On that Day of Pentecost, only seven weeks after Jesus died and was resurrected, God poured out His Holy Spirit on a few assembled disciples of Jesus. Peter, who was there at that Pentecost assembly, began preaching what must necessarily be done in order to receive the Spirit of God. He powerfully proclaimed:

Acts 2:38 **Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the **gift** of the Holy Spirit.

God alone **gives repentance** and it has to do with overcoming sin and turning to the law of God (2 Timothy 2:25). God is faithful to forgive those who have repented of their sins. Forgiveness is the result of God's mercy in taking away our sin. Repentance has to do with keeping God's Ten Commandments.

### **My Redeemer Lives**

Jesus came to redeem mankind. All had earned the death penalty for sin. Mankind had fallen from God's good graces and needed to be 'bought back.' God, in His love and mercy, is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). God would have all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Job 19:25 I know that **my redeemer lives**, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

It was Jesus' death that provided mankind with his indispensable redeemer who alone could atone for man's sins.

1 John 2:2 Jesus is the propitiation [atonement] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the **sins of the whole world**.

## **Divinity Set Aside and Vacated**

Philippians 2:6-9 Christ Jesus, being like God the Father, did not consider equality with God something to cling to: Giving up His divine standing, He, of His own free will emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the **likeness of men**: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.

Jesus willingly stepped down from His seat which He occupied in heaven, yielding His will to God the Father and surrendering all power as God, to come to this earth—to die in place of man who dies as a result of sin—as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8, John 6:38).

Jesus, knowing full well that if He failed to live a perfect sinless life, He would die for His own sin. He willingly came down to redeem and buy back mankind from the consequences of its sins (Hebrews 5:7). Even though Jesus was ‘found in fashion as a man,’ He was nonetheless the Father’s Son (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 2:17). Nevertheless, having set aside His power, Jesus could work no miracles on His own, but fully relied on His indwelling Father to do the working of miracles (John 5:19; 14:10).

On the night before He died, at the end of His life’s work, Jesus prayed to His Father to restore His glory and divinity to the full as it was before the days of creation:

John 17:1, 5 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

## **Prince of Peace**

During the month old infant Jesus’ presentation to God at the Temple in Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary met the long-time faithful and elderly Simeon, who through the revelation of the Holy Spirit spoke of the Messiah:

Luke 2:32 A **light** to **enlighten** the nations, and the **glory** of thy people Israel.

The angel of the Lord had appeared unto Joseph in a dream and told him:

Matthew 1:21 Mary shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.

Jesus Christ possesses the legal right to the throne of King David through His legal guardian, Joseph. We see this in a Messianic prophecy:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the [Kingdom of God] shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The **Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of His empire and peace there shall be no end, upon the **throne of David**, and upon **His Kingdom**, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Matthew provides the **legal succession** for Jesus Christ to be heir to the throne of David (Matthew 1:1-17, Jeremiah 33:14-17).

Luke provides the **bloodline genealogy** of Jesus Christ through His Jewish mother, Mary's family lineage back to King David (Luke 3:23-31), and ultimately to Adam in whom God breathed the breath of life at creation (Luke 3:38, Genesis 2:7). Jesus' DNA, therefore, is traced directly to Adam through King David (Luke 3:31).

Jesus is legitimately heir to David's throne through both sides of His family. Nonetheless, the enemies of Christ insinuated and accused Him of being illegitimate – born out of wedlock. Idle gossip followed Jesus all the days of His life:

John 8:41 ...They said unto Jesus, We were not born as a result of fornication.

Jesus did not have to answer their false accusations because God the Father had said differently of Him:

Mark 1:11 There came a voice from heaven, saying, You are **my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased.

### **Only Begotten Son**

As a matter of fact, Jesus was not born of fornication. God the Father begot Jesus. The Father had never begotten a son before, making Jesus His **only** begotten Son. 'Beget' is a biblical word that means to conceive, father, sire, have an offspring, bring into the world, give life to, bring into being—literally to bring a child into existence by the process of reproduction.

1 John 4:9 ...God sent His **only begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through Him.

The being we distinguish as Jesus Christ—The Word of God—had existed as Almighty God for all time and eternity with the being the Bible identifies as God the Father. Together and individually they were Almighty God. But in a moment, God the Father sent His **only begotten Son** into the world. Our human minds cannot fathom the process of God becoming man, but that is exactly what took place with Jesus Christ—Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us** (Matthew 1:23). At that moment God became the Father, and the Word became His Son—Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said unto Mary, ~~the~~ [there is no article in the Greek] Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest [God the Father] shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Matthew 1:20 ...The angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of ~~the~~ Holy Spirit. [again, there is no article in the Greek] [Holy Spirit is not a person or being.]

When each human baby is conceived a **unique identity** is formed with that new life. An individual comes into existence. Everyone has an only one of its kind identity. Identity is what makes you, you and me, me. Identity originates with the father and arises in the child - except in the case of Jesus Christ. His identity preexisted creation itself (John 1:2). Jesus said it this way:

John 14:10-11 ...I am in the Father, and the Father in me.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Instead of a new identity being brought into existence when Jesus was conceived, God the Father transferred the **preexisting identity** of the Word into the womb of Mary (John 17:5). God the Father voiced:

Hebrews 5:5 ...Thou art my Son, today I have **begotten** you. (Hebrews 1:5-6; Psalms 2:7)

John 1:14 The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the **only begotten of the Father**,) full of grace and truth.

### **Children of Light**

Jesus was only the first of **many begotten children** of the Father. Every Christian is first begotten by his physical earthly father. Then, at his **conversion**, each is **again begotten** by God the Father through His Spirit—becoming Children of God (1 John 3:2). Then, God the Father becomes ‘Daddy,’ and Jesus becomes our ‘brother’ (Romans 8:15, Hebrews 2:11). Speaking first of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 1:6 When [God the Father] brought His **first begotten** [Jesus Christ] into the world, He said, And let all the angels of God worship Him.

Peter also adds that each Christian is also begotten **again**, a second time – first in infancy by a physical father, but then again by God the Father at his commencement of **conversion** because Jesus makes it possible:

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has **begotten us again** unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 John 5:1)

**Conversion** is a journey toward **Light** and salvation (Note the cover of this book.)

Ephesians 5:8, 14 You were **sometimes darkness**, but now you are **light** in the Lord: walk as **Children of Light**... and Christ shall give you **light**.

### **The Father Revealed**

One of the major reasons that Jesus Christ came in human flesh was to fully **reveal** the Father who does not openly interact with mankind. It was Jesus who worked with all the men of the Bible. Jesus tells us that no one has ever seen the Father:

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has **declared** Him.

Jesus reveals the Father to us by way of repentance, faith, conversion and baptism. It is a reciprocal process – and only for those who are converted. Jesus said:

Matthew 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will **reveal** Him.

John 14:6 Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.

## **The God of Our Fathers**

God the Father was not “Father” to all of ancient Israel. A person only becomes a Child of God when the Father imparts a token of His Spiritual life to them (Romans 8:16). Only when our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were converted, used of God and reconciled to God the Father— did He become their Father:

Because they were converted, God the Father was revealed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. As well, Moses, David, the prophets and the people of faith had the Father declared unto them by Jesus Christ the God of the Old Testament. They will all be in the first and better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35).

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, **the God of our fathers**, has glorified His Son Jesus.

God the Father became their Father – just as He is “Our Father,” to converted Christians (Luke 11:2).

Jesus was a part of a large family with lots of brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3). Spiritually, a person becomes a brother or sister to Christ when they have the same Father (Matthew 12:50, Hebrews 2:11).

## **Jesus Christ God of the Old Testament**

This Jesus Christ of the New Testament, who was sent in the **fullness of time**, is the same Jesus Christ who was God of the Old Testament:

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that **Rock was Christ**. [Jesus the Messiah]

John reveals that this same Jesus Christ was the spokesman of the Father:

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word [‘Logos’ the One who became Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

This Book about the Plan of God – Darkness to Light, is based on the Holy Bible—the Word of God. The Father had the Word (Jesus Christ, the Spokesman) inspire and reveal it for our sake.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

## **Light to Them that Sit in Darkness**

Isaiah 7:14 The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

The angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and told her that she would be the mother of the Son of the Highest—who would bring **light to them that sit in darkness**:

Luke 1:30-33 The angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall **conceive** in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name **JESUS**. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.

Luke quoted Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, who in turn was paraphrasing Isaiah 9:2:

Luke 1:79 To give **light to them that sit in darkness** and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The Bible does not directly reveal the date of Jesus' **conception**. In the Plan of God it was a pivotal and momentous day. God the Father voiced this phrase:

Hebrews 5:5 ...Thou art my Son, **today** have I **begotten** thee.

Though we are not told specifically which day this took place, we know that it did. Almighty God became a man—in the likeness of sinful flesh with a nature like man's sinful nature, to condemn sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). What kind of day would God have chosen for the **fullness of time** to come to fruition on this earth? As momentous an occasion as God coming to earth in human flesh was – both conception and birth, Christians are not commanded by God to observe the day of Jesus' conception or birth—but are commanded by God instead to observe the day of Jesus' **death**.

## **Passover Commemorates Christ's Death**

Why does the world wish to hide the clear Biblical truth about Jesus being the embodiment of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:3-14, John 1:36)?

John 1:29 John the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the **Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world.

1 Corinthians 5:7 ... **Christ our Passover** is sacrificed for us.

1 Peter 1:19 With the precious blood of Christ [we were redeemed], as of a **lamb without blemish** and without spot. (Exodus 12:5)

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the **Lord's death** until He comes.

1 Corinthians 4:5 ...until the Lord comes, who both will **bring to light** the hidden things of **darkness**...

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Leviticus 23:4-5 These are the **Feasts of the LORD**, even Holy Convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S **Passover**.

Jesus' **conception** had to be at a precise time for all prophecy to be fulfilled exactly – even to the **death** of Jesus Christ on a Wednesday 'in the midst of the week' on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup> – **Passover** Day 34 years later on Wednesday April 5, 30 AD. [Count 1 AD – 1 BC, because there was no -0- year.]

The average length of human gestation is 266 days, or 38 weeks from conception, which is exactly 9 lunar months. If Jesus was conceived on December 21/22, 6 BC, Jesus could have been born on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Tishri, or September 15, 5 BC, everything pointing to His birth being at the time the Feast of Tabernacles which had just begun at sunset that evening! It is noteworthy that when the autumn moon shown at its brightest there was a lunar eclipse marking that particular Feast of Tabernacles. (Compare E.W. Bullinger, Companion Bible, APPENDIX 179 1. p. 198)

In John 1:14, the Word was **made flesh** refers to Jesus' conception, whereas, **dwelt** (tabernacled) among us refers to His birth. Many Scriptural references help us accurately locate the season of Christ's birth. And, of course we are able to count backward to His conception. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus was born nowhere near December 25<sup>th</sup>. Luke shows that Jesus was not born in the winter by recording that shepherds were tending their flocks in the fields by night (Luke 2:8). While cold temperatures generally do not bother well-fed sheep in full fleece, cold winds do—so grazing in open fields was inappropriate in the cold of winter.

Jesus, at His **first coming**, was not born at Christmas time, but born earlier in the year during the annual Fall Feast Days—possibly the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, or the Feast of Tabernacles. All the Feasts of the Lord carry most significant meaning for the Plan of God.

Jesus fulfills the very meaning of the **Feasts of the Lord**, past present and future (Leviticus 23:2). God deliberately made His Holy Days to be Holy Convocations for all time—each an important epoch in the history of God's people—so that we could understand what they meant and how they accomplish the Plan of God.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures a most significant event; the dramatic return and **second coming** of Jesus Christ in supreme power over all the earth. Just as importantly, the Day of Atonement pictures the cleansing from sin and the reconciliation of all mankind to God.

And likewise, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the revival and restoration of all things (Acts 3:19-21) when Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will be establishing the Kingdom of God over all the earth. At that time all the families of the earth shall go up unto Jerusalem every year to observe this Holy Day (Zechariah 14:16-18). Christ will be King: For He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

## **Jesus Fulfills the Feasts of the Lord**

When Protestants read that Jesus fulfills the Feasts of the Lord they automatically say things like, “Those are **Jewish feasts** – *they are not for us.*” On closer examination a careful reader will discern that indeed, they are **not** the Jews’ feasts but, the **Feasts of the Lord**. Protestants will also say, “Jesus fulfilled the Feasts of the Lord – *so we do not have to keep them holy,*” just as they say, “Jesus fulfilled the law – *so that means we do not have to keep the Ten Commandments.*” For that exact reason, God made them Holy Convocations forever—sacred assemblies to be declared at their appointed times for God fearing people. It is most important that we keep and observe God’s Holy Days. They are rich in information and facts that reveal how God is going about His Plan for mankind. On the other hand, this world’s traditional religious festivals like Easter, Saint Valentine’s Day, Halloween, Sun-Day, Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Christmas shed **no light** whatsoever on the Plan of God.

Because those pagan holidays are not found in Sacred Scripture they have no bearing at all on the things God is working out for His people. Those traditional holidays only hearken back to ancient demonic pagan festivals. That is why Jesus said to those who omit the Commandments of God, “[You are] making the word of God of no effect through your tradition.” (Mark 7:8, 13)

Each and every one of God’s Holy Days pictures a major step in God’s Plan to bring His Children into His **magnificent glory**.

1 Peter 5:10 The God of all grace, who has called us unto **His eternal glory** by Christ Jesus...

## **Born in a Barn**

When Jesus was born, masses of faithful men and women from far and wide were converging upon Jerusalem for the purpose of observing the Feast of Tabernacles. That is the reason there were no rooms available at the inn when Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Jesus' beginning was in the humblest of accommodations—a barn:

Luke 2:7 Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a stall; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Galatians 4:4 When the appointed time—the **fullness of time** came, God sent forth His own Son, born of a woman...

The angel Gabriel had come to Mary and told her that through the miraculous power of the Most High God's Holy Spirit she would be enveloped in a lustrous brilliance by which the Holy One born to her would be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

## **Called Out of Darkness**

The timing of Jesus' conception had been carefully selected by God. From Mary's time of ovulation, to the timing of the Jubilee Year that Jesus would begin His public ministry. Every indication points to the **conception** of Jesus taking place on, or near the winter solstice of 6 BC. It could have been that Jesus was conceived on the night of December 21/22, 6 BC. It was the **darkest** – and longest night of the year. It was darkest in more ways than one. The Romans ruled over the Promised Land, and they brought their debauchery with them. Peter would explain that Jesus came into the world to deliver the saints from **pervasive darkness**:

1 Peter 2:9 You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, an extraordinary possession; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has **called you out of darkness** into His marvelous light:

For the Romans of Christ's day, the time of the winter solstice was the gala time for pagan festivities commemorating their heathen god, Saturn. Saturnalia is an enduring Roman celebration held at the time when the sun has receded as low as possible in the southern sky. All of the degeneracy and corruption that was celebrated at that time of year would later be embraced by Catholicism and the so called Christian world in their observance of Christmas. All the decorative lights and glitter in the world cannot conceal the dark origin of this holiday that predates the Romans by thousands of years. Two-thousand years before Christ, Jeremiah and Isaiah warned God's people to avoid this abomination:

Jeremiah 10:2-4 Thus says the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: For one cuts a [Christmas] tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They decorate it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it does not move. (Jeremiah 3:13, Isaiah 40:19-20, 44:17 et al., show that idolatrous images and Christmas trees used in worship are an abomination to God.)

Satan, who hates everything about Jesus Christ, has perverted the time of His conception—turning it into a Christmas celebration honoring himself—the Power of Darkness (Colossians 1:13).

John 12:35 Jesus said...he that walks in **darkness** does not know where he is going.

## **My Father's Business**

Holy Scripture shows that from His earliest years Jesus focused on His purpose in life. In 9 AD Jesus was 12½ years old at the time of the **Spring Holy Days**.

Luke 2:41-43 Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the **Passover**. And when He was **twelve years old**, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the Feast. And when they had fulfilled the days [the Days of Unleavened Bread], as they returned, the young man Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it.

It was not only the Feast of Passover that they kept, but Jesus observed all the **Feasts of the Lord** His entire life—even dying on a Passover Day.

Leviticus 23:4 These are the **Feasts of the LORD**, even Holy Convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

## **Jesus Went Missing for Three Days**

What had happened is that Jesus had become involved in a studious debate with the Masters of Israel who knew Scripture best of all. Jesus remained at the Temple in Jerusalem **enlightening** those instructors through the wisdom acquired through God's Spirit (Luke 2:40; 52).

Luke 2:44-49 [Joseph and Mary], supposing Jesus to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were **astonished** at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that **I must be about my Father's business?**

## **Jesus Came to Reveal the Father**

Yes, Jesus was already occupied with the things of His Father (John 6:38). He was the only one who was able to unveil the hidden reality of God the Father. The Father is not generally known to mankind (John 16:3, 17:25). Jesus said:

Luke 10:22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knows who ...the Father is, except the Son, and he to whom the Son will **reveal Him**.

Not only was Jesus revealing the Father, He was making it possible for many to have a one-on-one relationship with the Father. Adam's sin had caused all mankind to be cut off from God—completely isolated from Him. Isaiah gives us an example of the separation between God and man:

Isaiah 64:7 ...For You have hidden your face from us,...because of our iniquities.

## **Children of God the Father**

God the Father remains unknown to the world, but He is “Father” to all those who have the love of Jesus Christ and keep the Commandments (1 John 5:2):

Matthew 5:45 That you **may be** the **Children of your Father** who is in heaven.

John 1:12 As many as received [Jesus], to them gave He power to become the **Children of God**, even to them that believe on His name:

A Christian is distinguished from the people in the world because he has become a Child of God (1 John 3:2). All Children of God have come out of the world, received God's Holy Spirit and begun putting on God's spiritual life (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Jesus also **revealed** the fact that access to the Father was strictly limited (John 6:65):

Matthew 11:27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to **reveal Him.**”

## **Jesus Begins His Ministry**

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jesus began His public ministry on the **Jubilee** year of 26/27 AD when He began to be about the age of 30—the age of the priesthood (Numbers 4:3). The Jubilee Year is each fiftieth year in a forty-nine-year cycle.

Luke 3:23 Jesus, when He began His ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph.

Prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus referenced the Jubilee Year and spoke of these Scriptures (Leviticus 25:8-13). The Jubilee Year is the Lord's year, the **acceptable year** of the Lord when men are set at **liberty** (Isaiah 61:2).

Leviticus 25:10 Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and **proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof**: it shall be a Jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

America's Liberty Bell (August 1752) is an iconic symbol of American **liberty** and freedom, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It's raised inscription reads: “Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof **Lev. XXVvsX.**”

'Liberty' was one of the first things Jesus proclaimed as He began His public ministry. He explained that the spiritual law requires sinful man be in **bondage** to death (Romans 6:23):

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John 8:34, 36 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be **free indeed**. (Romans 8:2)

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** wherewith Christ has made us **free**, and be not entangled again with the yoke of **bondage**.

Not only was it Jesus' **custom** to keep the Sabbaths Holy—He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) because He created the Sabbaths (Genesis 2:2-3).

### **Liberty**

Luke 4:16-19 Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as **His custom** was, He entered into the synagogue on the Day of the **Sabbaths** [Pentecost, Feast of Weeks], and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to **set at liberty** them that are bruised, To preach the **acceptable year** of the Lord.

All of these points were the actions the **Messiah** had been prophesied to perform—and Jesus was applying them to Himself! Those present at this particular Pentecost service were astounded at His proclamation.

Luke 4:20-21 And Jesus closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, **This day is this Scripture** fulfilled in your ears.

### **Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God**

Mark 1:14-15 After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the **Gospel** of the **Kingdom of God**. And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

What is the Gospel—most do not know? The Gospel is **not** the story about Jesus; how He gave sight to the blind; how He walked on water; how He made the lame walk; how He cleansed the lepers and raised the dead (Matthew 11:5). No, the Gospel is what Jesus preached and taught **over** and **above** those miraculous works—it is the **Good News** of His Father's Kingdom. Jesus will come to establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth—that indeed is Good News. God, not Satan will reign supreme over all. This message of the coming Kingdom of God is the **life's lesson** that must be conveyed to the world by every one of the **brethren** of the end-time Church of God—by being a **light to the world** (Matthew 5:14; 24:14). God's law, His love and His way of life will be the norm for all men.

(More on this in Chapter Six.)

## **Teach the Law**

Proverbs 6:23 ... The **law is light**.

The law of God enlightens our path so that we do not stumble and fall because of sin.

Psalms 18:28 O LORD, you **light** my lamp: the LORD my God will **enlighten** my **darkness**.

Psalms 119:105 O LORD, thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and **a light** unto my path.

Romans 7:12 The **law is holy**, and the Commandment holy, and just, and good.

Why is it that so much of the world believes that Jesus did away with the law of God allowing men to run amok doing just as they please? God's intention for man is not for him to behave wildly, uncontrollably and disruptively over his fellow man. Notice Jesus instructions:

Luke 11:35-36 Take heed therefore that the **light** which is in you be not **darkness**. If your whole body therefore be **full of light**, having no part **dark**, the whole shall be **full of light**, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you **light**.

God's law of light is a law of love—meaning that its purpose is for the betterment of self, family, society and nations. Jesus said that, we who have never been able to live up to God's standards perfectly, should look to Him who fulfilled the law, that is, lived up to the full intent of the law. He certainly did not destroy the law of God. He explained that all Christians should be teachers of His law—living peaceable, orderly and law-abiding lives. Jesus said:

Matthew 5:17-19 Do not think for a moment that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [magnify the Law of God]. For truly I say unto you, Until heaven and earth pass, **not one** jot or one tittle shall in anyway pass from the law, until all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven.

There are enormous benefits that accrue to those who live according to the law of God. God blesses everyone who acts in accordance to His holy law because they are advancing **His Plan**—instead of warring against it (Ezekiel 22:26).

Romans 7:12 The Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and just, and good.

That is why Jesus said, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and **keep it**." (Luke 11:28)

Psalms 119:2 Blessed are they that **keep** His testimonies, and that **seek Him** with the whole heart. (Psalm 1:1)

Psalms 119:97-100 O how **love I thy law!** it is my meditation all the day. You, through your Commandments have made me wiser than mine enemies ...I have more understanding than all my teachers: for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your Law.

## **Fulfill All Righteousness**

Jesus was baptized though He never sinned. He told John the Baptist that the reason that He was being baptized was to **fulfill all righteousness**—it was the right thing to do. Righteousness means obedience to the will of God. Jesus demonstrated to John, and to us, that it was His will to do **everything** the Father required of Him – setting us an example to follow.

Matthew 3:13-16 Then Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John the Baptist, to be baptized of him. But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and you come to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Allow it to be so now: for thus it is proper for us to **fulfill all righteousness**. Then he allowed Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: (John 1:32)

God's Spirit is not a bird, and does not look like a dove. Anyone who has ever seen a dove descending knows that they land slowly and gently – not like a bolt of lightning. God's Spirit was manifested in this way for a witness that something truly extraordinary had just taken place. At Pentecost when God's Holy Spirit came upon the first Church saints there was a similar remarkable spectacle observed by all in order to punctuate the fact that something truly breathtaking had occurred.

## **Jesus is Coming a Second Time**

God has graciously revealed so much more to His Church in these last days. God's Church is eagerly awaiting the second coming of Jesus the Messiah. It appears that John the Baptist did not fully understand about the Messiah's two-fold coming, though his obligation was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Notice the expectation of the Messiah...

Matthew 11:1-4 It came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John [the Baptist] had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto [Jesus], Are you He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

Jesus had not been implementing the prophesied vengeance, fire and wrath as John the Baptist expected of Him. In the Old Testament Scriptures, that retribution is rightly attributed to the coming Messiah. The public of Jesus' day even suspected John the Baptist of being the Messiah:

Luke 3:15-16 As the people were in expectation [of the Messiah], and all men mused in their hearts of John [the Baptist], whether he was the Messiah, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I is coming, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire:

John fully expected to see Jesus smite the earth any day. In this next verse we will see the difference in a gospel *about* Jesus, and the true Gospel that Jesus preached concerning the soon coming Kingdom of God. Jesus wanted John the Baptist who had been preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, not to be scandalized, but to recognize that He had been fulfilling the role of the Messiah's **first coming** (Isaiah 35:4-6, Malachi 3:2-3). Jesus sent this message to John the Baptist:

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Matthew 11:5-6 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, *and* the poor have the **Gospel preached** to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

God's people know that Jesus came 2000 years ago – a long time ago – and now expect His **second coming**. Some, however, grow weary in well doing and begin to say where is the promise of His coming; my Lord delays His coming (Luke 12:45)? It should be clear to us that the Messiah has a two-fold coming (Luke 18:8).

## **Forty Days of Temptation**

Satan possessed the authority and power to grant Jesus Christ the things that he tempted Him with. Satan offered Jesus Christ instant gratification, glory and all earthly power forever if only Jesus would yield to him and become subservient to him. For Jesus in the flesh, it constituted a tremendous temptation because Jesus could have avoided persecution and death. Spiritually intense after forty days of fasting to draw near to the Father, Jesus maintained the big picture in His mind (Matthew 4:4).

Matthew 4:8-10 The devil took Jesus up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if you will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said unto him, Get away from me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Luke 4:9, 12 Satan brought Jesus to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: And Jesus answering said unto Satan, It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord thy God.

Mark 1:12-13 Immediately [after Jesus was baptized] the Spirit drove Him [from Jordan River] into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.

## **Who Will be King**

Jesus would have lost His eternal life had He sinned because He was subject to the Law of God, just like every other man. But, Jesus obeyed God—His Father. Satan wanted nothing less than the total destruction and annihilation of Jesus. Satan offered Jesus the world, but Jesus knew that He would have died eternally for the sin of yielding to Satan! Had Jesus sinned on a single point of God's law He would have died for His own sin—just as the first man Adam did. But Jesus grew in Godly character by obeying God, and by suffering and striving against human nature—the same pulls of sinful flesh common to all mankind.

## **Calling His Disciples**

John the Baptist told his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He must increase, and I must decrease (John 3:30).

John 1:40-41 One of the two which heard John the Baptist speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said unto him, **We have found the Messiah**, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

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Matthew 4:21-22 ...Jesus saw two more brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother in a ship with Zebedee their father mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him.

Knowing the **Plan of God**, and that He must be betrayed and put to death, and having inspired the words of the Scriptures, Jesus knew before He chose Judas Iscariot that he was the “son of perdition.” (John 6:71; 17:12)

Psalms 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

John 6:64 There are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew **from the beginning** who they were that believed not, and who should **betray Him**.

Jesus after praying all night before He selected His disciples, Jesus knew what was in the hearts of the men He chose (John 2:24).

Luke 6:12-13 It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named **apostles**. [those sent forth]

Jesus handpicked each of His apostles—only after much prayer and scrutiny. We are given rare insight in the choosing of Bartholomew – or as John called him, Nathaniel. Nathanael of Cana in Galilee possessed a rare sincere character trait—that of **a true Israelite** in God’s sight—in whom there was no agenda, no guile, no hypocrisy, and no deceit. Jesus had seen him in the shade under the fig tree and heard his sincere prayer. When Jesus revealed to Nathanael that He knew the secrets of his mind and heart, Nathanael became a believer (John 1:48).

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, Behold an **Israelite indeed**, in whom is no guile!

This verse gives us insight into the character of Jesus Christ in whom, it goes without saying, there is no guile, vindictiveness or surreptitiousness—a true spiritual **Israelite of God**.

Galatians 6:16 As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the **Israel of God**.

## **Ye Are the Light of the World**

Those saints who believe in Jesus Christ believe in the principles and values that He taught. Too many who say they ‘believe in Jesus’ do not believe what He said, taught and did. His life is not about walking on water, multiplying the loaves, or raising the dead to life. Yes, He did those things, but that was to show that He was the prophesied Messiah. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was coming to this earth—and He taught how those who would be in the Kingdom would live their lives. It will not be like today’s world where God and His ways are relegated to ‘honorable mention’ at best, and are not deserving of first and foremost consideration. Jesus taught His followers how to live their lives. He said to those who would be His saints:

Matthew 5:14 You are the **light of the world**.

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We have no light of our own, but we are able to let the **light of Christ** shine through us.

John 8:12 Jesus said unto them, I am **the light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in **darkness**, but shall have the **light of life**.

Paul described how those who responded to God's calling no longer walked in the **dark** and lawless ways:

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes **darkness**, but now are ye **light** in the Lord: walk as **children of light**.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 Ye are all the **children of light**, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of **darkness**.

Isaiah 42:6-7 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for **a light of the Gentiles** [non-Israelite nations]; To open the **blind** eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in **darkness** out of the prison house.

Isaiah 42:16 ...I will make **darkness light** before the **blind**.

When John wrote that Jesus was the **Light of the World**, it was not a new concept. Isaiah, among others, described Jesus in this way:

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for **your light is come**, and your **glory** of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the **darkness** shall cover the earth, and **gross darkness** shall cover the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His **glory** shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to **your light**, and kings to the **brightness** of your rising.

The brightness of Jesus Christ is often underestimated, but Paul described it wonderfully. Jesus appeared to Paul as a **light brighter than the sun** itself, and repeated His words given to Isaiah. Paul described Jesus' appearance to him in this way:

Acts 26:13, 18 ...I saw in the road **a light** from heaven, brighter than the **brightness of the sun**, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me... To open the eyes of the Gentiles, and to turn them from **darkness to light**, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

## **Lord of the Sabbath**

Jesus created the weekly seventh-day Sabbath for the benefit of mankind. The Sabbath capped-off God's creative efforts! Not only is the Sabbath for man's rest, but it is a prophetic picture of the Plan of God—a spiritual rest hearkening back to the creation week. God, who rested on the seventh day is creating man in His image—so man is to rest on the Sabbath Day as well. It is a Holy Day. God gives man one day in seven to contemplate the spiritual things of God. Jesus said that the Sabbath does not take away from the purpose of man – but is advantageous to fulfilling God's Plan for man.

Mark 2:27-28 Jesus said unto them, The Sabbath was **made for man**, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man [Jesus] is **Lord also of the Sabbath**.

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Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath is supreme in authority over the function and purpose of the Sabbath.

Genesis 2:3 God blessed the **seventh day**, and sanctified it [made it holy]: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

God rested! God was not tired – He does not get tired. God rested on the Sabbath Day showing that it was the beginning of His **spiritual creation** for mankind. The seventh day Sabbath is a prophetic picture of the Millennial Rest at the culmination of six-thousand years, each week day representing 1,000 years, of human bondage to the labor of sin. Man will be able to rest—when man will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

Jesus will establish God the Father's Kingdom over all the earth and Jesus will reign supreme with His saints (Revelation 11:15; 20:4, 6).

Israel and Judah went into national captivity for **Sabbath breaking** and **idolatry** (Ezekiel 20:12-23). Few realize that these Scriptures are a prophecy for modern Israel today, but America, England and the English-speaking people today are about to suffer a similar fate.

Isaiah 56:1-2 Thus says the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that does this, and the son of man that lays hold on it; that **keeps the Sabbath** from polluting it and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

The Sabbath is for the purpose of worshipping God and learning all about Him. In Genesis, we are able to see that the Sabbath was the beginning of the spiritual creation (Genesis 2:3). It is the one day of the week set apart by God for physical resting. Even God rested! God is deadly serious about no work being done on the Sabbath:

Exodus 35:2 Six days shall work be done, but on the **seventh day** there shall be to you an Holy Day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.

Sabbath services are not primarily a social occasion, but a day in which Christians seek ways to live according to the rules of the Kingdom—even now. Those who are in Christ have been spiritually conveyed into His Kingdom already (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:13). When Christians assemble they do so primarily for the purpose of:

Hebrews 10:24-25 ... considering one another to provoke unto **love and to good works** [and] exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

## **Heart and Spirit of Christ**

God has called students and disciples out of this world to follow Jesus Christ. Christians are called now, not solely for the purpose of salvation, but for the purpose of the Gospel's sake and learning to teach others. Prior to baptism God leads a person to believe in Jesus Christ the son of God his Savior, and to heartily repent of sin and begin to live his life in accordance with His words and obedience to His Commandments. Another important thing to consider before baptism is to **count the cost** of becoming a Christian for Jesus said that one must be willing to give up everything including **their own life** to be His disciple (Luke 14:26-27,33). It is not easy to be a Christian. Wherever life takes a Christian, he must be faithful to the end. The Church brethren are called to be trained to become rulers and teachers in the coming Millennium of the Kingdom of God on earth. They will rule and teach under the King of kings, Jesus, when the Tree of Life will be opened to all men. All people are not being called by God at this time. God speaks of the time when they shall be called:

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Joel 2:28 It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh...

It is the **Heart and Spirit of Christ** that makes one a Christian. Christianity is not merely an intellectual endeavor. Too many people make that mistake! They speak religious sounding words but in fact they exhibit very little, if any, Christian substance. Religious practice in many congregations today is only a pretense of true Godly faith. Conventional Christianity may be a wonderful social experience rejoicing in olden festivities, but it does not resolutely adhere to the Christianity of Christ. Jesus came to make a **division** between customary superficial religion and His way of life:

Matthew 10:33-35 Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but **a sword**. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

It may seem strange to hear the King of Peace say, "Do not assume that I have come to bring **peace** to the earth; I have not come to bring **peace**." What it means is that Jesus will not compromise or step aside from His Father's perfect way in order to find some middle ground with this present evil world (Galatians 1:4). The true Church does not lower Christ's standards in order to make itself attractive to the world. Branding, or appearing to be likeminded with the public, is not the approach of the Gospel message (Mark 10:28-30). Jesus **laid down His life**, and a Christian must do likewise. That message is not to be soft-pedaled, played down, or de-emphasized. God calls only those He knows will be able to live up to His high standards. The Church must not try to build and sustain an alluring brand so as to successfully compete in the marketplace.

Thankfully we have, in Jude verse 3, the answer to where one can find True Christianity. "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." That was the true Christianity practiced as Jesus and the apostles taught it. We must find it again. It is extremely difficult to be and remain a true Christian.

### **You Will Be Persecuted**

In the exact same way that Jesus was ridiculed, dismissed, and ultimately killed, true Christians are not accepted, but reproached, and brought to ruin. True Christians will be disfellowshipped, persecuted and **put out** of the congregations when they live by Godly principles, standards, and remain faithful to the Truth. During the apostasy, the great deception of the 1980s, some true ministers continued to stand for the doctrine of Jesus Christ. They had left everything behind – home, family, profession, and security – devoting themselves entirely to the service of God's people. They were marked, and disfellowshipped – not for sin or heresy, but for political expediency (Romans 16:17). The great majority of the church pastors closed their eyes to that heavy-handed practice, not considering that God will hold them just as accountable as the perpetrators of the evil ordeal (Leviticus. 5:1). God will not hold them guiltless. One of the last things Jesus told His disciples was to expect that kind of treatment, even from the church rulers and powers that be:

John 16:1-3 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They **shall put you out** of the assembly places of worship: yes, the time comes that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

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Luke 21:12 ...They shall seize you, and **persecute you**, and deliver you up to be tried in your synagogues, and be put into prisons, and you will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

Luke 6:22-23 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall **reproach you**, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

### **False Teachers**

The religious environment that Jesus encountered was a noxious syncretistic amalgamation of God's word, tainted Judaism, Babylonian influence, Platonic doctrine and Greek philosophy—the end result being a **fatal blend** which denied the integrity of the True faith. Too much of that environment prevails today. Jesus established True Christianity in His followers. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one must expeditiously and fastidiously believe and follow the meaning of every Scripture in order to learn God's intent for us. Knowing the Truth of God and putting it off for a more convenient day is foolishness. God tells us that we must make the most of our opportunities while we have the occasion (Proverbs 10:5). All the elements of the True faith—the word of God—were delivered to the first-century Church of God. Nevertheless, God's people have been continuously plagued by false prophets, false ministers and those who would pervert the word of God. Jesus warned that false teachers would deceive many up unto our day.

Matthew 24:11-14 Many **false prophets** shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this **Gospel of the Kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Acts 20:29-30 [Paul echoed the same warning.] I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

### **Teach us to Pray**

More than a prayer to be memorized and recited, Jesus taught His disciples **how** to pray. First and foremost, prayer is to be directed to God the Father, recognizing His sovereignty. Jesus told them how to pray:

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive every one that is indebted to us; and lead us not into trials but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:1-3)

Some late translations from the Byzantine text include a version of a doxology from David's blessing in 1 Chronicles 29:11:

“For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”

## **Give us This Day our Daily Bread**

Most of this world believes that, “Give us this day our daily bread,” is a simple request for daily physical food – but it is clearly not an appeal for daily physical nourishment. To the contrary, Jesus taught the disciples:

Matthew 6:31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

The misunderstanding surrounding the translation of the unique Greek word ‘*epiousios*,’ arises from a lack of understanding of this word which was coined and used only by Jesus.

John 6:51 Jesus said: I am the **living bread** which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever:

John 6:58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of **this bread** shall live forever.

The renowned Biblical scholar, E.W. Bullinger believed that the word *epiousios* is a reference to Jesus Christ—speaking of Himself – the true spiritual Bread of Life that descends from heaven (Nehemiah 9:15, Revelation 2:17, Matthew 4:4, and John 6)

“**Give us this day our daily bread,**” is a request to our Father to have Jesus Christ, the True Bread from heaven, live His perfect life in us and provide all things necessary for salvation.

When Jesus said, “Deliver us from the evil one,” it was a request to the Father to release us from the devil, the power of darkness.

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in **light**: Who has delivered us from the **power of darkness**, and has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son:

1 John 2:9-11 He that says he is in the **light**, and hates his brother, is in **darkness** even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the **light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother **is in darkness**, and walks in **darkness**, and knows not whither he goes, because that **darkness** has blinded his eyes.

## **I Will Build My Church**

Jesus Christ is the wise master builder. Everyone knows that Jesus established the Church – but what is the basis upon which the Church of God is built? The Church was built on the fact that Jesus is the **Messiah**. Speaking to the apostles, and Peter specifically, Jesus said:

Matthew 16:19 I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Let’s understand that Matthew 16:19 does not appoint the Pope, nor anyone in the ministry of God’s Church to judge any person, or to represent God’s authority and have his decision ratified in heaven. This verse has been misused by men and organizations as the basis for church authority, the primacy of Peter, and the establishment of a ministerial elite class of church leaders. This was not Christ’s intent at all—quite the opposite.

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It is important to understand what Jesus was saying. The conversation began when Jesus asked His men, “**Whom** do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13) Jesus was establishing for His disciples what, or more properly, **whom** the foundation of the Church would be built upon.

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered and said, “**You** are the **Messiah**,” the Son of the living God.

God the Father had revealed that precious truth to Peter because Peter had not figured it out for himself (Matthew 16:17). The Father had shown Peter that Jesus was the anointed one, the Savior, who would rule in the Kingdom of God. Jesus was confirming to them that He was that long sought for Messiah—that was the topic of the conversation they were having. “**You are the Messiah**,” that is the basis, the foundation, the rock, upon which Jesus would build His Church.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [little stone], and upon this mega-rock I will build my Church; and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it.

Jesus was establishing this fact in their minds: “Upon this rock,” “This foundation,” “This corner stone,” “This key-stone,” “**I am the Messiah**,” I will build my Church. Jesus was looking Peter right in the eye – and He utilized a play on words – *petros* and *petra* – but the intent was that Jesus was saying to them all – the Church is built on the fact that **Jesus is the Messiah** (Matthew 16:19).

Jesus was telling them then, and He is telling the Church brethren today, that they are being held responsible for this precious knowledge – that **Jesus is the Messiah**. That meant that whatever they did from that point forward would be recorded in heaven as a testament to their very lives and how they lived them. Judgment is upon those who are converted and led by God’s Spirit—everything is recorded in heaven (1 Peter 4:17). However, judgment is reserved for a later time for those who are in the world – that is why Jesus directed His disciples not to tell others:

Matthew 16:20 Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was **Jesus the Messiah**.

Everyone is liable for what they know, and those who are converted are responsible, and are being judged now! The Church brethren are being tested and tried now for the purpose of writing a permanent record in the Book of Life.

Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18), has appointed no divinely ordained interpreter of the Scriptures on earth (2 Peter 1:20). God leads His called-out Church people in truth and understanding through His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14, 1 Corinthians 2:13-14). The Church of God is not visible to the world because it is a **spiritual entity**—the Body of Christ. There is no appointed or ordained leader of a church organization that possesses authority or dominion over members of the Church (2 Corinthians 1:24). The Bible—God’s Word—is the authority which rules through the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Church members (1 John 2:27).

Man tends to have an 'inherent' and 'innate' desire to belong and be a useful part of something greater than himself. There is a basic need to be loved and accepted. When those desires are shattered – one feels rejected. God the Father has reconciled His Children to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). That will never be shattered! The Biblical concept of ‘Church’ is much more than organization, authority, name, and numbers...

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The 'Church' is those converted people—Christ's Body—with a core set of beliefs, practices and identity who are led by God's Spirit – with a true unity of that Spirit. There are many groups that claim to be God's Church without possessing the all-encompassing life's set of ideal standards and boundless Christian love. It is God alone who has separated us out of this evil world. God the Father has placed us where we belong:

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, who has enabled us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints **in light**: [The saints and the Church are one and the same!] Who has delivered us from the power of **darkness** [where we do not belong] and has conveyed us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

### **The Bible is the Word of God**

Proverbs 30:5 Every **Word of God** is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.

God has given His people the entire word of truth. It is His manual for us, that we may be able to be as He is (Romans 10:17). Jesus said, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every **word of God** (Luke 4:4). God has preserved His every word—both Old and New Testaments. First, He used the Jews to preserve His Truth:

“To them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). This means that the Jews were responsible for the accurate conveyance of Scripture throughout history. The Old Testament Scriptures were codified by Ezra. Ezra wrote the Books of Chronicles, as part of his work in canonizing the Old Testament Scriptures. The Chronicles were the last books of the Old Testament to be written. The three apostles who codified the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were Paul, Peter and John. John wrote the Book of Revelation. John was of the priestly line of Aaron. As the last living apostle, John compiled, arranged and canonized the entire New Testament.

Paul instructed the Church to hold fast to sound doctrine and the truths he had taught them in his letters (2 Timothy 4:1-7). Luke, Mark and Silvanus helped Paul canonize some of his epistles.

Hebrews 4:12 For the **Word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The **entire Bible** is the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13).

### **Jesus Healed the Multitudes**

Matthew 15:30-31 Great multitudes came unto Jesus, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and **He healed** them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Healing is a miraculous occurrence wherein the physical laws of the universe are held in abeyance while God's supernatural intervention restores right health as it was in the beginning. Healing is achieved without the violation of God's perfect law—which never happens—but by God's compassion and mercy (Romans 7:12, Matthew 9:1-8).

Mark 5:33-34 The woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Jesus, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, **thy faith has made you whole**; go in peace and be whole of thy plague.

Luke 17:19 Jesus said to the cleansed leper, Arise, go thy way: **thy faith hath made thee whole**.

God has promised to heal us according to our faith—and He does (Psalm 30:2; 103:3). He is our Divine Healer. Healing is accomplished in those of faith when the suffering of Christ is accepted by the Father **in place** of the travail of one who is ill. "By His stripes we are healed." In the same way that Jesus died so that repentant sinners might live, He also suffered so that those who are sick might be made whole. Jesus personally bore our sins in His own body when He was killed so that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:24).

Jesus' **anguish and suffering** began before He ever felt a fist, a thorn, a whip, a nail, or a spear. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was overwhelmed by such grief that He could hardly breathe.

Matthew 26:36-39 Jesus began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto the disciples, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Jesus would not have prayed that urgent appeal to His Father if His anguish had been tolerable. Jesus knew that He would be physically marred more than any man, but His greater grief and sorrow stemmed from man's betrayal and rejection of Him (Isaiah 52:14). Most Christians do not realize that next to loving God, Himself, it is His desire that the brethren **care for one another**. They also do not realize that a **Godly brotherly love** is the primary prerequisite for healing. "For this **cause** (without brotherly love) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [are dead]." (1 Corinthians 11:30) The "cause" of illness and death was the division among the brethren, which constituted not **discerning the Lord's body** – that is, not determining and making a distinction between who were converted brethren and who were of the world.

## **The Called-Out-Ones are the Church Brethren**

Matthew 16:18 [Jesus said] ... **I will build my Church** [*ekklesia*]...

The apostle Paul spoke of all those who believed in Jesus Christ as being an inseparable **body** of believers.

Romans 12:5 We, being many, are one **body** in Christ, and every one members one of another.

It is important to grasp this concept because Paul often said things that were difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16). Those believers were none other than Jesus' true **called** out ones—the '*ekklesia*'—the Church brethren who were **called** unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9). Paul went on to say that the **body** belonged to Jesus Christ—they were His possession. Paul stated that it was the Passover fellowship that united the brethren into one **body**:

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the **Body of Christ**? For we being many are one bread, and **one body**: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

1 Corinthians 12:12 As the [human] body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: **so also is Christ.**

1 Corinthians 12:27 You are the **Body** of Christ, and members in particular.

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the **Body** of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23 ...Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the **body.**

## **The Church Brethren Are the Lord's Body**

The Church of God today really needs to grasp what Paul meant by, "the Lord's body." When we read the words, "the Lord's Body," we should understand that Paul is referring to the Christian believers—the Church brethren—who make up the Church of God (Ephesians 1:22-23).

When many people hear the phrase, The Lord's Body, they immediately recollect the **dead body** of Jesus that was taken off the cross and laid on a stone slab in a tomb. However, often times when the Lord's **Body** is spoken of in the New Testament, it is a direct reference to the **Church**—the Church brethren—and not Jesus' physical body. Jesus Christ revealed to Paul that the Church brethren are in effect, His **Body**:

Colossians 1:24 ...For **His** [Christ's] **body's** sake, which is the **Church.**

The phrase, The Lord's Body, takes on additional meaning as the Scriptures unfold. This allegory leads to a deeper spiritual understanding where words sometimes fail us. The **spiritual meaning** and intent of Scripture is always broader and more profound than physical fact. Many verses firmly establish that the "body" of Christ is a direct reference to the Church of God brethren. Paul built on that correlation of Christ's **body** being the **Church brethren** and tied it to marriage – as husband and wife are **one flesh – one body** in marriage.

## **Discern the Lord's Body**

"Division" among the brethren was the subject being addressed when Paul wrote that some of those of the **Lord's body** were shunning one another and some brethren were not being properly accepted and acknowledged (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:18). Paul let them know how serious the matter was:

Why were once faithful members of God's Church dying prematurely? When a once converted person turns his back on some of God's people—rejecting a part of the Body of Christ—he reviles the Holy Spirit and loses God's protection over his life (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26, Mark 3:29).

Every faithful member must absolutely grasp the definition of the Lord's body from the Bible itself. The Body of Christ is the Church of God—the brethren of the Church. This concept of one body is solidly established in Scripture. The purpose of the Church is nothing less than to ultimately bring all mankind to be of one Spirit – bringing the entire world to salvation. Passover pictures Jesus' death—body and blood—shed, not only for the saints, but for the entire world (John 3:17). The unleavened **bread and wine** are not to be taken lightly:

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1 Corinthians 11:27 Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall **be guilty** of the body and blood of the Lord.

Not only does division and discrimination destroy fellowship and unity, it is as though Christ were being **crucified anew** (Hebrews 6:6).

1 Corinthians 11:28-30 But let a man examine himself, and [if he accepts all the brethren without reservation] **then** let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks [the Passover] unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the **Lord's body**. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Are Christians able to discern who their brothers and sisters in Christ are—distinguish between the world and the Church, and treat all the brethren accordingly? Taking **Passover** while refusing to be reconciled to others renders the Passover service contemptible in God's sight. All true Christians must be wholeheartedly accepted, without exception, counting them as brethren. Salvation is at stake.

Paul said that a Christian must examine himself as to whether or not he is a part of any division before taking Passover. There can be no hate, despise, or rejection of any of the saints, as that behavior defines **not discerning the Lord's body**. The saints are obligated to extend their realm of fellowship to include all who have the earnest of God's Holy Spirit. Paul characterized personal scrutiny and **self-examination** as properly "discerning the Lord's body."

The heart of the matter is that the Corinthians were "**not discerning the Lord's Body**." Those Passover participants did not regard everyone there equally – as all being members of Christ's Body. That division was going on at the Passover service in question. 'Discernment,' means understanding and perceiving that all the brethren, regardless of their background, comprise the one Body of Christ. The Lord's Body is the Church – the saints – the elect children of God – the Bride – the brethren – members of the Lord's Body. Keep in mind that Paul is discussing the lack of discernment – the division taking place in the congregation (1 Corinthians 11:18). 'Discernment,' means realizing that God places the members in the Body as He chooses – and none who are led by God's Holy Spirit are to be excluded from recognition and fellowship:

1 Corinthians 12:18 God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it **pleases Him**.

Who can argue with that? It must be understood that all the brethren constitute the Church. Jesus is the head of His Church; and converted Christians are individuals of His spiritual body. Paul wrote:

Ephesians 1:22-23 [God the Father] has put all things under [Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the **Church, which is His Body**" [the one spiritual Body of Christ].

Anyone who expects to be the Bride of Christ, is obligated to extend their realm of brotherhood, fellowship, and service to include all who have the earnest of God's Holy Spirit. We cannot hate, despise, neglect, or reject any of the saints, as that behavior will **disqualify** us from the Kingdom of God. Those who are only interested in preparing themselves, while neglecting the spiritual welfare of their brethren, have fallen for the deception of Cain, who asked in Genesis 4:9, "Am I my brother's keeper?" At the close of the church-age just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, this terrible division is once again rampant among God's people. The Laodiceans are not zealous and on fire, but weak and sick spiritually (Revelation 3:19).

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Paul said that we must examine ourselves as to whether or not we are a part of any division. "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be **divisions among you** (1 Corinthians 11:18)." That was the very reason that God refrained from **healing** those who did not accept all the brethren in a right spirit.

Much can be learned about healing from Christ's **doctrine** of the **Laying on of Hands**, which sadly, most churches do not believe or practice. Paul says:

Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore leaving the principles of the **doctrine of Christ**, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of **laying on of hands**, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Anointing with **oil**, the **laying on of hands**, and the sending of an anointed cloth to the sick, are expressions of what God has shown us for the purpose of healing, setting apart, or sanctification by prayer.

It happened in Paul's day, as it often does today, that the saints were just too far away for the physical Laying on of Hands. Thankfully, Paul knew that this holy "setting apart" is truly **spiritual in nature**. He sent a piece of cloth with a little oil through the mail to the distant person who was in need of God's healing. When "anointing the sick," **oil**, representing the healing power of **God's Holy Spirit**, is used in the Laying on of Hands. Anointing is the ceremony of setting apart with (olive) oil representing God's Holy Spirit.

"Laying on of hands" is a holy ceremony in which an ordained representative of Jesus Christ extends his hands and places them upon the head or body of the person who is ill. This prayerful request to the Father pictures God stretching forth His holy hand to bless and to heal the ailing person by accepting the sufferings of Jesus Christ on behalf of the sick person (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5).

Acts 4:30 By **stretching forth thine hand to heal**; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.

Jesus Christ, as the Lord God of the Old Testament, established and utilized the "Laying on of Hands" as one of His foundational doctrines, rituals or ceremonies. When it was nearly time for Moses to pass on his responsibilities to Joshua, the Lord told him to "lay hands" on Joshua so that everyone would look to Joshua in obedience, and Moses "laid his hands" upon him and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded (Numbers 27:18-23). During His personal ministry, Jesus often employed this custom in the dispensing of blessings and healings.

Luke 4:40 All they that had any sick with different kinds of diseases brought them unto [Jesus]; and He **laid his hands** on every one of them, and healed them.

Luke 13:11-13 When Jesus saw the woman, doubled-over with a spirit of illness for eighteen years, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He **laid His hands** on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

The Laying on of Hands, then, is one of the essential **doctrinal truths** of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:2). It is the prescribed procedure for performing a number of divine functions including, but not limited to: The Blessing of little children • Anointing for healings • Ordinations • The Blessing of marriages • and, Imparting the gift of God's Holy Spirit at Baptism.

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The brethren of the Church of God are blessed to know and participate in these ceremonies, utilizing the “Laying on of Hands” by which God bestows spiritual gifts on them. Most religious organizations do not practice the Laying on of Hands or recognize the blessings that this intimate and meaningful doctrine brings. God established the Laying on of Hands in order for us to see **His direct intervention** in our lives. When we are ill, it would be so easy to pray to God with our head on our pillow and say, “Oh God please heal me.” But God tells us to bring a formal petition to Him through His ordained elders. God has promised to reward this kind of faith. The words “ordained” and “anointed” are similar.

James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? 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 shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.

In the New Testament Church of God, we see examples of Christ’s representatives laying hands on those who were baptized so that they might receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:15-17 When [Peter and John] were come down, they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: (For as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then they **laid their hands** on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

God’s Holy Spirit is imparted to new Christians, right after baptism, with the Laying on of Hands.

Acts 19:5-6 They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had **laid his hands** upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them.

In the “Blessing of the Little Children” ceremony, our young children are dedicated to God. There is a special request made that God place His angels about them for their protection (Matthew 18:10). In the blessing of the young children, we are following Jesus’ example:

Matthew 19:13-15 Then were there brought unto him little children, that [Jesus] should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, allow little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of heaven. And He **laid His hands** on them.

A Christian marriage ceremony is another occasion for the laying on of hands. Marriage is a **divine institution** in which a couple enters into a covenant relationship with each other, and also with God. As the couple face one another and join hands, the presiding minister **lays his hands** on them, and asks God’s blessings on their marriage.

It is only after prayer, fasting and due consideration, that ordinations to special duties and offices are performed through the **laying on of hands**. Paul cautioned Timothy, “Lay hands too quickly on no man.” That is because stringent qualifications must be met by those men who become ordained servants of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:5).

In the early New Testament Church, when the number of the disciples in the faith increased rapidly, the twelve apostles asked them to choose men of moral character and good reputation to be “deacons.”

Acts 6:5-3 The saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, ...whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they **laid their hands** on them.

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A word of caution is needed because of the many false ministers that Jesus warned us of. Many superstitious and unconverted men have coveted the power to bestow God's gifts through the laying on of hands. God will not give this power to anyone except the true servants of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:18-21). Here are a few more examples of Laying on of Hands. Note the apostle Paul being healed and anointed while he was yet called Saul:

Acts 9:17 Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and **putting his hands** on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 5:21-23 When Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea. And, behold, there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray thee, come and **lay thy hands** on her, that she may be **healed**; and she shall live.

There are many other Scriptures about the **laying on of hands**: Acts 13:2-3, Numbers 27:18, 23, Deuteronomy 34:9, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Mark 6:5, Acts 28:8, Genesis 48:13-20.

## **Reconciliation**

By addressing division within the Church, Paul shows that, not only our healing, but our very **salvation** depends on our truly caring for one another. Scripture does not allow for Christians to co-exist without properly relating to one another. It is clear that for us to have a right relationship with God, it is first necessary to "get right" with others. Jesus tells us that as Christians our priority must be to reconcile, not only with God, but also with one another. Christ taught that **reconciliation** has a higher priority than even church attendance.

Matthew 5:24 Be reconciled to thy brother, and **then** come and offer thy gift.

Since our unity with the Father and the Son begins at baptism, then so does our unity with one another.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into **one body** ...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

How much more clearly could it be written? Brethren become unified spiritually - one in Spirit, and one in the Body of Christ. By definition, it is absolutely impossible to have Christian love for only **a part** of the Body of Christ. We cannot serve some brethren while neglecting other brethren.

Ephesians 4:2-4 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

It is very clear what God's intent is – that people learn to live, to love, to work, to associate, etc., together. God wants us to learn how to live with one another now, so that we will know how to live with Him eternally. We cannot hate, despise, or reject any of the saints, as that behavior defines "not" discerning the Lord's body. We are obligated to extend our realm of fellowship to include **all** who have the earnest of God's Holy Spirit. Paul characterized our self-examination as properly "discerning the Lord's body." Our **healing** depends on understanding the full extent of this Scripture.

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There is a direct correlation between Divine healing and the unity and oneness we share with all of the children of God who constitute the Lord's body. Paul said that **sickness and death**, not healing, was the result of partaking of the Passover while division existed among the saints.

Those brethren who Paul was addressing had not **discerned the Lord's body** because there was partiality between the brethren. We are reconciled to God the Father by the death of His Son. Jesus was sent to this earth, not only to be sacrificed unto death and raised unto life, but in order to enable mankind to be **reconciled to God the Father** after their disobedient choice in the Garden of Eden. God was in Jesus making reconciliation, but He has charged us to be reconcilers and peace-makers with all the brethren as well—our healing depends on it.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the service of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has **committed unto us** the word of **reconciliation**.

Reconciliation is the restoration of good and right fellowship with all the brethren. This entire healing and salvational process is contingent on our having direct positive interaction and unity **with God's people**. If we, who are called of God, possess a genuine devotion and Godly tenderness for the brethren, we will not diminish the sacrifice of Christ.

We are healed by His stripes. Our **ultimate healing**, which is our salvation, awaits us because Jesus was raised to life by the Father, and so we shall be saved by His life (1 Peter 1:18-21).

Romans 13:10-11 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And do this [loving our neighbor], knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

When we worship the True God, keep His commandments, love the brethren, and discern the Lord's Body, our petition to the Divine Healer is heard. Too many Christians see the phrase, "discerning the Lord's body," as meaning that one must recognize that healing is a result of the **broken body** of Jesus. That is a misunderstanding as the result of an error in translation. Discerning the Lord's body has nothing to do with the concept of the Lord's body being broken—it was not! Yes, Jesus was beaten and tortured – but He was **not broken**. What does Scripture tell us?

### **Jesus' Bones Were Not Broken**

Prophecy that Jesus' bones would not be broken was fulfilled. Jesus was beaten, nailed, pierced, crucified, and killed. His bones were even exposed. Why was it so important a concept that His bones not be broken? The answer lies in the **integrity** of "the Lord's Body" – the very **people of God** who are "of His bones." Adam spoke for Jesus and the Church brethren when he said, "bone of My bones, and flesh of My flesh." (Ephesians 5:30-32, Genesis 2:23).

Christ's Church is therefore to remain **unbroken** and not be shattered into splinters. It is not God's Will that the "Body of Christ" – the true Church people, be broken apart. It is His Will that the true body of believers be unified in love and in Spirit – being of one mind with each other. The Church of God is not to be broken – it is to be prepared in **unity, wholeness and oneness** to be the Bride who will have made herself ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

## **Jesus' Body Was Not Broken**

The question has been asked, "Was not Jesus' body broken to make payment for our healing?" The Scriptures reveal that for our healing Jesus received "**stripes**" – not broken bones. "By whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:5) The Bible manuscripts specify that **Christ's body was not broken**. The King James translators, not realizing the significance of Jesus' bones remaining intact and unbroken (Exodus 12:46), incorrectly embellished the Greek text. They misapplied the phrase "**which is broken**" to the following verse – which is not in the original text.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 The Lord Jesus ...took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, take, eat: this is My body, **which is broken** for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

It does not say that in the original Greek. What then is the correct translation? This is how the Scripture should be correctly rendered according to E. W. Bullinger:

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 The Lord Jesus ...took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, this is My body, for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

That is what took place at Jesus' last Passover. Jesus **broke the unleavened bread** that represented His body. The Greek, *'k/ao,* Strong's 2806, means only "**to break bread,**" as in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. This word is never used in the sense of breaking bones. It always means to have a meal as the saints did: "breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart." (Acts 2:46)

Jesus was beaten with many stripes. He was crucified, and He died – but His bones **were not broken**. "When they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water ...these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, **A bone of Him shall not be broken.**" (John 19:33-36). This incredible symbolism has tremendous significance for God's Church brethren today.

God went to great lengths to prophesy about the bones of Jesus. It was told that Jesus would receive "stripes," but none of His bones would be broken. David was inspired by Christ to give us this Messianic prophecy. "**He keeps all His bones:** not one of them is broken." (Psalms 34:20)

Scripture reveals that we, the Church, the saints of God, are also represented **by the bones** of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:30 We are members of His **body**, of His **flesh**, and of His **bones**.

As the future Wife of Christ, we, the Church of God, are "of His bones," just as Eve was bone of Adam's bones. (Genesis 2:23, Ephesians 5:30) Therefore, the Church is to be **unbroken**, and to remain **one intact body**—one in spirit—as the bond between Jesus and His Bride is unbreakable and inseparable.

It is through the entire ordeal of Jesus Christ's anguish, torment, and suffering, that healing is available to those who are ailing. When a Christian goes to God **in faith** by being anointed with oil and accepts the sacrifice of Christ to cover sins repented of, their prayer is heard (James 5:14). Prophesying of the Messiah to come, Isaiah chastises us for our division:

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Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have **gone astray**; we have turned everyone to his **own way**; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus paid the entire price so that His people may be made whole in every way, physically, emotionally (restoring the broken-hearted), psychologically and especially, spiritually (Psalm 147:3, Matthew 15:30). Since all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose, we understand that God is fully in control of our lives (Romans 8:28) Time and chance do not happen to the people of God until His purpose is accomplished in them.

Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God whose bones were not broken (Exodus 12:46).

### **Answered Prayer**

When one goes to God **in faith** through anointing, accepting the affliction of Christ to cover sin and sickness, that man's prayer is heard. "The effectual fervent **prayer** of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16)

1 John 3:22-23 Whatsoever we ask, we **receive of Him**, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His Commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, as He gave us commandment.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we **have the petitions** that we desired of Him.

God built into man the natural ability to heal. Our immune systems fight foreign invaders in our system. Broken bones grow back together. Tendons heal stronger than before a break. But 6,000 years of sin and degradation have taken their toll on the human anatomy. By all means, Jesus expects all to live lives conducive to good health. Only upon faith, which includes repentance, should one ask God's healing of damage that has occurred as a result of a wrong lifestyle.

James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? 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** shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Jesus healed, not those who were converted Christians, but everyday folks from all walks of life. He healed them because of the compassion He had for them, and as a sign that He was the Messiah to come (Luke 7:13, Matthew 11:2-6).

### **One Body – One Spirit**

At creation, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and He opened his side and created Eve to be his wife.

Genesis 2:23-24 Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh ... Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**.

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This is a prototype of **Christ and His Bride**. Paul understood the prophetic significance, referring to Jesus as the final Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45, Romans 5:14). Jesus Christ foretold that He and His Bride would be **one body**, and ultimately - **one Spirit**.

1 Corinthians 6:17 He that is joined unto the Lord is **one Spirit** [with the Lord].”

It cannot be emphasized enough how serious a matter it is that the True Church recognize the unbreakable bond that exists between all its members.

### **Christ in Us**

Jesus Christ is lived in every Christian's life. Christ, His **principles and values** are the guiding motivation and only path. For those who seek the riches of God's glory, Paul put it this way:

Colossians 1:27 ...**Christ in you**, the hope of glory...

Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also **Christ shall be magnified** in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

2 Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the **life also of Jesus** might be **made manifest** in our body.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ  **dwell in you** richly in all wisdom.

John 6:27 Labor not for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures unto eternal life, which the **Son of man** [Jesus] shall give unto you.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body **be preserved** blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Bread of Life**

John 6:33 The bread of God is [Jesus] who comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.

John 6:35 Jesus said unto them, I am the **bread of life**: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:48 I am that **bread of life**.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and **they are life**.

## **That They May Be One**

This was Jesus' dying wish. Jesus' prayer was for the unity of the brethren.

Colossians 3:15 You are called into **one body**; and be ye thankful.

Every Christian must be: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). When Paul said that we must be properly "discerning the Lord's Body," he meant that we cannot take the Passover and at the same time be responsible for any of the division; the broken, shattered condition of the Church people. The Church of God is not to be broken.

"**That they may be one.**" These words were spoken by Jesus Christ the night before He died as He prayed for us to His Heavenly Father (John 17). **Five times** Jesus expressed His desire for our unity – not only a unity of the original apostles – but also of all who have followed in their footsteps, generation by generation. Notice the **significant repetition** of the phrase 'that they may be one' in Jesus' prayer:

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, **that they may be one**, as We are.

John 17:21 **That they all may be one**; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, **that they also may be one** in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

John 17:22 And the glory which Thou gave Me I have given them; that **they may be one**, even as We are one.

John 17:23 I in them, and you in me, that **they may be made perfect in one**; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.

Our response to this deep desire for unity that Jesus pleaded for should be to do everything humanly possible to bring about the unity and oneness of the brethren of the Church of God. It has always been God's Will that His Church, His children, be unified – made one by His Spirit. As God's children, we should be **laying down our lives** to help bring about unification in attitude, direction, and fellowship of the brethren; especially as we find ourselves separated by the imaginary walls of worldly administrations.

Philippians 2:1-2 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, **being of one accord**, of one mind.

Our individual responsibility in working to bring about Godly unity is a matter of **personal salvation**. We will not attain to eternal life unless we develop a Christ-like love for all of the saints.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we **love the brethren**. He that loves not his brother **abides in death**.

The basis of unity and oneness is a genuine care and deep concern for the complete well-being of all the brethren. This kind of unity requires nothing less than putting our very lives on the line for the sake of one another. Oneness demands the right application of Godly principles when interacting with our brethren. In short, oneness requires Christian love.

God's Church is not a place! It is a people, yielded to God, who exhibit unity and love for all. God commands all of His children to be one with all whom He calls, because we are to **be one in His Spirit**.

1 Corinthians 6:17 He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.

## **Footwashing**

Where the synoptic Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention the establishment of the bread and wine at Passover, John's Gospel entirely omits those accounts, giving weight to the Footwashing in the meaning of the Passover. Jesus served mankind – and He intends that we serve one another. The concept of spiritual cleansing portrayed by the Footwashing is rich in spiritual depth and implication.

We know what it means to be **served** our coffee and a meal by a server, waiter or waitress. True **Christian service** to one another entails so much more than being a cordial host or hostess. The introduction to the Footwashing begins on Passover evening before Jesus Christ died. Passover is a most solemn Feast picturing the death of Jesus Christ, and all that entails. The fare of this Feast is nothing less than the body and blood of Jesus Christ which brings eternal life.

John 13:1 Now just before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. [Very powerful poetic words!]

On this night Jesus observed and brought to an end the Old Testament Passover meal, and initiated the New Testament Passover service. While the Old Testament Passover Seder was in progress:

John 13:4-5 Jesus Christ rose up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a servant's towel, and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the servant's towel wherewith He was girded.

Extrapolating backward, the translators of the Amplified Bible correctly joined the word, "servant's," to this passage. Why did Jesus wash the disciple's feet, and why did He institute the Footwashing command as an integral part of the New Testament Passover? What spiritual lesson should be drawn from the Footwashing?

When Jesus said, "You also ought to wash one another's feet," He was inaugurating a most important Passover element (John 13:14). Is the Footwashing optional, or is it commanded? Why must Christians wash the feet of others? Some people think that the Footwashing is for the sole purpose of teaching us to be humble. The Footwashing does require that we have a humble attitude, but it means much more than merely humbling ourselves by washing the dirty feet of others. We must be careful not to fall into the trap of acquiring a false humility as a result of the Footwashing ceremony. By His example, Jesus was teaching us how to **serve** and **forgive others** just as He has done. There is no greater servant in the universe than God the Father (John 3:16-17). Godly service is the essence of Godliness. The Footwashing is about learning to serve one another in a **spiritual way**. Not having yet received God's Holy Spirit, the disciples could not understand the spiritual aspect of the ceremony Jesus was establishing.

John 13:6-8 Then came Jesus to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, is it for you to wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.

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Peter said unto Him, You shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash you not, you have **no part** with me.

Jesus established that the Footwashing ritual was absolutely required. The Footwashing, when performed in the spirit in which Jesus established it, assures our place in the Body of Christ, the Family of God, the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

John 13:9-10 Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, He that is washed need not except to wash his feet but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

Jesus establishes here that Peter has been forgiven—washed all over—and cleansed from sin through baptism. When Jesus said, "He that is washed, need not wash except his feet, but is clean every whit," Jesus was alluding to baptism which cleanses a sinner completely of all past guilt. And, Jesus shows here that the yearly Footwashing is still necessary and required. Because we are human – we sin. We must immediately seek God's mercy and forgiveness because unforgiven sin removes one from a right relationship with God and removes one as a part of the Body of Christ. The annual Passover Footwashing is a reminder of the necessity of being clean in God's eyes in order to remain in His good graces.

Sin separates man from God (Isaiah 59:2). Because we are in the flesh, we are not perfect. Sin can and does occur after baptism, and must be acknowledged, repented of and forgiven (1 John 1:8-10). The Footwashing is a needed spiritual cleansing – because we come short throughout the year – we are sinners – and Jesus Christ is our advocate, comforter, intercessor and consoler.

1 John 2:1 If any man sin, we have an advocate [*parakletos*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Though we were once washed at baptism, the Footwashing symbolizes our renewed commitment to walk in the newness of life that we made at our baptism. Because we are yet sinners, the yearly Footwashing indicates our desire to "clean our slate," so to speak, in a reaffirmation of our baptismal vow. But, this explains only having our own feet washed.

Why is it necessary to wash the feet of others?

John 13:12-15 So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was sat down again, He said unto them, Do you know what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also are required, [you must, obligated, duty-bound] to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

In the same way that we want to be clean before God, He requires us to help other brethren be clean before God in our common spiritual quest of His Kingdom. Jesus taught:

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life** for his friends.

Jesus laid His life down for us, so we **must lay our lives down** for others – but how do we do that? When a brother or sister has strayed and allowed a serious sin to enter their life – we must serve them by going to their spiritual rescue, no matter what it takes – that is laying down our life for them.

## **Who is a Christian**

Christians are empowered by God's Holy Spirit to overcome the self-serving human nature. Christianity demands that one follow the example of Christ and lay aside personal self-interests; preferring the good of all others, which is spiritually speaking, **Christian love**. James tells us how we are to go to the rescue of every brother or sister in Christ who is experiencing a spiritual problem.

James 5:19-20 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converts [turns around] the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

This is a perfect example of the spiritual application of the Footwashing. We, therefore, must wash the feet of one another. Not only must we have an attitude of being willing to **lay our life down for others**, we must actively intervene in their lives whenever they go astray so that they may live.

John 13:16-17 Truly, truly, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them...

Jesus gave and gave until He gave His all. How did Jesus love us—**He laid down His life for us**.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as I have loved you**, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Jesus gave us this priority: "Whoever would be first and foremost among you, let him be your bond slave, even as the Son of man came not to be waited upon, but to serve, and to give His life..." (Matthew 20:27-28).

The Footwashing ceremony defines our relationship with God and our fellow man. The Footwashing symbolizes our renewed commitment to **walk in the newness of life** that we made with our baptism vow when we were washed clean all over.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**.

## **God Dwells in Us**

It has always been God's Plan to dwell in His saints. We are dwelling in Him and He is dwelling in us. It is an inestimable blessing to be a part of God's true Church. The word "dwell" in Greek means to tabernacle. We find that Jesus tabernacles with us.

John 1:14 The Word was made flesh, and **dwelt among us**, tabernacled among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Jesus explained how He spiritually, through His Holy Spirit, is actually in His people continuously, actively, and not in some sentimental or emotional fashion. Spirituality is reality. It is eternal. It is God's Life becoming a Christian's Life.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; which the world cannot receive, because it sees it not, neither knows it: but ye know it; for it **dwells with you** and shall be **in you**.

When Jesus said this to His disciples they did not yet have God's Holy Spirit in them yet, but God was directing, calling, and motivating them. They received God's Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

John 14:20 At that Day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and **I in you**.

Christ lives in Christians, therefore they are His body. It is not only Jesus who dwells in His people, so does the Father.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words [that means to begin to do absolutely everything that Jesus taught] and my Father will love him, and **We will come unto him**, and make our abode with him.

It is not a case of just believing in Jesus and then carrying on doing what we've always done. That is the problem with the Protestant and the Catholic world. They continue as they always have—without true repentance. They live according to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil when it suits them. God would have us take of the Tree of Life—and live in us:

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...You are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will  **dwell in them**, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

God the Father and Jesus Christ live, dwell, and abide in true Christians. Does it show? Does it reflect in our attitudes? John Chapter 15 is all about abiding continuously with God. Paul said it like this:

Romans 8:9 You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God  **dwells in you**. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him [the Father] that raised up Jesus from the dead  **dwell in you**, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that  **dwells in you**.

## **Gift of Glory – Spirit of Glory**

Christianity is a life of giving and sacrifices, but it is not a faith void of its rewards. Jesus, by His life, glorified God the Father and the Father glorified His Son. Right after the institution of the New Testament Passover, Jesus revealed in a prayer to His Father how He would make it possible for unity and oneness to return to His apostles. Throughout the Scriptures we see a **spirit of reciprocity** at work. Reciprocation is a Godly give and take. We see that the Father glorifies His Son, Jesus Christ, and vice versa, Jesus glorifies His Father:

John 17:1 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;  **glorify thy Son**, that thy Son also may  **glorify you**:

We see God's principle of reciprocity working here. Reciprocity is a **mutual promotion** of one another. Glory works when others are promoted – not when we seek to promote ourselves. We see that Jesus gave the same glory to His apostles and to His saints. We see that we are to give glory to God. What is God showing us here? Jesus tells us why He gives that **gift of glory**. Jesus gave that gift of glory to the apostles to bring them into the unity of the Spirit, as the Father and Son are one.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

That unity and oneness is not a natural course of development in carnal people as seen with sons of Zebedee – who were into self-promotion. They were jockeying to be in the positions of influence. They were not at all deferring in submission to God’s direction (Mark 10:37-41). They were thinking, “How can we be first and foremost over the other apostles? How can we end up being in charge? How can we have all the people look up to us? How can we have the power and control?” As we know, that only causes indignation in the others. The unity and oneness established by the **gift of glory** from Jesus to the apostles is the same mutual reciprocity to one another of the glory between Jesus and His Father.

The Gift of Glory is the means of bringing unity and oneness by way of shared promotion of one another. This giving and receiving cycle is the opposite of competition in that it only works when the **gift of glory** is received and given again.

1 Peter 4:11 ... That God [the Father] in all things may be **glorified through Jesus Christ**...

1 Peter 4:13-14 ...When **Christ's glory shall be revealed**, ye may be **glad also** with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the **spirit of glory** and spirit of God rests upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but **on your part He is glorified**.

This **spirit of glory** and the **gift of glory** are one and the same.

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but **let him glorify God** on this behalf.

Over and over we find the principle of reciprocity at work. Jesus said of Himself:

John 13:31-32 ...Now is the Son of man glorified, and God [the Father] is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him [Jesus], God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall immediately glorify Him. (John 17:5, Acts 13:37, Psalm 16:10)

The Gift of Glory—Spirit of Glory is not an independent spirit that promotes self rather than foster the unity of the Church brethren. This is where so many church leaders have gone wrong – being afraid to honor those who serve them. They are not utilizing God’s Holy Spirit to boost all the brethren of God’s Church. They chose rather to promote themselves and their corporate organizations in an effort to sustain their prestige.

1 Corinthians 12:26 ...And whether one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The **Spirit of Glory** is the means of bringing unity and oneness by way of shared promotion of one another. This giving and receiving cycle is the opposite of competition, in that it only works when the gift of glory is received and given again.

## **The Passion of Christ**

There have been many good books covering the trial and passion Jesus endured before His crucifixion and death. It should be added that God foretold the spiritual insults that would be heaped on Jesus. We see precious little evidence of the **spiritual pitched-battle** that was ensuing during Jesus’ physical passion. While Jesus was dying, the invisible demons were encircling His cross like buzzards circling putrefying carrion. Thinking that he was finally victorious over the Messiah, Satan reveled at the crucifixion, underestimating the love of God, the Plan of God, and the exceeding great power of the resurrection (Ephesians 1:19-20).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jesus inspired David to write of His spiritual battle long before crucifixion was the prevalent mode of execution. Jesus knew that He would be laying down His life in **lonely solitude**, and He lamented being distanced and separated from God the Father—all the while being taunted by Satan and the demons. This Psalm describes Jesus thoughts and prayer while hanging on the stake:

Psalm 22:11-19 **Be not far from me**; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may count all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. But **be not thou far from me**, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

These Messianic prophecies describe so accurately what took place in the midst of the week on Nisan 14, Wednesday April 5, 30AD on Passover afternoon. After His 3½ year public ministry Jesus was crucified.

Daniel 9:26-27 After threescore and two weeks shall **Messiah be cut off**, but not for Himself ...And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the **midst of the week** He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...

The first half of that final week has also already taken place. It was the 3½ years during which Jesus Christ confirmed the New Covenant with His Church. We find that there will be another span of 3½ years in the future in which God will fully confirm His New Covenant with His chosen people—those who comprise the first and better resurrection.

### **God the Father So Loved the World**

God the Father made the greatest sacrifice. He was willing to lose His Son, Jesus, to save us! We are told, “God so loved the world that He gave [up] His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). God the Father could have lost Jesus Christ forever! If Jesus Christ had failed; if Jesus Christ had sinned even once – He would have died **eternally** for His own sin. He would not have lived again! Jesus would have been eternally dead, and God the Father would have been forever alone. Jesus’ existence would have ceased! The earth would have ceased to exist (Hebrews 1:3). It is Jesus who upholds all things by the word of His power. So, when we read John 3:16, let’s understand to whatever degree we are able, the magnitude of the sacrifice that God the Father made.

There are those who do not believe that God loved us that much – that He would allow His Son’s eternal life to be at stake. They say, “God cannot die,” but they quote God the Father’s eternal state:

1 Timothy 6:16 Who only has **immortality**, dwelling in **unapproachable light** which no man can come near to unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

They think, “Surely God had some sort of contingency plan whereby Jesus would have been saved in His sins.” That would have been a terrible violation of everything our Father stands for:

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sins, it shall die.

There is a high price to pay for the violation of God’s Judeo-Christian ethics.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is the law of God that must be satisfied. The law of God is the power and authority that sentences the sinner to death.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the holy lawgiver who lives by His every word.

1 Peter 1:15-16 He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conduct. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for **I am holy**.

“Hallowed be thy name” is better rendered as “Father, Your Name is the Holiest;” or “Your Name is set apart in a class all its own, held in the greatest respect;” or “No other name compares to Your Holy Name.” Jesus intended that only His Father have the title, Holy Father. In Matthew 23:9, Jesus demanded that only His Heavenly Father be referred to in that way because God the Father is Holy—actually the Holiest! God is perfect in every way and He will not permit man to bring his imperfections into His flawless presence. God says:

Psalm 101:7 He that works deceit **shall not dwell** within my house: he that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight.

The resurrected Saints’ Family name will be the same as God’s (Revelation 2:17). As long as man resides in carnal sinful flesh (Romans 8:3) – he cannot come near unto the Father, nor have his prayers answered (Isaiah 59:2). But, with conversion, the receipt of God’s Holy Spirit, and Jesus’ righteousness being imputed to the saints, reconciliation to the Father is afforded to the Church brethren. Jesus then teaches His followers to pray, “Our Father” so that their prayers may be heard. It is only the select Christians—led by the Spirit of God—who are able to do those things which are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22). In the Millennium, with God’s Holy Spirit poured out (Joel 2:28-29), all men will enjoy that same reconciled status with the Father. And yet, because of man’s acquired sinful nature, God the Father will continue to rule through Jesus Christ.

The eternal **Plan of God** is made manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord. God’s selection and calling of people for the purpose of adding to His Spiritual Body is part of a much larger Plan or purpose which will ultimately involve all mankind. God’s desire is that man becomes holy as He is holy. Until and unless sinful man puts on the righteousness of Christ, he will be forever disqualified from the Plan of God, and he will not see the Kingdom of God. No man will be welcomed into God’s eternally perfect and glorious Kingdom to bring in iniquity, corruption, sin and contamination. The premise is that all mankind is refused and lost because of its sinfulness. Only salvation and righteousness through Jesus Christ can rectify this impasse.

The Eternal God is Holiness: He is perfect, faultless, righteous, set far apart and high above all that is corrupt, dishonest or imperfect. Nothing sinful will ever come into God’s holy presence and spoil or soil His perfection: Not war, crime, murder, stealing, lies, adultery, dishonor, etc., because His Kingdom is always a place of perfection, love and peace. God is not going to let His Kingdom become soiled by our sin. No sin can come into His Holy presence. This earth has plenty of sin – but not the eternal Kingdom of God. Jesus had to die for us so that His **righteousness might be imputed** to us.

## **Jesus Stood Alone**

Why did Jesus have to die? God knew that one day—in the **fullness of time**—Jesus, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, would have been sent to the world to die for the sins of mankind. Before the heavens and earth were created, God knew that man without God's Spirit in him, would be utterly incapable of remaining sinless. God also knew that it would be necessary to send a **Savior** who would pay the price for the sins of mankind that he might be delivered from the death penalty he had brought upon himself—and live. The Savior would be the atoning sacrifice who would pay for the sins of the world.

Man's greatest trials and tests usually come all of a sudden. Oftentimes, it seems we are all by ourselves. The spiritual reality is that we are not alone – God is with us. Elijah said, "I am all alone," but he knew that God was very much involved in his confrontation with the priests of Baal (1 Kings 19:14). He was not alone as far as knowing that God was a part of what he was doing. The fact is this: We never walk alone – like Elijah, like Daniel, like David who so clearly proclaimed, "The Lord is with me." Paul stood alone, notwithstanding the Lord stood with him (2 Timothy 4:17). From our human standpoint we have to step up to the plate; but we are not alone. Just as a parent does not abandon a child, our loving Father said that He would never leave nor forsake His children (Hebrews 13:5). The Plan of God will come to pass in His People. Jesus, the Son of God, was not alone, as He said:

John 16:32 ...I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

In death, Jesus Christ had to stand completely alone – something we will never have to do. Jesus bore our sins (Hebrews 9:28). Jesus became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). God the Father had to **turn His back** on Jesus and allow Him to stand alone (Isaiah 59:2). Jesus Christ willingly went through that abandonment unto death. Hanging on the stake, Jesus said, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" (Mark 15:34) That is to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Why did God the Father forsake Jesus on the stake?

2 Corinthians 5:21 God has made Jesus **to be sin** for us, who knew no sin; so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

When Jesus was covered in our sin – His Father could not look upon Him.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you.

Sins separate us from God because no sin can come into the Father's presence. Jesus had become sin in our stead, and **our sin** caused Jesus' Father to have to forsake Him. Jesus never sinned—not even once—though He was tempted in all points just like we are (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus Christ suffered the ultimate sacrifice in that He died alone on the stake without His Father. It is unimaginable what God the Father went through at the loss of His Son.

## **God the Father Alone**

It is inconceivable for mere humans to even try to comprehend the sacrifice the Father experienced—excruciating hurt, pain, loss, and the **profound loneliness**. Jesus Christ was dead, and for the only time in all of existence, God the Father was all alone. For the first time ever, the Father was separated from His Son, He could not see His Son, nor talk to Him, nor hear Him. God the Father stood alone, as Jesus Christ stood alone, so that we do not have to ever stand alone.

In times of testing and trials, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalms 46:1) When we think we have it tough, think about that example. When we look to God, knowing that God is with us, it gives us the courage and maturity to step out in faith and stand alone. Jesus Christ wants to know if we will always represent His Truth in the face of adversity, no matter what. Are we able to stand alone when the attacks come against His True Way? When all is said and done, He is with us in our Christian battle. Jesus says to us:

Mark 8:34 Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

When people use the excuse that it is God’s responsibility to make corrections in His Church, they are demonstrating that they lack the courage to stand for what is right. Some brethren, however, will courageously **take a stand**, showing God that they will implement His way; not only now – but in the Millennium as well. That is what God is finding out right now, and this is why He does not intervene to make “wrongs” right. Christians do not have the option of whether or not to take a stand. They must take a stand. No one qualifies for the Kingdom of God without standing strong—walking in faith, overcoming, and proving themselves. Moses’ advice some 3,500 years ago, is still perfectly valid today. Moses said unto the people:

Exodus 14:13 Fear ye not, **stand forth**, and see the salvation of the Lord which He will show you today.

### **The Father Raised Jesus from Death**

Contrary to what the apostate Worldwide Church of God taught in the 1980s when it turned its back on God—rejecting His law, His Holy Days and His doctrine—and went fully into paganism, **Jesus did not raise Himself** from the grave. If Jesus raised Himself, then He was not dead – and if He did not die for us – we are still in our sins! The Father raised Jesus from death! Jesus’ thoughts had perished, His memory was completely gone, and His identity no longer resided in that dead body.

Psalms 146:4 His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his **thoughts perish**.

What would it take for the Father to, not only raise Jesus to life, but to reconstitute His identity, thoughts, memories and the power that Jesus had at His fingertips when He created the vast universe? How great was the power required for the resurrection of Christ? There is no **greater power** mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Jesus had to be completely restored to His former glory—as He had prayed for the night before He died:

John 17:5 Father, glorify thou me with thine own self **with the glory** which I had with thee before the world existed.

The power of Christ in **sustaining** all that exists is only a token of the power that had continuously resided in Jesus before His incarnation:

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and **upholding all things by the word of His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The resurrection utilized the Father’s most **exceeding greatness of His mighty power** to raise Jesus from death to His former glory.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This writer was fired and disfellowshipped from that organization for teaching that God the Father in exceeding great power raised Jesus from the dead. The Bible clearly says this in over two-dozen places. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is only imputed to those who believe in God the Father who **raised up Jesus** our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:24).

Ephesians 1:17-20 The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory ...the eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**; that ye may know ...what is the **exceeding greatness of His power toward us** who believe, according to the working of his **mighty power**, which He worked in Christ, when **He raised Him from the dead**, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

Our universe of countless galaxies contains an unimaginably immense amount of energy and power – but they pale into insignificance when compared to the **mighty power** God the Father utilized in raising His Son, Jesus Christ, to Life and restoring the glory to Him that He possessed from all eternity. As incredible as it may seem to our carnal minds—that same **life-giving power is working toward us**, the Children of God:

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now unto Him that is able to do **exceeding** abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the **power that works in us**, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

### **The Wave Sheaf**

When properly appreciated, the wave-sheaf offering brings a great message of hope and salvation to God's people. **Jesus Christ is the Wave Sheaf** offering. God gave this very special ritual to Israel long before they were to implement it. The wave-sheaf was to be gathered in the Promised Land, and not before.

Leviticus 23:9-11 The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall **wave the sheaf** before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

The Church of God brethren have been given the understanding of the superb New Testament fulfillment of Jesus Christ as the wave-sheaf offering. It took place on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, after Jesus had died on Passover.

John 20:1, 14, 17 On the first day of the week [Sunday] came Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher ...And when she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father ...my God, and your God.

In fulfillment of the wave-sheaf offering, Jesus ascended to His Father on Sunday, the first day of the week. In the Old Testament, the wave-sheaf offering was offered to God by Israel's High Priest on behalf of the people. The phrase, "**accepted for you**," is most revealing. It pictures Jesus Christ, the true Unleavened Bread of sincerity and truth, being offered to God the Father to be accepted on our behalf. When God the Father formally accepted the resurrected Jesus Christ, it became possible for us to also become Children of God.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jesus Christ presented Himself to God the Father as the **Wave Sheaf** offering to be accepted as the first of the "firstfruits" resurrected from the dead to eternal life. We, too, will be resurrected and accepted by the Father to eternal life as firstfruits. The wave sheaf ceremony shows us the achievement of the perfect Plan of God and our salvation in it. We can now have hope and full assurance that God the Father will accept us to glory, just as Jesus Christ was glorified during the Days of Unleavened Bread so many years ago. Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in that He was sinless.

### **Days of Unleavened Bread**

Jesus is the Unleavened Bread of sincerity and Truth. Paul explains how we are to put all sin out of our lives while we are putting on Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven (sin), that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our **Passover** is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the **Unleavened Bread of sincerity and truth**.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a memorial of the Israelites' hasty departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:39). Because of the oppression Israel suffered in Egypt, unleavened bread was also called the **bread of affliction** (Deuteronomy 16:3, Exodus 3:9).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread follows Passover for seven days. The fifteenth day, and the twenty-first day of the first month are Feast Days and are therefore, Holy Convocations. God tells us:

Exodus 12:15-17 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eats **leavened bread** from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an Holy Convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an Holy Convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever.

Unleavened Bread pictures our coming out of sin – putting sin entirely out of our lives. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of a sinless life.

Exodus 23:15 Thou shalt keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou came out from Egypt; and none shall appear before me empty.)

Deuteronomy 16:17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He has given you.

By the gracious act of God, the "called out Church of God brethren" do not have sin imputed to them because they have renounced sin in repentance and accepted in faith the blood of Jesus Christ for forgiveness—and have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. They have been delivered from "sin" and Egypt by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Deliverer.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Ephesians 2:1-8 He has made you alive, who were dead in your trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince** of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

When man sinned, God, Himself, made restoration and reconciliation possible.

### **Christ in Us – the Hope of Glory**

Christians have come out of the world to live by the principles and values which Jesus Christ taught. That is how Jesus lives in us. We have been given the inestimable blessing of being a part of God's true Church at this time. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) But to be able to come to the Father, we must go through Jesus Christ because He is the only way, He alone has the truth, and He is life. We must "Put on Christ." When Christ lives in us through His Spirit, we begin to put on His ways, His faith, His attitude, His sacrifice, His character, His mercy – all of His attributes and characteristics like forgiveness, and love [not hate towards others] – we must become just like Him! Every characteristic of Jesus must be in our minds and in our hearts, replacing all the sinful and wrong thought patterns which once defined us. The apostle Paul's commission included the responsibility of fulfilling the word of God:

Colossians 1:25-28 Even the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

### **Feast of Pentecost**

'Pentecost' is a New Testament term indicating that fifty days are to be counted. It is a Holy Day of Convocation that always falls on the first day of the week, Sunday, because the count is begun on the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Pentecost is also called the **Feast of Weeks** because God tells us to **count seven weeks**.

Leviticus 23:15-16 You shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the **Wave Sheaf** offering; **seven** Sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number **fifty days** [Pentecost]...

Exodus 34:22 You shalt observe the **Feast of Weeks**, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest. (Numbers 28:26)

Pentecost is also called the **Day of the Firstfruits** because it pictures the resurrection of the firstfruits saints. (Leviticus 23:17)

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Firstfruits are the first agricultural produce to ripen each year. God uses the analogy of the harvest to demonstrate His Plan of Salvation. Ancient Israel observed it late in spring after the barley harvest. Firstfruits actually begin with the first ripe grain of the Wave Sheaf offering and continue through to Pentecost. God's people, are a part of the Firstfruits with Jesus Christ.

Numbers 28:26 Also in the **Day of the Firstfruits**, when ye bring a new food offering unto the LORD, after your **weeks be out**, ye shall have an Holy Convocation; ye shall do no servile work.

Pentecost is also called the **Feast of Harvest** because it pictures the spring harvest of the Church of God brethren—the resurrected firstfruits saints.

Exodus 23:16 And the **Feast of Harvest**, the firstfruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field.

God sent His Holy Spirit and **fulfilled** the meaning of the prophetic Day of Pentecost when He established His Church some seven weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection. That birth of the Church took place on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 30 AD.

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost was **fully come**, they were all with one accord in one place.

The Church of God brethren are being judged and sanctified by God now to be in the early harvest pictured by the Feast of Pentecost—shown by the first and **better resurrection** (Hebrews 11:35).

The resurrection of the saints to reign and rule with Jesus Christ will come at the sounding of the **last trumpet** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

God's Law was given on Pentecost on Mount Sinai. The Holy Spirit enables Christians to keep the Law of God—even its expanded meaning and spiritual intent. Old Testament Israel, without God's Holy Spirit, was unable to keep the Commandments as God desires we keep them.

The Day of Pentecost following Jesus' ascension into heaven shows the coming of God's Holy Spirit upon the Church brethren. This Day marked the establishment of the New Testament Church of God—not an organization run by men—but a spiritual entity with Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). Neither did Jesus establish a rulership hierarchy among the called-out brethren.

Jesus empowered and taught His disciples to be servants to God's people by providing especially for the spiritual needs of God's flock (John 13:14). Jesus said:

John 21:15; 16; 17 ...Feed my lambs... feed my sheep.

Pentecost shows the conversion process wherein the spirit in man is enlivened, vitalized, animated, given life, impregnated by the Spirit of God making us Children of God. One hundred and twenty New Testament Church of God brethren were empowered and initiated on the first Feast of Pentecost following Jesus death and resurrection (Acts 1:15). They were each sealed with that **Holy Spirit of promise**. (Ephesians 1:13). Jesus had instructed them:

Luke 24:49 Behold, I send the **promise of my Father** upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **power from on high**.

Today, we are near the pivotal point in the Plan of God as portrayed by the Feast of the Lord. The resurrection of the Saints of God will occur on an imminent Feast of Pentecost—at the last trumpet at the return of Christ.

*Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 Thessalonians 4:16 The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the **dead in Christ shall rise first**.

In Chapter Six we will look at the yet to be fulfilled Holy Days including the Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, The Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

## Chapter 6

### The Church Age

#### Our Messiah Died

Shocking words! Imagine the distress of the apostles when Jesus died. Everything they knew and believe was predicated on one thing alone—the Messiah lives! And yet, He had died. The purpose of this book is to preach the Gospel. The Gospel of the soon coming Kingdom of God is mostly lost to the world today (Mark 1:14). The Gospel message was proclaimed by Jesus Christ and by His apostles in the clearest of terms – and recorded for us today in the Scriptures. God’s Plan is sure, and nothing will prevent the fulfillment of His loving purpose. Jesus had taught the apostles:

Matthew 10:27 What I tell you in **darkness**, that **speaks you in light**: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.

**Darkness** was upon the face of the earth from noon until three o’clock as Jesus Christ our Messiah was dying on Passover Day. It was as though His **light** were extinguished for a moment – but only so that it might shine forth in the brilliance of eternal glory.

Isaiah 60:1-2 Arise, shine; for your **light is come**, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and **gross darkness** shall cover the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and the splendor of His glory shall appear upon you.

Matthew 27:45, 54 Now from the sixth hour there was **darkness** over all the land unto the ninth hour... When the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Jesus had brought **light** unto man. He was about to be entombed in a sepulcher to fulfill the replication and meaning of the Night to be Much Observed (Exodus 12:40-42). Jesus had given His life to bring His Sacrificial Covenant to fruition (Genesis 15:17-18). Jesus said in effect, “I will give my life in order to bring all men to salvation.” Abib 15<sup>th</sup> was about to arrive – ushering in the beginning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6). Our Savior’s work in the flesh was complete, but the work of **salvation** would not be complete until His resurrection to Life—which would come fully **three days and three nights** after Jesus’ dead body, wound in pure linen clothes with aromatic spices, was placed in the heart of the earth at the beginning of the **High Day** (John 19:31, 40; Matthew 27:59; Romans 5:10). Why did Jesus have to die?

**Jesus had to die**—His death a substitution for ours—in order for the New Covenant to go into effect—first for the Church brethren, and later for all mankind; for God to send His Holy Spirit; for our sins to be forgiven, upon repentance; for reconciliation with God the Father to take place; and for the gift of eternal life. We see these in the following verses:

Mark 14:22-24 ...Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And He took the cup... and He said unto them, This is my blood of the **New Covenant**, which is shed for many.

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Hebrews 9:16 Where there is a **Covenant**, there must also of necessity be the **death** of the one who made it.

John 16:7 [Jesus said] ...If I go not away, the [**Holy Spirit**] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send it unto you. (John 14:26)

Romans 5:8 But God proved His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died** for us.

1 John 1:9 ...He is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins**...

Hebrews 9:22 ...Without shedding of blood there is no **remission [of sin]**. (Hebrews 9:26)

Romans 5:10 ...We were **reconciled** to God the Father by the **death** of His Son, [Jesus Christ].

Romans 6:23 ...The gift of God is **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ezekiel prophesied of the New Covenant and some of its attributes:

Ezekiel 36:26-27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Only the Church brethren – led by the Spirit of God – are able to conform their lives to the terms and conditions of the New Covenant. Jesus did not establish the New Covenant with the House of Israel and Judah at that time—that is yet future as Jeremiah explains:

Jeremiah 31:31-33 Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a **New Covenant** with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah: Not according to the [Old] Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the [New] Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it **in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

### **The Only Miracle**

When asked for a miraculous sign from heaven that He was truly the Messiah, Jesus said that the **only miracle** given to them would be His entombment for **no less** than three days and three nights, **no more** than three days and three nights, but **exactly** three days and three nights:

Matthew 12:39-40 Jesus answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a **miracle**; and there shall no **miracle** be given to it, but the **miracle** of the Prophet Jonah: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the giant fearful sea monster's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

It is made perfectly clear in the Scriptures that Jesus was not in the grave less, or more than three days and three nights – but exactly three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. In order to understand any basic subject in the Bible, it is necessary to view all Scriptural evidence touching that particular question. One of the proofs that the Bible is the **word of God** is that its many writers, covering many centuries, never contradict one another, but worked in concert as their inspired writings combine together with crystal clarity (John 10:35). No other book does this. God's word is truth (John 17:17). God is the very **Fountainhead of Truth**. God the Father resurrected Jesus to life after a **full** three days and three nights; proof that He is the Messiah. That is the only miracle that Jesus ever gave that He is the Messiah. Unless Jesus was in the tomb for three days and three nights, a full 72 hours - He is not the prophesied Messiah.

God's timetable for counting when 24 hour days begin and end is very simple and straight forward: **When the sun sets, the day is over**. That is not what Catholics and Protestants believe. They reckon that Jesus was in the grave from Friday afternoon till Sunday sunrise. There are not three days and three nights between Good Friday afternoon and Easter Sunday morning. Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is barely 36 hours – only 2 nights and 1 day. Those who are intellectually honest and believe Jesus' words to be accurate ("**when it was yet dark**") will note that He was gone from His tomb before the sun rose on Sunday morning (John 20:1). That fact alone works to shorten their way of counting Jesus' time in the grave. Late Friday to very early Sunday does not fulfill the Scriptural "sign" that Jesus gave as proof that He is the Messiah.

Because Catholics and Protestants have rejected God's annual Holy Day Sabbaths they cannot understand what was taking place during the Passover on which Jesus died, or the First Day of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31). The beloved apostle John makes it perfectly clear that the day after Jesus died was a **High Holy Day**—the First Day of Unleavened Bread. People say that they believe in Jesus; the problem is that they just do not believe what **He said**. There are millions of people who actually **believe in Jesus Christ** but do not have salvation because they disregard His teachings—that is not categorically believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John shows exactly what took place on the Passover when Jesus was crucified. Jesus died and His body was hastily placed in prominent business man and disciple of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea's sepulcher at **evening time**, just as Passover was ending with the sun setting and the High Sabbath Day beginning (John 19:30-42).

Do not believe that weak and anti-Semitic argument that Jews do not know how to count the difference between a part of a day and an entire day. Until the advent of highly technical time measuring methods of today, their understanding of time and calendar was incredibly accurate. Almost 6,000 years ago, our forefathers were the first to develop the sexagesimal system for astronomy and mathematics, a system verified by today's atomic clocks which are accurate to within a few seconds over many thousands of years. In the Holy Scriptures, three days, or three days and three nights are clearly understood (1 Samuel 30:12-13). Jesus had obviously gotten His point across to the Jewish Pharisees who understood how long three days were (Matthew 27:62-65)! They put guards on His grave – but to no avail.

Those who hold to a Good Friday crucifixion and an Easter Sunday morning resurrection deny the **one true miracle** that Jesus Christ gave proving that He is our Messiah. Unless Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights, a full 72 hours – He is not the prophesied Messiah according to His own word.

## **Exactly Three Days in the Grave**

Jesus Christ died. His thoughts perished and He ceased to exist for three days and three nights – leaving the Father all alone. He had declared:

John 2:19, 21 ...Destroy this temple, and **in three days** I will raise it up... But he spoke of the temple of His body.

God the Father restored Jesus' life, power and glory that He had before the creation of the world (John 17:5) and Jesus left the tomb at the exact conclusion of three days and three nights. God the Father with exceeding great power **resurrected** Jesus Christ back to Life eternal.

Ephesians 1:17-20 ...That you may know what is the exceeding greatness of [God the Father's] power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He **raised Him from the dead**, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

The importance of a full **three days** and **three nights** cannot be over emphasized – the Bible speaks of it so many times.

Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be **raised again the third day**.

## **Not Less Than Three Days**

Christ spelled it out so clearly and in so many ways that it could not possibly be misconstrued. And yet, the world has been deceived into believing that Jesus was not three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Mark 8:29-31 [Jesus] said unto them, But whom say you that I am? And Peter answered and said unto Him, You are the Messiah. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him. And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and **after three days** rise again. [At the end of three full days.]

Matthew 17:22-23 While they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill Him, and **the third day** he shall be raised again.

The accounts of the Gospel writers agree with each other and must all be added together for the entire picture. The Scriptures, which are the Word of God, are never broken or in contradiction to one another (John 10:35). Mark's Gospel account confirms that a **full three days** transpired. Mark records it this way:

## **A Full Three Days and Three Nights**

Mark 9:30-31 They departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were for He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise **the third day**.

Jesus had clearly gotten His point across to them!

Matthew 27:62-63 Now the next day [First Day of Unleavened Bread], that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver [Jesus] said, while He was yet alive, **After three days** I will rise again.

Those Biblical words demonstrate that Jesus knew for certain that He would be in the tomb for **a full** three days and three nights and then be brought to Life by His Father.

There was **no Easter sunrise resurrection**. After a complete three days and three nights in the grave, Christ's resurrection occurred at precisely the same time of day that He was laid to rest in the tomb—at sunset—and that was when the weekly Sabbath Day came to an end during the Days of Unleavened Bread. John tells us that Jesus was gone from the grave before Sunday sunrise. “On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was **still dark**, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” (John 20:1)

## **A Salvational Matter**

There is no more important doctrine than that of God the Father's restoring **eternal spiritual Life** to His Son precisely **three days and three nights** after His dead body was placed in the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life**.

Belief in the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ is a **matter of salvation** because it is an integral part of the Gospel. These Scriptures show our salvation! The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians explaining that Jesus did, in fact, fulfill the Scriptural prophecies concerning the sign of Jonah by His resurrection. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they stand in the Gospel:

1 Corinthians 15:2-5 By which also **you are saved**, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was **buried**, and that He **rose** again **the third day** according to the Scriptures: And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

Jesus Christ fulfilled the miracle of Jonah. He is the Messiah!

## **God Dwells in Man**

John 5:17 Jesus said, “My Father is still at work, and I **work** as well.”

God the Father and Jesus Christ were working in the past, they continue to work now, and they will go on working to fulfill their Plan of making man in their image and glory. This book is necessary because there are so many people who are not able to make sense out of the Bible to understand what Jesus and His Father are doing. God is not an uninvolved observer way off in the distant heavens. On the contrary, the Father and Jesus reside in those with whom they are actively working.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come** unto him, and **make our abode** with him.

There are only a relatively few people who know and love God. They are the ones for whom this book is written. They have taken ownership of their faith and do those things that are pleasing in God sight (1 John 3:22). Jesus quoted the inspired Prophet Habakkuk saying that everyone else would remain in the dark about these spiritual works of God until their appointed time.

Habakkuk 1:5, Acts 13:41 Behold, you despisers among the nations, and consider, and wonder in dismay marvelously, and come to naught: for I **work a work** in your days, a work which ye shall in no way believe, though it be told you.

After all due diligence in searching the Scriptures we present our best explanation for consideration until a better answer is made available.

## **The Church Age**

Chapter Six is about the Church Age. Few realize how considerably different things have become since Jesus formed the Church. How will the Kingdom of God come to be established over all this earth? Without the knowledge of the Plan of God as outlined in His Holy Days it is not possible for those in the world to see the hand of God in everything from the most minute happenstance to the enormous events taking place in world affairs.

With the first coming of the Messiah some 2,000 years ago the world entered the enlightened Age of Faith, or as we prefer, **The Church Age**. This period of time extends from its inception on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus until the second coming of the Messiah and the restitution of all things in the Millennium.

Acts 3:20-21 [God the Father] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Men have made valiant attempts at recording the history of this time period. Will Durant, American writer, historian, and philosopher, with his wife, Ariel, wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning, massive eleven volume series, "The Story of Civilization," in which was covered, "**The Age of Faith**." They would be the first to confess how difficult it was to write a concise and all-inclusive history of this age. "To the Reader:

"The obligation to cover the economic, political, legal, military, moral, social, religious, educational, scientific, medical, philosophic, literary, and artistic aspects of four distinct civilizations—Byzantine, Islamic, Judaic, and West European—has made unification and brevity difficult." *The Age of Faith*, Volume 4, 1950 p. *vii*

Our responsibility in *Plan of God—Darkness to Light* is much simpler and straightforward. We are presenting God's perspective (as supported by Scriptural references) on how Christ alone **enlightens** those who follow His every word (John 8:12). However, this book is not at all meant to be a comprehensive treatise of all the details of the **Plan of God**, as it would be impossible to begin to cover every aspect even of the Church Age in a single book!

John 21:25 There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

Disclaimer: The world recognizes the **Age of Faith**, or the **Church Age**, as that portion of history mainly presided over by Rome and the Reformation. Our position is that Rome, even prior to Constantine, had become apostate and not a part of Christ's true faith. The Catholic Church and her Protestant daughters had rejected the Law of God, the Holy Day Plan of God and all things Christian (Revelation 17:3-5). There are nearly two billion people on this earth who identify themselves as Christians. But does that really make them "Christians?"

In reality, the **true Church of God** is a very select few faithful members consisting of those who are led by God's Spirit (Romans 8:14). Even among those ministers and members who would count themselves as faithful, Jesus Christ says that many are called and few chosen (Matthew 22:14). Jesus gives us ample instances of foolish virgins and tares to make that point clear. Therefore, the Church people of whom we speak are a relatively small number of converts at any given time of whom the writers of world history are mostly oblivious. Salvation will be afforded all others in their order (1 Corinthians 15:23). The Church Age then is the history of that unique faithful people of whom the world is not worthy (Hebrews 11:38).

This Chapter covers the **Church Age** to its culmination in the Millennial rule of Christ and His saints – who will reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:6; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). The Millennium will commence only after every eye will have seen Jesus return to this earth with His saints—in great power—to establish the Kingdom of God – after eradicating the enemies of God from the face of the earth.

Matthew 24:30 Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man [Jesus] in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Jude 1:14-15 ...Behold, the Lord comes with tens of thousands [myriads] of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly...

The events of the Church Age revolve around the calling, development and expansion of the spiritual body of converted brethren generation after generation until their resurrection as glorious spiritual beings shortly before the Millennium. Satan will be bound for the duration of the Millennium allowing the world to be at rest— a *Sabbatismos* rest (Hebrews 4:9). Satan will be powerless to deceive the nations for 1,000 years. During that time, as spirit beings with Christ, the saints—the work of God's hands—will reshape and revive the world (Job 14:15; Acts 3:19). During the 1,000 years of the Millennium the entire face of the earth will be restored and refashioned, from being virtually destroyed, back to the Garden of Eden-like former grandeur and perfection at the time of its creation (Genesis 1:31).

Proverbs 3:19 The LORD by wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding He has established the heavens.

## **Why Jesus Came**

In God's far-reaching Plan, Jesus the Messiah is continuously a hands-on Designer and Creator – tweaking its direction until it comes to the full. In addition to making intricate daily adjustments in the course of human affairs, there would be two major comings of Christ [the Messiah] of foremost importance. His first advent, some two-thousand years ago, was for the purpose of inaugurating the Church of God—a people with the heart of God—and proclaiming the Gospel, the good news of God's coming Kingdom on earth (Mark 1:15). The Day of Pentecost, at the culmination of Christ's public ministry, was the commencement of the **Church Age**. Even before the arrival of that extraordinary man on earth (Jesus), He had established for mankind the indelible imprint of His eternal Plan shown in His Holy Days. On the seventh day of creation He gave mankind the memorial of all creation—a delight—the Sabbath Day of rest (Leviticus 23:3, Isaiah 58:13). Though it may seem a small thing to many, in actuality, the Sabbath Day of rest shows the true reason that worship is due only to the Creator. God set the precedent of Sabbath rest for man by resting Himself.

Genesis 2:2 On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and **He rested** on the seventh day from all His work which **He had made**.

God needs no rest! He is Creator God. He not only instituted the Sabbath rest, but for our example, He Himself celebrated the first Sabbath Day—giving us the standard to preserve.

## **The Messiah Walked the Earth**

In today's world, only a miniscule percentage of the earth's population knows the meaning of the Sabbath Day and the appointed Feasts of the Lord. But that was not the case when Jesus walked the earth. Even after their captivity, deportation and subsequent resettlement back into the Promised Land, a large number of those Israelites who heard Jesus speak maintained the intent of the Holy Days as best they could.

They had grown up with the Torah which is the law of God revealed to Moses and written in the Pentateuch—and they took it for granted. From the synagogues of Galilee to the Temple at Jerusalem, culture and religion centered around the faith of the Patriarchs of Israel. The Sabbath was a day of rest and the Feast Days were a time of rejoicing. Eight-day old boys were circumcised, and all eschewed those meats that were not set aside by the word of God and prayer to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4-5, Leviticus 11). Many people prayed and fasted often. The priesthood was sustained by the tithes and offerings of the populace (Matthew 23:23). They had the Law of the Ten Commandments and the Prophets, and from year to year they went up to Jerusalem from all over the known world to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, as all will do once again in the glorious days of the Millennium ahead (Zechariah 14:16).

In this modern time, the way of life that God gave to ancient Israel is all but lost and forgotten. When a new proselyte is called by God today, that foundation in the word of God that once existed—needs to be reestablished.

When Jesus began His public ministry of preaching the Gospel to the great multitudes of people from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea, and from beyond Jordan, He did not need to teach them those well-established tenets of Israel because they knew them already. In the **fullness of time** God introduced and revealed the practice of Christianity to mankind through Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

What Jesus began to teach His disciples were the heretofore unknown profound tenets of Christianity—how a converted person is entirely different in mind, heart and spirit from everyone else in the world. In those first sermons, Jesus taught the **essence of Christianity** which is necessary for the Kingdom of God.

1 John 5:3 This is **Godly love** that we keep His Commandments.

What makes the **Church Age** so different from everything that has gone on before? What was the need and purpose of Jesus establishing yet another distinct set of people—the *Ekklesia*—the **called-out** ones, the earthly saints?

He began with so few, and the true sect of undaunted faithful believers remains a small flock to this day (Luke 12:32). What is the difference between the Church in the Wilderness of the Old Testament, and the Church of God of the New Testament when Jesus is Lord, Prophet, Messenger and High Priest of both (Acts 7:37-38)?

Using Moses, God established a **people** “called by His name” (2 Chronicles 7:14; Acts 15:14). “Our help is in the name of the LORD” (Psalm 124:8). These verses are not referring to the phonetic sound of God’s name, but to His spiritual character and nature, as in ‘a good name’ (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1).

Upon those people God promised physical blessings and national greatness for obedience to His Commandments. God intended that Israel be an exemplary people to all their neighbors round about them. Their wisdom and understanding would have shown the foreign nations how near and how great the true God is (Deuteronomy 4:5-8).

But Israel was unable to live according to the way of the Lord because they lacked God’s Spirit which would have given them a heart of flesh (Hebrews 8:7-8). With the New Testament Church that He established on Pentecost, Jesus became the mediator of a new and better Covenant, which was established upon better promises—not national prominence, but the promise of **eternal life** (Hebrews 8:6).

Jesus, not only observed all the **Feasts of the Lord** His entire life, He magnified them by revealing their spiritual meaning. Jesus openly celebrated all of God’s annual Holy Days – not because He was a Jew, but because God had declared that they are, “My Feasts,” and their observance was a **statute forever** (Leviticus 23:2; 41). Jesus lived and taught the expanded objective that God intended from the beginning of creation. From a small child until the Passover day of His death, Jesus’ life revolved about the annual Holy Days—the Feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23).

### **The Feasts of the Lord**

The seven annual Holy Days were ordained by God as “Feasts of the Lord.” They were diligently kept by Jesus Christ, His disciples, and the first century New Testament Church of God. Jesus revealed that each Feast has a special prophetic meaning depicting an important step in God's Plan for man. The Feasts and Holy Days are the following: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, and Last Great Day.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The seven annual Holy Days were ordained and commanded by God to be observed as holy gatherings—Holy Convocations—required observances, because they are rehearsals in preparation for distinct events in the Plan of God. They are the appointed times which picture exactly what God is doing to bring **His Plan** about. The Holy Days unveil God's continuing Plan for all mankind. They were originally given to the holy men of God and ancient Israel (Matthew 13:17; 2 Peter 1:21). God is gracious, not only to disclose His great design, but also to allow us to partake of His Plan of Salvation as it unfolds.

God's Church today observes the Scripturally commanded seven annual Holy Days given to us by our Lord through Moses, kept by Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, and all the faithful New Testament Church of God members, as evidenced by the Biblical books of Acts and Corinthians. God commands His people to keep, not only the weekly Sabbath Day, which is a Holy Convocation, but His annual Festivals as well. From Jesus Christ's sacrifice as the Passover Lamb, to the Last Great Day of the Feast spoken of in John 7:37, the Holy Days explain God's intervention in bringing many sons to Glory.

Each year God intends that we go through the entire cycle of Holy Days depicting His eternal Plan for mankind. In fact, because of their essential significance to the members of the Church, the apostle John used the annual Holy Days, which occurred during Jesus' public ministry, as the outline for his Gospel account. Jesus used the occasion of the Holy Days to expound on their spiritual and prophetic significances. Each Feast Day has a special prophetic meaning depicting an important step in God's salvational Plan for man. A deeper understanding of the meaning of the Holy Days comes with their persistent observance.

All of God's Holy Days have great meaning and significance. Not only have they not been done away with, the Bible clearly shows that the Feasts of the Lord will **continue** to be kept during the 1,000-year Millennium when Jesus Christ will have established the Kingdom of God over all the earth.

Zechariah 14:16 It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**.

By way of contrast, the false pagan holidays such as *Christmas* and *Easter* do not possess any symbolic meaning at all. Jesus did not rise from the grave during an *Easter* sunrise. Halloween, St. Patrick's Day and St. Valentine's Day are all worthless because of their pagan origin. They are Satan's counterfeit feast days. The great Church of Rome upholds these counterfeit days, but the true Church of God has never observed those bogus holidays. They do not point out anything that God is doing. They are hollow and meaningless. It is because pagan holidays draw people away from the truth of God, that God calls those practices, "abominations." Jesus was not born anywhere near December 25<sup>th</sup>, and we are told nowhere in the Scriptures to observe His birth at all. Christmas is not pleasing to God in any way at all—quite the contrary! Students of the Bible understand that God has given us a prophetic outline of events leading up to the return of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us everything that we need to be alert to the times and seasons so that we will not be caught unaware as the world will be. God's Feast days reveal His **Plan of action**.

## **Passover**

Before the foundation of the world the Plan of God was decided upon by God the Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus would die, redeeming mankind through His shed blood, and the Father would raise Him to Life—making eternal Life available to man (Romans 5:21).

1 Peter 1:18-21 Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; But with the **precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained **before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that **raised Him** up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Jesus Christ died to pay for my sin. Everyone can say the same thing. Jesus bore our sins so that we do not have to die eternal death (Romans 6:23). Jesus became sin in our stead. God the Father allowed Jesus to substitute Himself in our place:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For [God the Father] has made [Jesus] **to be sin for us**, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

God the Father had to turn His back on **sin**—represented by Jesus—and allow Him to **die forsaken** and all **alone**. Jesus Christ willingly did that for us. At the end of His brutal ordeal, hanging on the stake on Passover Day, Jesus said:

Matthew 27:41 *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? [The Father had to hide His face – Isaiah 59:2]

Jesus **died** so that we would be able to **live** eternally with Him (2 Corinthians 5:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:10). In the Plan of God, **Passover** is the first of the Feasts of the Lord. Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover service—a most solemn ceremony.

Leviticus 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at evening is the Lord's **Passover**.

**Passover** pictures Jesus Christ—the Passover Lamb—slain from the foundation of the earth for all mankind (Revelation 13:8). Passover is to be observed just after sunset, at the beginning of the 14th day of the first month, just as Christ kept it on the Passover evening before He died (1 Corinthians 11:23). Passover is kept only once a year. Passover is not a High Holy Day of Convocation, and work is permitted. God instructs His people about the first month of the year:

Deuteronomy 16:1-2 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice **the Passover** unto the Lord thy God.

As Passover began, Jesus told His beloved apostles how much He looked forward to observing the Passover service again, with its unleavened bread and wine, in the Millennium:

Matthew 26:29 I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom.

Christians are commanded by God to observe Passover as the memorial of Jesus' death. God's Holy Days, more than anything else, define and illustrate the Plan of God – from Passover to the Last Great Day. Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection fulfill the very meaning of the Feasts of the Lord, past present and future (Leviticus 23:2).

Included in the Passover service is the Footwashing ceremony conducted at the beginning of the Passover service (John 13:1-17). The **Footwashing** service is performed as an example of serving one another in humility, and in accordance with Christ's example and instruction to us. For more on the Footwashing, see Chapter Five of this book. Baptized members partake of the unleavened bread and wine, symbolizing the forgiveness of sin by the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We renew our **baptismal covenant** with God yearly at the Passover service. Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, this is My body, for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, this cup is the **New Covenant** in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He comes.

At our baptism we became virgins to Christ because He **cleaned us up** – no matter what our sins were. We entered into an eternal Covenant. Jesus provides a necessary spiritual cleansing at the Footwashing each Passover so that we are able to remain **holy** and **without blemish** (Ephesians 5:27).

At Passover, Jesus purged our sins so that we might have a right relationship with God – having been **justified** [past guilt removed] and made innocent by His blood, we shall have salvation by His life and resurrection (Romans 5:9-10; 6:5).

That word “justified” means a clean slate with God—our guilty past wiped out—cleansed by the death and blood of Jesus. Justification means becoming righteous in the sight of God. Justification means rendered innocent. Speaking of Jesus and His Father:

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the **brightness of God's glory** and the express image of His person, and sustaining all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Where Passover concerns the redemption of the firstborn [the Church brethren, the saints, the Christians], whom God has called in every age before Jesus Christ's return, the Day of Atonement reveals the reconciliation of **all humanity** to God – the entire world. (For more on Passover see Chapter Five)

## **Zero Witnesses**

There were no witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. There were no believers—yet. Had even one of the apostles or disciples understood and believed – they would have surely been there between the two evenings to witness Christ's resurrection. Of all believers, Mary Magdalene would have been present at that exact time. She was of the select women who witnessed His death, burial, and was first to see Him after He had been resurrected (Mark 16:9; John 19:25; Luke 24:4-8). How she must have kicked herself over and over for missing out on the greatest moment the earth has ever known—**the resurrection of Jesus to Life**. Jesus had taught them many things including when His resurrection would take place—and yet they could not put it all together—not until God sent His Holy Spirit some fifty days later:

John 14:26 The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Faith in God is a gift. Up until Pentecost, **doubt remained** in them as the Scriptures show us. Jesus said to Peter and the disciples, “Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which [God] says shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever He says” (Mark 11:23).

## **Unleavened Bread**

Leviticus 23:6 On the fifteenth day of the same month is the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread represents Jesus Christ—the true Unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth. Unleavened Bread has no yeast in it—representing the **sinless** life of Jesus. Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the **Feast [of Unleavened Bread]**, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the Unleavened Bread of **Sincerity and Truth**.

Unleavened Bread follows Passover for seven days. The fifteenth day, and the twenty-first day of the first month are Holy Convocations. Unleavened Bread pictures a Christian coming out of sin – putting sin totally out of our lives. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of a sinless life. Therefore, Christians put leavened bread [yeast products] out of their homes for seven days—picturing the **spiritual removal of sin** from our lives entirely.

Exodus 23:15 Thou shalt keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread: (you shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it you came out from Egypt.

## **Tribulation**

Wake up Britain and America along with all of our English-speaking brothers and sisters! Jesus Christ is coming soon! As loving, compassionate, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and patient as Jesus is, He is not soft-headed when it comes to the anti-Christ movement. There is coming a final judgment when the glory of the Lord will be seen and felt by those who hate God. The Tribulation precedes the return of Jesus Christ pictured by the Feast of Trumpets.

Isaiah 66:15-16 Behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render **His anger with fury**, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will the LORD **plead with all flesh**: and the slain of the LORD **shall be many**.

The Apostle Peter advises the masses of people to save themselves from this corrupt generation by obedience to God (Acts 2:40). The Great Tribulation begins with Satan’s wrath which lasts 2½ years (Matthew 24:21-22). It begins with the fifth seal. It is followed by heavenly signs and earthquakes (Joel 2:30-31).

Isaiah 13:9-11 Behold, the **Day of the LORD** is coming, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And **I will punish the world for their evil**, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

What will be the straw that breaks the camel's back? The infrastructures of modern Israel, the USA and UK, are rapidly disintegrating, but **no single factor** will bring down our American and the Israelitish nations. Why? Because, if that were the case, post-tribulation mankind would be able to stake the claim that there was still hope – and that Jesus had showed up when He was not really needed. No, every institution for mankind – marriage, education, economy, defense, ranching, justice, courts, travel, entertainment, medicine, mining, trade, collective bargaining, you name it – will be rotten to the core – beyond redemption. No one will be able to say to Jesus, "If only such or such..., we could have tweaked the system, and we could have put society back in order. Mankind must learn the lesson of hopelessness that sin brings. It will not be the failure of one single system that will bring about the ultimate destruction of the end-time. The blessings and strength of America and Britain are bound up tightly within our societal institutions of academia, banking, finance, family, military, farming, agriculture, law, transportation, tax, health, welfare, cyber technology, computers, social networking, communication, government, industry, commerce, etc.

All systems are ungodly and corrupt. In every case, these systems that regulate and govern so much of the blessings that God so freely gave us are rapidly deteriorating. It sounds like it will be more like a crash – than a gradual decline.

Deuteronomy 28:20 The LORD shall send upon you cursing, vexation, and rebuke, **in all** that you set your hand unto for to do, until you be destroyed, and until you perish **quickly**; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby you have forsaken me.

Expect **sudden destruction** when all these societal systems collapse all at once:

1 Thessalonians 5:3 When they shall say, Peace and safety; then **sudden destruction** comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

If a **single factor** brings down our nations people would be able to say, "If only such and such... none of this would have happened, and Jesus Christ would not have had to return." There is going to be total failure of all worldly systems at the same time! All men, including the Israelitish nations, will realize the utter hopelessness of this world's God-less ways.

Revelation 1:7 Behold, He [Jesus Christ] comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindred of the earth **shall wail** because of Him.

Men will finally realize how futile all existence is without Jesus Christ ruling in their lives. There will be no second guessing the need for the Kingdom of God because history will have recorded that the result of mankind's best efforts was always ruin, failure, and devastation. Man will realize that the root cause of his demise is the lack of Godly character. It is rejection of the True God, and disobedience to His Commandments. The degeneration of the English-speaking peoples in areas such as morality, secular education, and spiritual values is rapidly taking place. The moral decline – the rejection of God and His ways – within America and the other Israelitish countries is the real cause of the coming **obliteration of society**. Look at the obvious signs of how our moral fabric and society are failing from within:

The Ten Commandments are looked down upon with utter contempt, especially God's Sabbath rest; one parent homes are the norm; Children grow up being raised by an irreligious state; same sex unions are politically correct; out of wedlock births are the norm; millions of abortions of precious God given life never entered the **mind** of God! Every life is a gift from our Great God, and the taking of that life, no matter how early or late, is **murder** and a violation of the Ten Commandments.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jeremiah 19:4-5 ...They have filled this place with the blood of innocents; They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spoke it, **neither came it into my mind.**

The gambling industry is blatant; the war against drugs is forgotten; genetically modified foods and destructive agricultural practices preclude quality nourishment; the farm land has no rest (Leviticus 25:4; 26:34); Devil worship and idolatry are thought to be shrewd and chic – relegating God to the status of a non-entity; the medical community's overuse of antibiotics is setting us up for the prophesied pestilence and disease epidemics of Biblical proportions; gang murder in the streets is rampant; the practices of financial institutions are unbiblical (Leviticus 5:10; Deuteronomy 23:20); adultery is winked at and the courts pervert justice (Leviticus 19:15); there is incomprehensibly massive runaway debt; abuses within the World Wide Web and unparalleled migrations of peoples (Daniel 12:4); and fanatical worldwide jihad. These and many more vices tear away at family, society and the Plan of God. The family as designed by God is the sustaining foundational component of society. And because **family is the foundation of society**, God prophesied of Ephraim as a type of all Israelitish nations, that these pervasive and ungodly trends will finally result in a people that has made itself to be without substance or endurance:

Hosea 13:1-3 Now they **sin more and more...** according to their own understanding... therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that **evaporates away.**

Revelation 12:12 Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil [Satan] is come down unto you, having **great wrath**, because he knows that he has but a short time.

Following the beginning of the **Great Tribulation**, the **heavenly signs** are the **sixth seal.**

Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the Tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

Revelation 6:12-13 I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Joel 2:30-31 I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible **Day of the Lord** comes.

Revelation 8:1-2 When he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

The **Day of the LORD's wrath**—the seventh seal—which is the one-year long **Day of the Lord** - totaling 3½ years of Tribulation. The Tribulation will be the final wake up call for Church brethren; the most tragic period ever for those who once knew the truth of God but were remiss in living their faith to the full.

Matthew 24:9-10 They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

It will be the hardest thing those saints ever did, but **some** will call on the name of the Lord for strength to take a stand by becoming martyrs. They will overcome Satan by physically **laying down their lives**. They will be with Christ in the **First Resurrection** (Revelation 20:4-6).

Revelation 7:14 I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of **Great Tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [Jesus died, and these avail themselves of His blood by being martyred.]

Man's inhumanity to his fellow man knows no boundary. From Cain who killed his brother Abel; to the utter ruthless atrocities of the ancient Assyrians; to the German perpetrated horrors on the Jews and Russians; to the Japanese brutalities of gas and germ warfare inflicted on the Chinese; to the pitiless treatment of slaves everywhere through history, and sadly to how the indigenous tribes of America were wronged. There is a spirit—the devil—that works in the children of disobedience – and **when that war-like spirit awakens** for the last time it will be so ferocious and atrocious that no period in history is like unto it, ushering in the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7).

God is sending warning for man to repent even now. When the fourth seal was opened, the rider of a pale horse representing death and pestilence went forth, and the grave followed him.

Matthew 24:7-8 There shall be famines, and pestilences, and natural disasters, in widespread places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Revelation 6:8 I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 6:9 When he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

## **Pentecost**

Only the faithful brethren of God's Church who are living Christian lives will be spared the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Their resurrection to reign and rule with Jesus Christ will come at the sounding of the very last trumpet. Do not be mistaken: The Trumpets (Plural) begin to sound on a Feast of Trumpets, but the last Trumpet, the resurrection Trumpet, (singular) will be sounded on a Feast of Pentecost. It is wise to study out the sequence of the Holy Days and the sounding of the Trumpets of the Lord.

Not all the saints will have to die. The saints will be raised incorruptible – in the image of God.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet** [singular]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

This takes place at the end of the Tribulation on a Pentecost Day. Only a relatively small number of saints will have been protected – most having died in the Tribulation because they were so slow to get their act together—and love their brethren as Christ gave us example. Why did God add the clause, **“and remain?”** It is because many of the saints will have been martyred by that time, no longer remaining—they are the remnant with whom Satan makes war (Revelation 12:7). They too, will be in the first resurrection, but how will they muster the courage to stand up to the Beast and die, when they have been so reluctant to **lay down their lives**, spiritually speaking, for one another?

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trumpet of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive **and remain** [alive] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The world has been deceived into believing that they do not have to obey God – but somehow He will forget that and *rapture* them up into heaven. That misunderstanding comes mostly because they have rejected God's Holy Days which give the prophetic framework of the Plan of God. They forget that the third woe heralds the return of Jesus Christ with His saints at the timing of the pouring out of God's seven last plagues – after the marriage supper of all the firstfruit saints who were resurrected as spiritual beings on that final Feast of Pentecost.

Revelation 11:14-15 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly. And the seventh angel sounded [his Trumpet]; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

More than any of the other Feast Days, Pentecost exemplifies the Feast of the Church.

Leviticus 23:16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you **number fifty days**; ['Pentecost' means number fifty days.]

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

God poured out His **Holy Spirit**, the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4), upon the Church brethren on the Day of Pentecost with stunning manifestations of spectacular happenings—the noise, the cloven tongues like as of fire, and the foreign languages—observed by all in order to punctuate the fact that something truly breathtaking was occurring as never before.

Indeed, at that particular Holy Convocation God the Father was bringing converts into His Family as His Children with His Life, Mind and Spirit making them brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ—the Church of God. Those whom God calls to be firstfruits led by His Spirit are also to be partakers of the **first** resurrection with Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:6). The first resurrection numbers 144,000 spiritual saints (Revelation 14:1-5). Only a relatively small physical remnant of mankind will survive the maliciously cruel wanton carnage and indiscriminate annihilation of young victims all around the war-torn earth during the Tribulation to live over into the Millennium to become the people of the wonderful world tomorrow. For more on Pentecost see the end of Chapter Five of this book.

## **Heavenly Signs**

There is a great deal to understand about all of the episodes associated with the end-time trumpets that lead up to the final trumpet. The seven trumpets signal the day of God's wrath, the **Day of the Lord**. Just prior to the Day of the Lord, the sixth seal reveals that there will be **signs in the heaven** and on earth (Revelation 6:12). God tells us in advance:

Joel 2:30-32 I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall **call on the name of the LORD** shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The **Feast of Trumpets** falls on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24). In the Plan of God, Trumpets is the next Feast of the Lord to realize its prophetic fulfillment. Even now, Church brethren are counting down to the return of Jesus Christ. After six thousand years of human misery, wars and sin, righteous men cry out for the day of Christ's return in power and great glory:

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

God's annual Holy Days reveal His Plan of action to us. By comparing the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 with those in the Book of Revelation, the full meaning of the Feast of Trumpets is revealed. When opened, the **seven seals** of Revelation 5 reveal the sign of Christ's coming spoken of in Matthew 24. Jesus tells us that the **heavenly signs** will usher in the seven trumpets - the seventh seal. While foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said:

Luke 21:25-27 There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the **Son of man coming** in a cloud with power and great glory.

Christians were reconciled, made right with God the Father, in the context of Passover and at our baptism... But the world remains **cut-off from God** because Satan is still the ruler of this evil world. That is about to change when Jesus begins to rule as King of kings.

## **Trumpets**

In the Plan of God, the **Feast of Trumpets** foreshadows the victorious **return of Jesus Christ** who will overcome all evil kings and rulers of this world. He will conquer the Beast and the False Prophet with divine wrath (Revelation 17:13-14; 19:20). He will bind Satan. He will establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth (Revelation 19:14-16). As King of kings, Jesus' **saints will be with Him** when as He gains victory.

Revelation 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], and the **Lamb shall overcome them**: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him [the saints of God] are called, and chosen, and faithful.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures a most significant event; the dramatic return and **second coming of Jesus Christ** in supreme power over all the earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **Trumpet of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Revelation 11:15 The seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

There are **two** very different **suppers** spoken of by our Lord in Revelation 19. Christians wish to partake only of the **first supper** – the second is for the birds:

Revelation 19:9 ...Blessed are they which are called unto the **marriage supper** of the Lamb. [This is the **first supper**.] (Matthew 22:2-13).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

After that splendid Marriage Feast where Christ will be wed to the Church, Jesus will unleash His indignation against all wickedness on the earth described as the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. We see the second supper here:

Revelation 19:17-19 I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the buzzards that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the **supper** of the great God; [That is the **second supper**—the supper for buzzards, the eaters of carrion] That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army [the resurrected saints of God].

Joel 3:2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

God even tells us where the second supper will take place:

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the **Day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.

Matthew 24:28 Where-so-ever the carcass is [those spiritually dead], there will the buzzards be gathered together.

## **Day of Atonement**

Each and every Sabbatical year begins on the 10th day of the 7th month, which is the **Day of Atonement**. Jesus began His Public ministry on the Jubilee year of 26/27 AD (Leviticus 25:10). Notice the insightful words of Jesus on that High Sabbath Day:

Luke 4:18-21 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the **acceptable year** of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, **This day** is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

As the Plan of God is unfolding, the realization of the Day of Atonement shows how God the Father will make reconciliation possible for all the sinful world to Himself. It is a most grand step in the Plan of God. Atonement is one of the seven annual Feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23:27) – it is a Holy Day of Convocation on which we are to appear before the Lord. The Day of Atonement is to the entire world what Passover is to called, chosen and faithful Christians. God in His perfect love will reconcile the entire world unto Himself. That is what the Day of Atonement is all about:

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was in Christ, **reconciling the world** unto **Himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Atonement pictures the complete cleansing of sin – making possible the reconciliation of all mankind to God. Atonement is a spiritual Feast Day – without physical food or drink. Its complete fulfillment will be a very great day! Atonement will make an intimate and thorough relationship with God possible for all mankind. It will be an extraordinarily remarkable Day in that **both** God the Father and Jesus Christ will have so obviously worked together to bring it to fruition.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

2 Corinthians 5:21 For [God the Father] has made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

1 Corinthians 15:22 As in Adam **all die**, even so in Christ shall **all be made alive**.

Jesus **died** for us, and the Father, with exceeding great power resurrected Jesus Christ to **life** eternal when He **raised Him** from the **dead** and restored His divine glory (Ephesians 1:17-20, John 17:5). Otherwise, Jesus would have remained dead, and God the Father would have been forever alone. Jesus' existence would have ceased! That is how much God loves us—by putting everything He has on the line for us (John 3:16-17).

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the personal **atonement** for our sins.

In the same way that Passover makes reconciliation with the Father possible for **Christians** through the cleansing of sin, the Day of Atonement will bring about the reconciliation of the **world**. Mankind will no longer be separated from the Father (Isaiah 59:2). God the Father initiates the process of reconciliation through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The Feasts of Passover and Atonement are distinguished by **when** the blood of Christ is applied to the Church of the first resurrection, and **when** the blood of Christ will be applied to the balance of mankind that will live in the Millennium and in the second resurrection at the Last Great Day.

Atonement is for the world: In the same way that Christians were reconciled to God by the Passover sacrifice and death of Jesus, Atonement makes possible a right relationship with God for all the world. Where the Feast of Passover provided for our personal reconciliation to God the Father, Atonement looks to the day of universal reconciliation of all who have ever lived. Atonement falls on the tenth day of the seventh month. Atonement is a spiritual Feast day – a day of fasting without food or water.

Leviticus 23:27-29 On the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a Day of Atonement: It shall be an Holy Convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls [fasting]... And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a Day of Atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

Atonement makes way for the millennial rest to begin because man is delivered from the bondage of Satan and every enemy. For more on the Day of Atonement go to **Jesus Died and He Lives** later in this chapter.

## **Feast of Tabernacles**

The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day Feast unto the Lord at the time of the abundant fall harvest typifying the great **spiritual harvest** of the Millennial Kingdom of God on this earth (Leviticus 23:34). It is the best known of the annual Holy Days because all the members travel to Feast sites for fellowship, spiritual messages, abundant food and drink – all picturing the time when our Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church, will reign and rule over this entire earth for a thousand years. The first day of the seven days is a Holy Convocation. God intends that there be a strong sense of the **temporary and transient nature** of our earthly sojourn by having us reside in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:39-40, 43 In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a Feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath [Last Great Day]. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days... That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to  **dwell in booths**, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

The first inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will be the surviving remnant of the Great Tribulation. They will each be called to conversion providing them opportunity for eternal salvation (Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 37:14). Speaking of this remnant God says:

Ezekiel 39:28-29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them anymore there. Neither will I hide my face anymore from them: for I have  **poured out my Spirit** upon the House of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

Their primary task throughout the one-thousand years will be to restore the entire earth to its original Garden of Eden state in preparation for the great resurrection of all who have ever lived. God calls that resurrection, The Great White Throne Judgment.

## **Last Great Day**

The **Last Great Day**—the last of God’s Feast Days—pictures the time at the end of the Millennium when all who have ever lived will have the incredible opportunity to live again on this earth, and then to know God and be led by His Spirit!

Matthew 25:31-33 When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left (John 5:25-29).

All who have ever lived shall have God’s Holy Spirit poured out on them (Joel 2:28). Spiritual blindness will be removed from the earth (Isaiah 35:5). Jesus signified that God’s Spirit would be abundant for all in that day—pictured by rivers of living water. We find the New Testament name of the last Holy Day here:

John 7:37-38 In the **Last Day**, that **Great Day of the Feast**, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

This is the day when we will be reunited with our loved ones. They will have been in their graves since they died—then, raised to physical life once again at the voice of the Son of God:

John 5:25-29 Truly, truly, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and had given Him authority to  **exercise judgment** also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which  **all that are in the graves** shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation.

Adam and Eve, along with all mankind who have ever lived, will be resurrected back to physical life on the Last Great Day and have God's Spirit poured out on them for the **first time** – providing their opportunity for salvation that comes to all men only once. In the Great White Throne judgment all who have never received God's Holy Spirit will be resurrected – receive God's Holy Spirit – and then be judged during that period.

In reverse order, Isaiah writes about how there will be ample time at the end of the Millennium and just before the New Heavens and New Earth for all mankind to be **judged by God** – either as worthy of His Kingdom, or deserving of the accursed second death (Isaiah 65:17-25).

There is so much more to be told of the story of God's Holy Days. After the time of the Last Great Day and the Great White Throne Judgment will come the **New Heavens and the New Earth** with a glorious future for the Children of God. For more on the Last Great Day see Chapter 7.

## **A New People**

In expectation of the Messiah, John the Baptist was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah to **turn the hearts** of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready **a people** prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17). The Prophet Elijah had turned many Children of Israel to the Lord! In the same way that Elijah was sent by God, Zacharias was informed by the angel Gabriel as to the commission and purpose of John the Baptist's ministry:

Luke 1:17 And [John] shall go before [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to **turn the hearts** of the fathers to the children... and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready **a people prepared for the Lord**. (Malachi 4:6)

We see here that the most important result of John the Baptist's commission was that of **turning hearts to God**. Those Christians who embrace Christ's teachings are given that which no group of people has been given before—a heart for the Lord.

1 Peter 2:10 In times past they were **not a people**, but are now **the people of God**: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

For the first time, **a righteous people** would be able to live according to the intent of God's Law. This small number of people are the Spirit-filled people who are His Church. This people—the Church of God—is a forerunner of all those who will eventually be saved in the day of the great judgment, the Last Great Day when they all will have God's Spirit poured out on them for the first time – providing their opportunity for salvation that comes to all men only once (Joel 2:28, Revelation 20:11).

Hebrews 8:10 This is the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me **a people**:

For the world, this conversion is yet future, but for God's little flock—the Church brethren who have already covenanted with God, this is a reality— they are now **the people of God!**

Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

Luke 12:32 Fear not, **little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

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God is not trying to save the entire world at this time. If He were, most would admit that He has been a dismal failure. There is an order and purpose to God's calling (Romans 8:30; 1 Corinthians 15:23). The purpose of God's calling is to have "a people" – the Church of God. The Church brethren are being prepared to reign and rule with Jesus (Revelation 5:10). Called out of the world, the Church brethren are to be a **light to the world** at this time. Jesus prayed:

John 17:23 I in them, and you [Father] in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the **world may know** that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.

### **Calling His Disciples**

Jesus chose His disciples carefully – praying to His Father all night long for discernment – that they might be, not only witnesses to every word He spoke, but to become foundational elements in His Eternal Kingdom. The apostles' names will be inscribed over the gates of God's eternal city—New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14).

Luke 6:12-13 It came to pass in those days, that [Jesus] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.

After calling His disciples, Jesus set out in His Sermon on the Mount to magnify God's Law and make it honorable by instituting the basic moral code of Christianity (Matthew 5-7). Jesus taught His followers how to triumph over their human foibles. Over seven hundred years earlier, the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied:

Isaiah 42:21 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will **magnify the Law**, and make it honorable.

Christianity is a lifestyle. It is founded in the Law of God. When lived, Christianity develops the individual; the Christian family grows in integrity; society is strengthened, and nations are established. The Bible contains the written record of the Law of God in action. The Bible is God's manual for humanity.

Psalms 119:97 O how love I thy Law! It is my meditation all the day.

### **Sermon on the Mount**

Jesus brought His teachings into a darkened world—to a people wholly lacking in Christian awareness and understanding. For the most part, Jesus preached and taught a crowd whose minds were blinded by a veil of darkness:

2 Corinthians 3:14 Their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same **veil** untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament.

The fathoming of Jesus' words was given only to those being called by God. (Romans 11:7-8). Jesus did not come to bring salvation to everyone at that time, but He came to bear witness to the truth of God (John 18:37).

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Romans 11:7-8 What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks after; but the election [Church brethren] has obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God has given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

The preaching of John the Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus and given the masses a sense of expectation. Isaiah had prophesied of John the Baptist:

Isaiah 40:3-5 The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the **glory of the LORD shall be revealed**, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Jesus came the first time some 2,000 years ago, not to save the world then, but to announce the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God, and to prepare a people to reign and rule with Him throughout the Millennium (Mark 1:14). Even now, God is not ready for everyone to know Him and His perfect way. Jesus said:

Matthew 11:25 I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have **hidden these things** from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

Standing in a natural amphitheater part way down a mountain where He had been praying all night, possibly at the plain of Gennesaret not very far from Capernaum, Jesus looked up and began teaching the true **spiritual standards of life** to the multitudes—the **sermon on the mount** (Matthew 5:1; 8:1, Luke 6:17; 20). The people listened and were astonished at Jesus' doctrine because He taught them as one having that singular quality of command presence, and not as the scribes who lacked authority (Matthew 7:28-29).

Jesus was not trying to convert the multitudes. Jesus came for a number of reasons, but one of them was not to try to convert everyone. God's Spirit would be conveyed to only a comparatively small number – those who would comprise the Church of God—the one community of called-out believers—the Children of God. In the resurrection, the rest of those people will be called to conversion. (Romans 11:32)

## **Lifting the Veil of Darkness**

The **Church Age** is not relevant to the great majority of mankind which remains in spiritual darkness. In the soon coming Millennium, the symbolic veil that represents man's separation from God will be removed for all mankind (Isaiah 25:7). It may be that if you are reading a book like this that you are being called by God (John 6:44, 65; 14:6). If you answer Him, He will grant you repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 2:4; Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8). If you do not answer Him, it is because the wicked one, the devil has seized the word of God from your heart. Jesus said:

Matthew 13:19 When any one hears the word of the Kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and confiscates that which was sown in his heart.

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Most of mankind is not aware of the Gospel. Most do not know what the Gospel is. The Gospel is not the story about Jesus; how He gave sight to the blind; how He walked on water; how He made the lame walk; how He cleansed the lepers and raised the dead (Matthew 11:5). No, the Gospel is what Jesus preached over and above those miraculous works—It is the Good News of His Father's Kingdom. Soon, Jesus is going to come to establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth—that indeed is good news. God will reign supreme over all. God's law, His love and His way of life will be the norm for all men—that is the Plan of God.

Those who are mindful of the Gospel message of repentance from sin, and faith in the sacrifice of Christ will begin to live lives of obedience to God's way of life, and thus He will give them His Spirit at baptism with the laying on of hands (Acts 5:32). For those called by God to be Jesus' spiritual brothers and sisters, Christ came to **lift the veil of darkness** and blindness that engulfs the world. The very words of Jesus attest to the fact that He was **bringing spiritual light** to a people who were heretofore blinded and in darkness, who would believe and walk in all His ways.

Isaiah spoke of how the entire earth lay in darkness and in need of the One who would **lift the veil** of blindness. The very reason that Jesus spoke to the multitudes **only** in parables was so that they would **not understand** (Matthew 13:34; Mark 4:34). That may sound harsh, but it was not time for them to receive the Gospel. The veil of darkness covered the nations then, and it continues to cover the nations today so that they cannot understand—except for those who are being called by God.

Matthew 13:10-11 The disciples came, and said unto Jesus, Why do you speak unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you **to know** the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them **it is not given**.

The world thinks that Jesus spoke in parables to make His message clearer. They are yet blinded by the veil of darkness. Jesus tells us that it is not yet time for the world to be healed of their spiritual blindness. He said:

Matthew 13:13-15 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing ye shall hear, and **shall not understand**; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their **eyes they have closed**; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should **be converted**, and **I should heal them**. (Mark 4:12; John 12:40; Acts 28:27)

Jesus said plainly that it was not yet the time for the multitudes to turn around and be converted to the way of God. For the vast majority of the world's population the time of their **conversion** is yet future:

Isaiah 25:7-9 He will swallow up in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the **veil that is spread over all nations**. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD has spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and **He will save us**: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

God tells us that because of mankind's sin He is the source of blindness, and confusion of heart. It is God who has placed the **veil that separates** sinful mankind from Himself because He will never tolerate perverseness in His presence—and certainly not in His Kingdom.

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Isaiah 59:2-4 Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

It is God who **blinds the minds** of unbelievers. It is Satan who murders, lies, twists, deceives, distorts and rules this entire evil world (John 8:44; 14:30; Revelation 12:9). The earth is under the sway of the wicked devil (1 John 5:19). Satan is not the “god” of anything but he is a serious threat to Christians. That is why we must pray for protection from the **evil one** (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4). Notice that it is the Lord who **has blinded** the minds of them which believe not:

Isaiah 29:10 The **LORD** has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has **closed your eyes**...

It is not yet God’s intention that all the world should see and understand the Plan of God at this time—that day is coming. For now, this precious knowledge is for the Church brethren alone. Even though the Jews have kept the Holy Day calendar throughout the centuries, they do not grasp the prophetic meaning of each Feast Day (Romans 3:1-2; Leviticus 23).

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 If our Gospel be hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost: In whom the **God** of this age **has blinded** the minds of them which believe not, lest the **light** of the glorious Gospel of **Christ**, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

It is conversion that removes the veil of blindness:

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 Their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same **vail** untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which **vail** is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the **vail** is upon their heart. Nevertheless, whenever one shall have **converted** to the Lord, the **veil** shall be **taken away**.

How is that **veil of darkness removed** from the saints, those being called into the Body of Christ, who have **converted** to the Lord? Paul gives us the answer:

Colossians 1:12-14 ...The Father ...has rescued us from the **power of darkness**, and has conveyed us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of [our] sins:

Beginning with His sermon on the mount, Jesus began removing the **veil of darkness** that blinded those who would truly follow Him. Those who were called to conversion were the first New Testament Christians to be **enlightened** and see the light. At the very moment that Jesus died, the **veil** that separated man from God’s Holy Presence was torn asunder – making it possible for the saints to come into the true Holy of Holies having obtained reconciliation with God the Father (Hebrews 9:8; 10:19-20). The veil in the Temple at Jerusalem represented the veil of blindness:

Matthew 27:50-51 Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up His breath. And, behold, the **veil of the Temple** was torn in two from the top to the bottom. (Leviticus 16:2, Ephesians 2:14-16)

## **Relationship with the Father Restored**

In Moses' day no one would dare approach Mt. Sinai because of the presence of the LORD there – they would have been struck dead (Hebrews 12:20). Who today would dare to approach the heretofore inaccessible **throne of God** the Father? Jesus came to **reveal** the Father (John 1:18; Matthew 11:27). Paul explains that Jesus has opened the way to the Father:

Hebrews 10:19-22 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through **the veil**, that is to say, His **own body**. And having an High Priest [Jesus] over the house of God; let us draw near [to the Father] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Having been separated because of our sins, Jesus' atoning sacrifice on our behalf made our reconciliation to the Father possible. When the Father looks upon converts He no longer sees a rebellious sinful people, but He sees the righteousness of His Son that has been imputed to them (Romans 4:6-8; Psalm 32:1-2). God said, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34). Now the saints can go directly to the Father where we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Luke 11:2; Hebrews 4:14-16).

Jesus is not trying with all of His might to save the world at this time. If he were, all would have to agree that He is fighting a losing battle. Too many have wrongly concluded that all men are being judged at this time. Only the Church of God is being judged right now and judgment is reserved until a later time for those who are in the world (1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 11:15).

John 9:39 Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do **not see may see**, and that those who **see may be made blind**.

## **Conversion from Darkness to Light**

Conversion is much more than the sentiment of giving your heart to the Lord. Conversion is much more than the adoption of a set of beliefs identified with one particular religious denomination to the exclusion of others. A **convert** is one who has been called by God; repented of that which is evil in God's sight; accepted Jesus Christ in faith as his personal Savior; been baptized receiving God's Holy Spirit; been turned around from the ways of this evil world; been transformed by the restoration of his mind; chosen that which is good; and fully yielded to the perfect **will of God**. (Romans 12:2).

When Paul wrote of being transformed by the regeneration of your mind he meant that a convert was an **entirely new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17). It was one of the first lessons that Jesus had taught him. When Paul was knocked to the ground, Jesus began immediately to teach him all about **conversion**—beginning with Paul's sins being washed away and his being filled with Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17; 22:16). Paul asked Jesus:

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Acts 26:15-20 Who are you, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. [Paul was killing Christians] But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose—to make you an appointed servant and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to **convert** them from **darkness to light**, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and **become converted** to God, and do works suitable for repentance.

In the Scriptures 'conversion,' which would normally mean simply to turn about, takes on its spiritual dimension of **converting** entirely to the Lord through repentance, faith, submitting and yielding wholeheartedly to God. Conversion is a moral revolution brought about entirely by God of turning an individual around. It takes place when God the Father acts in a person's life to call them and grant them repentance and faith in the blood of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin (Romans 2:4; Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8). God the Father calls only some people at this time to **conversion** – all others, in their order, will be called later (John 6:44; 65; 1 Corinthians 15:23). Jesus taught the requirement of the lifelong **conversion** process when He said:

Mark 1:15 The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye, and believe the Gospel.**

Repentance and belief are the very first aspects of the conversion process. The **Gospel** is the entire Good News Jesus brought concerning the soon coming Kingdom of God—including everything Jesus taught regarding God's way of life. Conversion is a gift of God. Unless God calls and gives a person repentance, the faith of Jesus Christ, and the motivating influence of His Holy Spirit – they are not able to live their lives according to the principles Jesus has laid before us.

Repentance has to do with keeping God's Ten Commandments—not only in the letter but in the spirit of the law. Most importantly, with a measure of God's Spirit, a new heart enables a true Christian to keep covenant with his Maker – and receive the promise of eternal life (Acts 2:38).

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **become converted** from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

The apostles were not converted until after the resurrection of Jesus—on the Day of Pentecost—when they received God's Holy Spirit. Jesus said to Peter:

Luke 22:32 I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are **converted**, strengthen your brethren.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the apostles taught the necessity of conversion:

Acts 3:19 Repent you therefore, and be **converted**, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

There are dire consequences for those who would treat their conversion shabbily. Peter compares those who would **fall away** from their conversion to:

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2 Peter 2:21-22 It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to become **unconverted** from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The apostle Paul cautioned of the consequence of not remaining true to conversion ever so much more sternly:

Hebrews 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who were **once enlightened**, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they **shall fall away**, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

Hebrews 10:26-27 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

God has revealed to us the astonishing importance of our remaining **converted**. Only true Christians are altogether yielded and wholly submissive with all their heart to God and His ways. There is a reason that the Plan of God exists. The French have a saying, *raison d'etre*, meaning "reason for existence." A man who has a life's goal of accomplishing a project is said to eat, sleep, and walk, every waking moment of his existence to carry out his ambition. That is the way God is with His Plan to bring many sons and daughters to glory. Christians are the *raison d'être* of God's Plan! We, the Children of God, are the venture, the Plan that God dreams of, envisions and is achieving.

Conversely, our calling, and our *raison d'etre*, for living is to be yielding up of ourselves as servants to one another, and laying our lives down as surely as Jesus did for what is right in God's eyes. We are servants of Jesus Christ right now. We are to give of ourselves – all of ourselves – as Christ gave us example. That is what Jesus meant when He said:

John 4:34 My meat [*raison d'etre*] is to **do the will** of Him [God the Father] who sent me, and to finish His work.

Conversion has to do with doing God's will. Jesus said:

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that does the **will of my Father** which is in heaven.

Jesus said, **not as I will, but as you will** (Matthew 26:39).

## **Will I do His Will**

That is the question. Jesus taught, Thy will be done (Matthew 6:10). Again, the question is, **will we do His will?** The answer is so clear: **Do so.** (Matthew 24:46)

The crux of Christianity lies in coming to the point of yielding one's self to the perfect **will of God**. Yield to God in everything, without equivocation. Not, "...if it works out." Not, "...if it is convenient." Not, "...If I get the chance." The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment is put God 1<sup>st</sup>. That means that God's will is always placed ahead of personal inclination (Matthew 22:37-38). That means maintaining Godly principles even when they are difficult or seemingly impossible. The natural man **cannot submit** entirely or surrender his will and mind to the will of God. Without the gift of God's Holy Spirit to purge an evil conscience it is impossible for man to relinquish his thoughts in favor of the higher power (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22). Isaiah wrote of the evil and complex machinations of the carnal mind:

Isaiah 55:7-9 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Paul gave a good example in expressing that he worked diligently to yield his ways to God's ways when he said:

Acts 24:16 ...I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

The people of God's Church are called for the purpose of preparing now to rule with Christ in the Millennial world tomorrow. Christians are learning how to live according to the rule and way of God's Kingdom here and now in everything – by coming out of this present evil world (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Romans 12:2 Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, **will of God**.

God tells His children not to worry needlessly about what we consider to be the necessities of life - food, clothes, and shelter – for after all, God takes care of even the flowers and the animals which are not as important as man (Matthew 6:26). Our focus is to become like God. Jesus said it like this:

Matthew 6:33 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things [food, clothes, and shelter] shall be added unto you.

Those few true Christians who **yield entirely to God**, love Him and their fellow man according to Godly principles, will qualify to sit on the throne of Jesus Christ with Him (Revelation 3:21; 5:10).

Daniel 7:27 And the Kingdom and Dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

## **Children of Light**

John 12:35-40 Jesus said unto the apostles, Yet a little while is the **light** with you. Walk while ye have the light, **lest darkness** come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes. While ye have light, believe in the **light**, that ye may be **the children of light**. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore, they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, **He hath blinded** their eyes, and **hardened their heart**; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them (Isaiah 6:9-10).

God is not saving the entire world at this time – there is a time order to God’s calling – God blinds those who are not being called and **hardens their heart** according to His will as He moves His creation toward everlasting light.

Matthew 13:15-16 This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

## **Essence of Christianity**

In introducing Christianity to humanity, Jesus began an indoctrination program (in the good and right sense of the word) into the heart and mind of God. For the first time, a true called-out people—the ‘*ekklesia*’—the Church brethren, would begin to acquire that heart and mind of God (Jeremiah 31:33). He began a process of instruction and teaching of His moral code to the great multitude of His followers so that some would recognize and wholeheartedly appreciate God’s high standards. Jesus taught them the goal, purpose and state of mind a true Christian disciple must live by. We have heard of them as the beatitudes. In actuality, with respect to the Law of God, Jesus began teaching the aspirational principles of the Kingdom of God that together with all of His other doctrine constitute the Love of God. Those folks were already familiar with the Old Testament and were looking for the prophesied Messiah to arrive. Jesus came to fully develop God’s law in a glorious way – teaching how to become blessed Christians. Jesus’ message was eminently superior to the teachings the multitude had heard before. ‘Blessed’ in today’s English means to be spiritually well-off, pleasing to God, especially privileged, and supremely happy in God’s approval.

Jesus taught for hours on end. The Sermon on the Mount extends from Matthew Chapter 5 all the way to Chapter 8:1 where Jesus descended from the mountain. He expounded on the **law of God** in its fullest sense and application. He explained and illustrated God’s principles and values that describe how to live, think, and be like God. It was time for them to come out of the dark and know the love of God. God is love (1 John 4:8). God is **light**, and in Him is **no darkness** at all (1 John 1:5). The love of God has to do with dealing with others in compliance with the Ten Commandments. In other words, we do not fight, steal, lie, cheat, or in any way hurt or mistreat others—rather we help, care for, encourage and advance their cause. Jesus clarified everything from the smallest detail of daily life to the most important aspects of Christian living. Jesus taught fairness, kindness, empathy, equity, attention, patience, respect, honor, generosity, thoughtfulness, sacrifice, appreciation, affection – the list was endless (John 21:25).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Because man has the proclivity to seek loopholes to evade the law, Jesus did not provide a Talmud of do's and don'ts, but a **way of life**. Jesus' discourse was in no way a dry presentation that left the crowds bewildered. These beatitudes only scratch the surface of what Jesus presented to them. Repentance, faith and God's Holy Spirit would later open the converts' understanding that they might fathom the deeper meaning of Christ's sayings (Luke 24:45).

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the **poor in spirit**: for theirs is the **Kingdom of heaven**. (Luke 6:20)

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that **mourn**: for they shall be comforted. (Isaiah 61:3)

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the **meek**: for they shall inherit the earth. (Galatians 5:23)

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after **righteousness**: for they shall be filled. (Luke 6:21; Matthew 6:33)

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the **merciful**: for they shall obtain mercy. (Ruth 3:10)

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God. (Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 1:47)

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called the Children of God. (Romans 12:18)

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are they which are **persecuted** for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the **Kingdom of heaven**.

All of these preceding eight characteristics are descriptive of **life within the Kingdom of God**, because they are bracketed with the phrase, "for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:11-12 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and **persecute** you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven [where God keeps track of our doings]: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Luke 6:23)

Christians who unwaveringly and resolutely take a stand for God's way will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus Christ gives the correct response to persecution:

Matthew 5:44-45 ...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may become the Children of your Father which is in heaven.

Living according to Jesus' moral code **imparts light** to a Christian. These attributes are the heart of the Law. It is only the Church brethren that understand their God-ordained potential of becoming glorious beaming spirit beings in the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 2:10; Daniel 12:3).

Matthew 5:16-17 Let **your light** so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Yes! Jesus came to **fulfil** the law and the prophets to the fullest. That had not been done before! Certainly, the law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and just, and good, but Jesus came to make the law replete – supplying that which was the goal of the law. For example, where the law says that, “Thou shalt not kill,” the New Testament Christian is instructed to be a peacemaker, and as much as possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18).

Disobedient and sinful men reason that because Jesus **fulfilled the law**, God is appeased. And because God has been placated by Jesus Christ they do not have to be obedient and keep His Ten Commandments.

They do not understand that God’s Commandments are an expression of His love. The Ten Commandments tutor us how to love God and our fellow man.

The leadership of the Church of God has often been remiss in its duty of teaching the brethren the principles of these qualities of Christian behavior and how to implement them. Christians must learn them and live them to be in the Kingdom of God. Jesus, Himself, lived according to the highest expression of the expanded law. Jesus’ way of life was peaceful, humble of heart, and poor in spirit—that is what a Christian emulates:

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for **I am meek and lowly in heart**: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

All the things that Jesus taught about Christianity were on a higher spiritual plane than His disciples had known. God’s plane of existence is far above man’s realm of thought and reason (Isaiah 55:8-9). Jesus taught that a person does not gain favor with God through physical might, wealth, guile, influence or political intrigue, but by this spiritual code—this inexhaustible set of virtues that define who Jesus is. Christ’s doctrine was counter-intuitive and contrary to all the expectations of the world: *“How can you ever get ahead by being humble, meek, generous and serving?”*

When Jesus said, “Happy are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven,” He was speaking of a poverty of spirit which is not natural to the human condition which tends to think more highly of itself than is becoming of a Christian (Galatians 5:17). “Poor” means to be in want of – in need of – to make one whole and complete. **Poor in spirit** is the exact opposite of a haughty heart that needs nothing, and knows it all (Proverbs 18:12). Only in resisting pride, having a humble heart, and possessing a total dependency on God’s mercy, can anyone be **supremely happy** and blessed having gained God’s approval. He who is **poor in spirit** is one who realizes that his relationship with God is lacking in many ways. God dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 66:2).

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit.

Jesus taught that a repentant attitude was the proper self-view and self-evaluation which distinguishes those for whom is the Kingdom of God. For example, upon repentance, King David, the mightiest king on earth, sought to subjugate his carnal spirit:

Psalms 131:1 LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

That is the quality and attitude that Jesus denotes as **poor in spirit**. Though rich in earthly possessions and powerful militarily, David had become poor in spirit. Referring to himself, David prayed:

Psalms 34:6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

It is difficult to understand exactly what Jesus meant by, "Blessed are the **merciful**." Paul tells us that Jesus became a man so that He could learn **compassion** for pitiful mankind's sake (Hebrews 2:17). It is difficult to be magnanimous to the unfortunate ones in the spirit of meekness without assuming a wrongful better than thou attitude (Galatians 6:1).

In the Hebrew there is the often-used word, *hesed* or *chesed*, better translated as **lovingkindness**. We are to be big-hearted. We do see God's abundant **mercy** that we are to assume and replicate in our lives, thoughts and actions. God is pleased with loving acts of mercy, forgiveness and kindness – more so than blind compliance to law.

Exodus 34:6-7 ... The LORD, The LORD God, compassionate and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in **lovingkindness** and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and **lovingkindness** with them that love Him and keep His Commandments to a thousand generations.

Numbers 14:18-19 The LORD is longsuffering, and of abundant **lovingkindness**, forgiving iniquity and transgression ... Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy **lovingkindness**, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

## **Judgment Mercy Faith and Love**

As Jesus expounded on God's principles and values, He was not remiss in teaching the more important aspects of Christian living. Jesus had, of course, spoken through the prophets of old, like Micah, and inspired their writings (1 Peter 1:10-11):

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD **require** of thee, but to **do justly**, and to **love mercy**, and to **walk humbly** with thy God?

When Micah wrote that it was **required** for man to 'Walk humbly with his God,' he was expressing the similar elements of Christian **faithfulness** and **Godly love**. We know this because of the manner in which Matthew and Luke recorded this verse when Jesus quoted it.

What are the most significant guidelines for Christian living? What are the most important things we should be doing? In addition to the observance of the Sabbath and the Feasts of the Lord, the Church of God last century had an established set of customs and culture, including sermons and sermonettes, the singing of hymns, Bible studies on Scripture and prophecy, potlucks, colleges and Spokesman Clubs. Some of those endeavors were unfamiliar to those new in the faith.

Many learned for the first time that God required a tithe of ten percent on income, and that He had a law about clean and unclean food laws (Leviticus 27:30; 11:1-23). Jesus said that those were important, but He said that there were ways of living that even **more importance** than tithing and unclean food laws.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Some people in God's Church never get past the unclean food laws as the standard for their faith. And, like the Pharisees of Jesus Christ's day, some Church brethren have not always learned to practice the principles that Jesus says are of **major importance**. Jesus says that there are key issues – really important things – that are of more gravity than others. Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees for missing the point entirely:

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, [every little thing – like our salt and pepper] and have omitted the weightier issues of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not left the other undone.

**Judgment, mercy, and faith** are the Godly standards of Christian living that must be adhered to so that one's life might conform to that of Christ's life! How many in God's Church understand this straightforward concept?

This word, 'weightier' is the Greek, '*barus*' meaning 'grievous,' 'serious' or 'grave.' The Pharisees were obviously majoring in the minors by leaving out the more important **weightier matters of the law**. They were very exacting over some details, but when it came to the most crucial aspect of their lives, practicing Godliness, they left a great deal to be desired.

Zechariah 7:9-10 Thus says the Lord of hosts, Execute true **judgment**, and show **mercy** and compassions every man to his brother: And **oppress not** the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Has the Church of God matured to the point of understanding how important Christ's lesson is? Jesus says that our righteousness must **exceed** that of the Pharisees who considered the Law to be a legalistic drill. Being unconverted, they could not put their hearts into the things of God. To what extent should New Testament Christians be living according to the weightier matters of the Law? Christians are instructed to practice the more decisive matters of judgment, mercy and faith – “these ought ye to have done,” not forgetting the less crucial aspects of such things as food laws and tithing. “Not leaving the other undone,” Jesus said.

'Weightier' means more important, central, or more crucial as compared to what are peripheral or secondary things pertaining to the Law. Thus, the intent of God's law is to yield judgment, mercy and faithfulness—to produce justice, compassion and kindness, and loyalty to God. We find then that practicing judgment, mercy, faith and the love of God are the weightier aspects of the Law of God. Why is it that Matthew recorded the weightier matters of the Law, differently than did Luke's Gospel account?

Luke 11:42 Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment, and **the love of God**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Luke does not mention mercy and faith as Matthew does, but he substitutes and adds the major concept of the **love** required by God. Are **the love of God**, and **mercy and faith**, somehow equivalent? It is informative to us that where Matthew writes, “mercy and faith,” Luke substitutes the word “*agape*” – Godly love. When we follow the Biblical principle for establishing doctrine of ‘a little here and a little there’ (Isaiah 28:10), putting the entire word of God together, it tells us that when we are practicing God's attributes of mercifulness and faithfulness – we are in fact practicing **Godly love**.

## **Kingdom Parables**

Another way Jesus taught was by the use of Kingdom parables. In the very beginning God the Father and Jesus Christ envisioned what their perfect world would be like wherein mankind would be able to develop into the veritable Children of God. In parables, Jesus gave insight into the various aspects of that coming ideal world. Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23). That Good News included how God's Kingdom would be established over all the earth and how the Kingdom of God operates. The understanding of the Kingdom parables was given only to those being called by God (Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). The **Kingdom of heaven** and the **Kingdom of God** are synonymous – they are one and the same. The attributes of the Kingdom of God are described with numerous revealing details in many parables. All of these parables must be studied and considered in whole to obtain the complete picture that God is providing for us:

Matthew 13:24 ...The **Kingdom of heaven** is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

Matthew 13:31 ...The Kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field.

Mark 4:30-31 To what will we liken the **Kingdom of God**? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth.

Matthew 13:33 ...The Kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Matthew 13:44 The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he hath, and buys that field.

Matthew 13:45 The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.

Matthew 13:47 The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.

Matthew 13:52 ...The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Matthew 18:23 ...The Kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

Matthew 25:1 ...The Kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Matthew 25:14 The Kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Mark 10:14 ...Allow the young children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. (Luke 18:16)

These and many other Kingdom Parables when properly understood in context teach us what Jesus intended we know about the Kingdom of God.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Acts 1:3 Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things **pertaining to the Kingdom of God**. (Acts 19:8; 28:23)

Many who read the words "Kingdom of heaven" are thinking, "The Kingdom **in** heaven." The Kingdom of which Jesus taught is not **in** heaven. "Of" is possessive, simply meaning that the Kingdom belongs to God. That is the very basis of the Gospel message. The Gospel is not about the things Jesus did. The Gospel is about the Father's Kingdom. Notice closely the two:

Matthew 4:23 Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, **and** healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. (Luke 8:1; 9:2)

Yes! Jesus preached the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom, **and** He did other things like walking on water and raising the dead, etc. Those things Jesus did to signify that He was indeed the Messiah (Luke 7:20-22). The Bible needs to be studied closely because the Catholic Church and its derivatives have led many astray. There is a way to know what Jesus is doing now – and what He will soon be doing. Christians will be reigning and ruling in the Kingdom of God **on earth** for a thousand years with Jesus Christ:

Revelation 5:10 Who has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign **on the earth**." [Not heaven]

Exodus 19:5-6 If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Mark 1:15 The time is fulfilled, and the **Kingdom of God** is at hand: repent ye, and **believe the Gospel**.

## **Lost to History**

Jesus declared that His **Church** people would always exist in some places, and never die out entirely—the gateways of the grave shall not overpower God's called-out people—the *Ekklesia* (Matthew 16:18). But, they were soon lost to recorded history.

The seven Churches of Asia Minor, near the Isle of Patmos where John was exiled and received God's Revelation, are representative of many resurgent revivals and awakenings of God's Church throughout the centuries. After the first one hundred years of the Church, the true brethren disappeared from history and remained in small enclaves widely scattered.

History records a few of the more prominent reappearances of God's people labeling them, "heretical sects." As Paganism flourished anew, we find that the newly dominant Catholic Church had; moved away from Passover, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the first month, to Easter; had done away with God's Law and Holy Days by substituting Christmas Day and the like; had proclaimed the Pagan Trinity; had proclaimed the immortal soul; had proclaimed heaven and hell as eternal rewards; had instituted infant baptism; had blessed swine flesh for human consumption; had sanctioned killing in war; had accepted Pagan idols and the cross in their worship; and had replaced the Sabbath Day of creation with the eighth day Sunday.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

History tells us that the Church of God almost died out at times – and what few brethren held on to God’s truth – were not that well versed in Christ’s doctrine. A few of the names ascribed to those who sought to hold on to God’s truth were the Nazarenes, Elkasaites, Ebionites (poor men, Matthew 5:3), the Albigenses (Acts 24:5), the Paulicians, the Cathars, the Waldenses (Peter Waldo), the Bogomils, the Sabbatarian Anabaptists (re-baptism as adults). Men like John Traske and Thomas Tillam wrote books in defense of the Sabbath and were severely persecuted for doing so. They did not possess the entire truth of God, but they ardently disseminated the truth given them in a dark world.

### **To the Church in Ephesus**

The apostle John dealt with false ministers like Diotrefes who abused the true saints (3 John 1:10). Jesus warned that those who go along with the heavy-handed tactics of a false minister or counterfeit apostle would have their candlestick removed. They cease to be a part of the valid Church of God.

Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and you have **tested them** which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them to be liars:

Revelation 2:4-5 I have somewhat against thee, because you have **left your first love**. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will **remove thy candlestick** out of his place, unless you repent.

### **To the Church in Smyrna**

Here is the promise of a crown of eternal life to those saints who faithfully endure torment until the end.

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a **crown of life**.

### **To the Church in Pergamos**

Repeatedly throughout the ages there are those who would trip-up, seduce and dominate Church brethren in the name of God. It is clear that God will bring swift retribution on the perpetrators of abuse. God’s people are assured that just vengeance is His prerogative:

2 Thessalonians 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.

Jeremiah 26:14-15 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seems good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Revelation 2:13-14 I know thy works [Pergamos], and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is: and you hold fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

### **To the Church in Thyatira**

We find that over and over there are most egregious sins extant among God's people. Obviously, God tells us that these violations of His love and law will be dealt with for all the other of His Churches to see. What could be worse than being cast into the Tribulation and having your children die?

It has been said that the symbol adopted by Thyatira to represent itself was the Menorah with the middle of seven candles burning.

Revelation 2:19-20 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou allow that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Revelation 2:26 He that **overcomes**, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

### **To the Church in Sardis**

Most of the supposed saints in Sardis were defiling their garments – meaning that they were not living righteously as a Christian must. These words are a dire warning to all those throughout the ages who, though they would attend services with the Body of Christ, they have not yielded themselves to the Sovereign God.

Revelation 3:1 Unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that you have a name that you are living, but you are dead.

Revelation 3:4-5 You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that **overcomes**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

## **To the Church in Philadelphia**

Revelation 3:7 To the messenger of the Church in Philadelphia write; These things says He that is holy, He that is true, He that has the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.

The Book of Revelation originates with God the Father (Revelation 1:1). Jesus is the door to the Father (John 10:7; 14:6). Jesus alone has the key because the Father has given to the Son authority to execute judgment (John 5:26-27). Jesus has the final say as to who is resurrected to life – and who is not. It is Jesus who is holy, true, that has the key of David, that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens—His decision is final.

Revelation 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

It was commonly held in the latter half of the twentieth century that the church era of Philadelphia had arrived. It was assumed that there was an open door to preach the Gospel to the world. There was an elation in the belief that God levied no reproach against the people of Philadelphia. And, best of all, because Philadelphia did everything so right everyone would *get to go to the Place of Safety*. All those who did not recognize Philadelphia's ascendancy would be given their comeuppance:

Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved you.

If everything was already so perfect in Philadelphia, why was it necessary for Jesus Christ issue this warning to **overcome**?

Revelation 3:12-13 Him that **overcomes** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

During the twentieth century, God did a rather large work (John 6:29). The Gospel of the Kingdom went to a large part of the world, and many were called and converted. Jesus shows in the second and third chapters of Revelation that He hates what was frequently going on in His Church congregations – the Nicolaitan heresy. We know that Jesus instructed His apostles to eschew the abusive exercise of authority upon the brethren in a hierarchical top down government which wars against true servant leadership – which is bottom up service – not top down control (Matthew 23:11; John 13:15; Revelation 2:6, 15). Neither Jesus or the apostles ever established a hierarchical form of government over the Church brethren. In fact, Jesus expressly taught against an authoritarian government that ruled over people's lives – exercising lordship over them (Matthew 20:25-28). The Church of God answers directly to Jesus Christ and His Father (1 Peter 5:1-4).

It is interesting to note that the Radio Church of God grew and prospered rapidly – with Christ as its head. In 1939 it was correctly believed by the church that hierarchical government was not the way to work with God's people. There was yet no top down hierarchy of government ruling over the Church brethren.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

However, as the church grew as an organization with lots of departments and administrative areas such as: ministerial administration, publishing, congregations, festival sites, colleges, youth programs like SEP (Summer Educational Program), YOU (Youth Opportunities United), archeological projects, motor pool and fleet, field ministry, radio and TV, Personal Correspondence and Letter Answering Department, D&R (divorce and remarriage), finances, travel, etc., Herbert W. Armstrong felt the need to maintain control, and he became an advocate for a top-down hierarchical authority headed by one man. He, with a council of elders and ministers, formed and administered a hierarchy that ruled over, not only the governance of the organization, but over the Church brethren's lives as well. The greater problem was that the Church brethren were not being taught to look **directly to God** – in effect, pushing God out of the picture. The Church brethren – the spiritual entity – had to submit to a physical government that was often a coercive hierarchy. There was great social and psychological pressure put on the Church brethren to accept the presumed spiritual authority of the organization as coming directly from God. Ministers began to be ranked by hierarchy: Apostle, Evangelist, Administrators, Regional Directors, Senior Pastors, Pastors, Associate pastors, Assistant pastors, Elders, Church Elders, and Local Church Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses.

As the organization grew, developed and flourished, God the Father, Christ as head of the Church, and Christ-centered servant leadership, were often relegated to secondary importance. Perhaps not willingly – but the result was to displace God as sovereign ruler in members' lives. In fact, that topic of looking to God and serving others as Christ did was declared bogus in subsequent ministerial conferences and forums. Eventually, with much encouragement from ministers in his organization, and in an attempt to maintain control of the church organization, Herbert W. Armstrong acquiesced to a hierarchical form of government with tight control over doctrine and members.

When members were treated harshly by the ministry, they all too often found that they had nowhere to turn. There was no real recourse or redress of their mistreatment – as complaints were returned to the minister at fault to deal with as he saw fit. Certainly, Jesus Christ was their Advocate and rear guard (Isaiah 52:12). But, there was no effective appellate procedure in place to seek remedy within the organization. As a result, hurt members were driven away, while others succumbed to church politics. Marking and disfellowshipping by the ministry were powerful tools sometimes used on hapless members who were subsequently railroaded out of the congregations (Romans 16:17). They were disfellowshipped – not for sin or heresy, but for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10-11). In desperation and exasperation, they were cut off from their families and their church body of loved ones (1 Corinthians 12:12). In all too many instances the members were left to **stand alone** (1 Corinthians 2:5). As the apostasy of the 1980s came upon the Church, many brethren who continued to live by Godly principles and standards, and who remained faithful to God – found themselves scattered and without a pastor. God's people went from enjoying a sense of belonging to one another – to being widely scattered around the world because of the abuse and duress heaped upon them.

Ezekiel 34:6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my **flock was scattered** upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

**God allowed** those things to happen for a purpose (1 John 2:19). The great majority of the church pastors closed their eyes to the abandonment of Godly doctrine and truth, and supported the heavy-handed practice of congregational destruction—not considering that God will hold them just as accountable as the perpetrators of the return to worldly abominable heresy (Leviticus. 5:1). God rules the universe. There is nothing that is not under God's Umbrella of Authority. Church brethren are answerable to, and responsible directly to Christ. No organization is able to insert itself between a church member and Christ. God did not institute any organization to rule His Church—which is a spiritual entity—in His place. When organizations and ministers demand a member's loyalty, that constitutes idolatry in that it is putting God in second place. It violates the First Commandment. Paul put it succinctly:

Ephesians 5:23-24 ...Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the body... the Church is subject unto Christ...

The only power and authority Jesus ever gave His original twelve apostles was to heal the sick and cast out demons. And He sent them, **not to rule**, but to preach—not to bear authority, but to serve (Matthew 20:25-27). The necessary qualification to be an apostle of Christ was to have been a **witness** of all that Christ did. This was the primary criterion to be met when replacing Judas Iscariot's apostleship:

Acts 1:21-22 Which of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that [Jesus] was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a **witness** with us of His resurrection.

Jesus says that He hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans at least twice – because of its prevalence in His Churches. Nicolaitanism is the practice of hierarchical form government—like a military establishment – an abusive administration of dictatorial church leadership (Matthew 20:25-27). It is the system of a strict rank and file hierarchy dominating within *God's Church* that must be submitted to by everyone. Just like with Diotrephes (III John), everyone knew and recognized the pecking order. It results in ungodly behavior. And, Christ hates it vehemently.

In many of the Church of God organizations the ministry is unquestionably superior to the lay members. The members are subject to the directives of the ministry in many significant aspects of their lives. Some church leaders believe that they represent God's government on earth and if their authority is rejected, they make the brethren feel as though they were rejecting God, Himself. Those church leaders fully believe that they have dominion over the members' life – even throughout the apostasy, the church break-up, and afterward (2 Corinthians 2:14). Ministers believe that they belong to a higher tier – a form of social and ecclesiastical stratification – than the rank-and-file brethren. Those ministers do not understand Christ's example of coming as a **lowly servant** (Luke 22:27). Church brethren must have the opportunity to develop their God given talents without fear of retribution against them as they grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came to dispel darkness. Those are beautiful words, but unless we can understand with our heart what they mean they are without profit to us as Christians. We must allow the Holy Scriptures to define what God means by these words that are much more than merely pious sounding sentiments. The importance of these words cannot be overestimated in that they represent the way to eternal life—the light of life. Jesus gave us a most stern warning with regard to the path a Christian must walk when He said:

Matthew 6:23 If therefore the **light** that is in you be darkness, how great is that **darkness!**

For those who are sitting in God's congregations around the earth today, let us hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

Luke 11:35 Take heed therefore that the **light** which is in thee be not **darkness**.

### **To the Church in Laodicea**

This book, *Plan of God – Darkness to Light* is being written while recognizing that the prevailing attitude of God's Church is predominantly Laodicean, though the principal characteristics of any of the seven congregations could also be present. Jesus warns Laodicea of their lack of **Godly character** and tells them to, “buy of me gold tried in the fire.” They are **rich** in doctrinal understanding – more so than anyone else has ever been. Jesus' words apply doubly so where He says, “Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them” (Matthew 13:17).

Like some of the Pharisees of Jesus' day, the Laodiceans claim to be able **to see** clearly, but it is Jesus Himself that tells the people that, like so many who have gone before us, **we are blind**. It behooves the Church brethren to make sure that we anoint our eyes with **eye salve** that we may be able to truly see our wretched spiritual state. When Jesus says that a people is naked, it means that they are not righteous in His sight. For the Church brethren, it is a matter of salvation and sitting with Jesus **on His throne** in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 3:21).

John 9:41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, “**We see**,” therefore **your sin remains**.

Revelation 3:15-16 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

Revelation 3:17-18 Because thou say, I am **rich**, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and **blind**, and **naked**: I counsel thee to buy of me **gold** tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed [in righteousness], and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with **eye salve**, that you may see.

Revelation 3:19-22 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

Seven times, Jesus forewarns the Church brethren throughout all ages when He says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches” (Revelation 2:2, 7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6; 13, 22). In every age within the Church there are those who think that they **'have it made.'**

They assume that because they have been baptized and are surrounded by Christians at Sabbath services, they will be welcomed into the Kingdom with everyone else. That is precisely who Jesus is addressing when He says, “To him that **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also **overcame**, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

## **Letters to the Messengers of the Churches**

There are a number of ways to discern the seven cities of Revelation. Keep in mind that these seven churches constitute the **True Church of God**. How are we to interpret these letters?

First: There are **seven cities** spoken of in the prophecy of Revelation. There was a viable congregation of the Church of God in each city. The letters were written to those seven active Church congregations on a Roman mail route in the first century of God's Church. Too many people wish to relegate Christ's words as being relevant only to the seven first century Church groups, but they are relevant **throughout the ages**. The language to these Churches too often speaks in relation to the return of Christ – which is not yet (Revelation 3:3).

Second: It is possible to see some chronological patterns in the history of the true Church, but we cannot keep track of them with a stopwatch because their dates lapse and overlap one another. The thought that the seven Churches are exclusively **historically sequential** congregations is unsubstantiated because the verses speak of more than one assembly being extant at Christ's return. Lately, everyone wants to be a Philadelphian because God seems to find no fault with Philadelphia. Certainly no one wants to be a Laodicean.

Third: These letters represent important tests, trials and blessings on the various Churches of God throughout the ages. These letters demonstrate the weaknesses and **attitudes in the Churches** that are present at all times. Jesus Christ does not give us a lot of detail into the things He hates in these Churches. He just tells the Church brethren to deal with it and **overcome** it as He did (John 16:33; Revelation 3:21). There is great danger in believing that there is no culpability or flaw within any of the groups. For example, a lukewarm lackadaisical Church that is deficient in Godly character, and spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked is in serious need of repentance (Revelation 3:17).

Fourth: There is a fourth way we must view the letters to the messengers of the Churches of Revelation 2 and 3. Each Christian must consider that each letter is directed to him **personally**. All of the messages from Christ to the individual Churches are meant to be heeded personally. Jesus tells each of us to hear Him and what the Spirit says to all the seven Churches. Each Christian's life develops and goes through stages of growth and trials. We are privileged to have personal letters from God the Father through Jesus Christ to the Churches of God (Revelation 1:1). Every Church congregation has had and continues to have its own unique strengths and weaknesses on which each and every Church member will be judged. We are to take **personally** what Jesus says to all the Churches, and examine each stage of our own personal Christian growth and experiences after having been called to perfection by God. Anyone can from time-to-time, and throughout a lifetime have any one of the attitudes or trials of the seven Churches.

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Like **Ephesus** – all Christians experience their **first Love**—not only the excitement of having God’s truth revealed to them, but the first love that is most importantly—that of a right relationship with Jesus Christ and His Father. Yet, they have to deal with false apostles and with the ungodly leadership of the dominating Nicolaitans like that of Diotrephes of Ill John who loved to have the preeminence instead of pointing the brethren straight to God. Each member must be vigilant not to let his love wax cold (Matthew 24:12). Like **Smyrna** – where every Church member has individual trials and tests to go through. Like **Pergamos** – where the seductive doctrine of Balaam taught the people that they could rub shoulders with the world and still be right with God, and where the Nicolaitans abused and persecuted the faithful flock. Like **Thyatira** – we all have to deal with false doctrine and lawlessness within the Church. Like **Sardis** – most of the congregation lived unrighteously. Like **Philadelphia** – where the faithful brethren have had to deal with the accusations of being irreligious causing them to be cast out of the congregations. Like **Laodicea** – where the fervent members are debased and rejected by the apathetic preponderance of self-satisfied church goers who have no need of the other parts of the Body of Christ. Everyone has to grow in faith and endure until the end.

**Looking** directly to God removes spiritual blindness. Everyone will possess his own personal record which will be presented to Jesus Christ on His judgment seat.

Romans 14:10, 12 ...We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give **account of himself** to God.

The Church brethren are severely tested in every generation, but in every case, there are some who stand up to the trials and become overcomers.

Revelation 3:21 To him who **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also **overcame**, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Fifth: There is a possible fifth way to consider the prophetic nature of the **seven churches**. Each time God raises up a Church group it sequentially goes through the same cycle or stages of coming to the truth, receiving spiritual gifts, experiencing growth, standing fast, enduring weaknesses, suffering trials, etc., and then coming to its ultimate ending. We see that occurring even with the first century Church of the apostles beginning on the day of Pentecost. It experienced its Ephesian **first love**, growth, trials and persecutions, and ultimately faded away. Paul wrote that all the brethren in Asia had turned away (2 Timothy 1:15). Because the true Faith was disappearing, Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote of the need to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3). Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and the visible Church was subsequently lost to history after about one-hundred years. Only small isolated bodies of believers continued to exist. What of the few Churches of which we are aware, that thrived for a time, like the Albigenses, Bogomils, Cathars, Paulicians, Nazarenes, and Waldenses, who enjoyed varying degrees of repute, but then gradually disappeared? It follows that there must have been a calling to the truth of God for each one – a first love – the momentum of a new Christian movement, but then we find that, eventually, each group grew old and diminished.

It was the same for all the historical Churches of God throughout the ages. They flourished for a season, but then were lost to virtual obscurity.

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All the Churches consecutively go through the **phases** and **attitudes** represented in all seven letters. We have Christ's command to hear what He said to **all the Churches**. With this common refrain Jesus forewarned of the behaviors of the seven Churches and what they would go through. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" (Revelation 3:22). Jesus spoke of the **prevalent characteristics** of these first century Church congregations that would be found in all congregations throughout time until His return. Amazingly, the same thing happened to the Worldwide Church of God. At first, it flourished with an Ephesian type of first love beginning in the 1930s only to become blind to the truth (Revelation 3:18) and meet its demise some fifty to sixty years later. For example, the Radio Church of God, which filed Articles of Incorporation on March 13, 1946, and was renamed Worldwide Church of God on June 1, 1968, was quite possibly the largest work of God since the days of the first century apostles. It's **first love** was the Gospel Truth and its going to all the world. Many people came to a knowledge of the Truth, the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days and the Plan of God. But like all of God's Churches through the ages, wrong concepts crept in **for the testing** of the brethren. One such misstep that replaced sound doctrine was the thinking that God's government was represented by a corporate organization on earth—quite possibly a case of twentieth century Nicolaitanism; and that all members were to be loyal to that church government no matter what. It was taught that a member's loyalty to the corporate organization constituted proof that members would be eternally loyal to God's government in heaven. The problem with that rule was that it removed the **personal accountability** of each member to God. Ministers made decisions in families' lives that should only have been made by the head of the family. Local congregations had their responsibility usurped by faraway corporate men who declared that they were "the church" instead of the [*ekklesia*] called-out ones (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13).

As the individual Church brethren strive to understand what is meant in these letters to the seven churches, one important consideration is most telling: These letters constitute a **stark warning** to each and every Church member. They must be studied with the utmost contemplation of salvation. Take for example:

Revelation 3:4 You have a **few names** even in Sardis which **have not** defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Does that "few names" mean that "**most names**" have defiled their garments and are not righteous in God's sight? Generation after generation of Church brethren are placed in circumstances where they too have the opportunity to be overcomers – just as Jesus was tried, tested and overcame this world (John 16:33).

### **The Promised Seed**

When God told Abraham, "In **thy seed** [offspring] shall all the nations of the earth be **blessed**," it was a Messianic Prophecy of **Jesus Christ** whose life and sacrifice would bring untold **spiritual** blessings on the entire world. Jesus' life's work having been accepted by the Father, the blessings of salvation and life eternal could begin to accrue to all (Genesis 22:18; Leviticus 23:11).

Though the multitudinous offspring of Abraham was primarily intended, the apostle Paul interpolates within this verse the inspired interpretation that all the Church brethren—who are also descendants of Abraham—constitute the **Body of Christ**, and thus, '**thy seed**' is Christ, notwithstanding that Jesus the Messiah is also the offspring of Abraham (1 Corinthians 12:27; Galatians 3:29). Jesus is the promised seed:

Galatians 3:16-17 To Abraham and **his seed** were the **promises made**. [God] did not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' **which is Christ**. And this I say, that the **Covenant**, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the **promise** of none effect.

We understand here that both aspects of God's promises—**physical** and **spiritual**—to Abraham are valid to this day. Physical and spiritual promises were confirmed by God to Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5). God subsequently promised Jacob that, "A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body" (35:11).

Genesis 22:17-18 In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

God stipulated the provisions of the sacrificial covenant, making it clear that He would not deviate from its terms. God promised Abram, with an incontrovertible oath, that he would become a great nation (Genesis 12:2, 7). Then God promised Abraham that he would become a father of many nations (Genesis 17:5). Was it possible for Abram to grasp the full spiritual aspects of Genesis 15:5? Just so we do not miss the implication here – Paul spells it out for us in Galatians 3 – that these future children are not all Abraham's physical seed/children – but they also include all those who become **spiritual children** – through Christ.

## **Give the Best**

God the Father is lavishly generous – and He desires His Children to be generous as well. God **gave** the very best – His Son, Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that **He gave** His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Had Jesus sinned, His Father would have lost Him forever. Jesus would have died for His own sin, and paid the penalty of eternal death. But, Jesus did not sin (1 Peter 2:22). Jesus in His generosity **gave His life** for our sins—so that we might live (Galatians 1:4).

We find God being well pleased with the first martyr, Abel, and his generous offering. Abel **gave the very best**, choosing rather to suffer loss than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). Withholding a proper offering from God is a sin (Malachi 3:8, Genesis 4:7).

Genesis 4:4 Abel also **brought a gift—the best** of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift.

Abel could have easily justified giving a lesser animal saying, "I need the very best for breeding purposes—to build up my flocks, and in that way I'll have more to give the LORD later." Instead, Abel acted courageously in faith, knowing that his generosity would be rewarded in God's good time (Hebrews 11:4). Abel's sacrificial lamb prefigured Jesus Christ, the **Lamb of God** slain from the foundation of the world (John 1:29, Revelation 13:8). Cain, a tiller of the ground, should have also given the very best to the LORD (Genesis 4:2). He could have brought the best of his grains, prefiguring Jesus Christ, the **Bread of Life**.

John 6:35 Jesus said unto them, I am the **Bread of Life**.

Cain lacked both generosity and faith—therefore; God did not favorably accept Cain's offering (Genesis 4:5). Cain yielded to his selfish nature and did **not give his best**. Had God already instituted His sacrificial offering system and instructed Cain and Abel in it? If so, Cain did not follow God's specified form of sacrifice (the outpouring of the life's blood) and worship to bring a slain lamb that he could have humbly obtained from his younger brother, Abel. In either case, Cain's offering was not acceptable to God.

## **One Seed—Christ**

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and **his seed** were the promises made. [God] did not say, "And unto seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed," which is Christ.

The one seed, the spiritual offspring of Abraham, is Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Galatians 3:29 If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abram showing some trepidation because he remained childless at an advanced age, and remembering God's prodigious promise which was remarkably great in extent, asked God how He was going to perform His promise (Genesis 12:7):

Genesis 15:2, 8 Abram said, Lord GOD, what will you give me, seeing I go childless... whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

The Covenant of Promise to Abram was ratified by God with a **Covenant Sacrifice**. We saw in Chapter Five how Jesus Christ's sacrifice of His life provided the ratification of the New Covenant.

## **The Sabbath Comes to America**

Because of the promised blessings to Abraham, God brought the knowledge of His Sabbath Day to America so that eventually the Gospel could be preached to the **entire World**. Jesus said:

Matthew 24:14 This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in **all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

In 1664, Sabbatarian Stephen Mumford fled severe persecution in London, England and came to America. He understood correctly that the entirety of the Ten Precepts [Ten Commandments] as delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai were spiritual, holy, just, good, moral and immutable. On December 23, 1671, the first Sabbath-keeping Church in America began with seven members. Pastor William Hiscox served the Church until his death in 1704. Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and New Jersey were the main areas of Sabbath-keeping Churches. About 100 years later as the Church began to spread, a general conference was organized by eight Sabbath-keeping congregations – adopting the name The Sabbatarian General Conference, and later changed to Seventh-Day Baptist General Conference. Very harsh persecution scattered the early congregations, with the laws of Pennsylvania being particularly oppressive toward Sabbatarians.

## **I Come Quickly**

Paul wrote to Titus about the immediate and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. God intends that each person realize that the time consigned to him be used wisely – because **time is short** (1 Corinthians 7:29):

Titus 2:13 Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Over and over, the Church is advised to **overcome**—and to do so **quickly**:

Revelation 2:5 ...I will come unto thee **quickly**, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except you repent.

Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee **quickly**, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

God warns the Philadelphians hold on to True Christianity because too many are letting down and others are being called to take their place. Because they have not held fast to the basics, they will not qualify to reign and rule with Jesus in the Millennium (Revelation 20:6).

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come **quickly**: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man **take thy crown**.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come **quickly**: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:12 Behold, I come **quickly**; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Revelation 22:20 He which testifies these things says, Surely I come **quickly**. Amen. Even so, **come**, Lord Jesus.

## **Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth**

Who will be in the **better** resurrection (Hebrews 11:35)? The answer is those who have let their **light shine forth** as Jesus did. But what of those wicked who offend and do iniquity of whom Jesus says that they will be cast into a furnace of fire? There are tares among the wheat sitting among the people of God. Those tares will awake in their resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt. The weeping and gnashing of teeth of which Jesus speaks is a very inconceivable pain and the inexpressible agony as a result of their violent despair of having seen **a glimpse of God's Kingdom** and themselves thrust out. They finally realize the glory they have missed out on too late! Jesus said:

Luke 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when **you shall see** Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets **in the Kingdom of God**, and you **yourselves thrust out**.

Notice carefully, because some congregations act as though God is interested only in their Church group. When Jesus looks down from His heavenly throne He sees His **one true Church** which is not separated by artificial walls of corporate organizations. Jesus continues:

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Luke 13:29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.

Who are these firstfruits in the Kingdom of God that may be **taking our place**? Right now they may not seem to have the best places on the committees, councils, and so forth – and that may be because they are living Christian lives of quietly serving and sacrificing. Jesus sets forth a principle:

Luke 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Matthew 13:24 Another parable Jesus put forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the Children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Matthew 13:41-42 The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**. (Matthew 13:50)

Matthew 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Daniel 12:2-3 Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting **contempt**. And they that be wise shall **shine as the brightness** of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

Many times God warns His Church of what the unbelievers will encounter: Bitterness, most intense disappointment, the realization of their horrific loss, extreme anguish, and anger at the realization of the eternal judgment of sinners. God will expose their superior, smug, self-satisfied, prideful attitude of thinking themselves better than their brethren.

## **Outer Darkness**

Matthew 8:11-12 I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into **outer darkness**: there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

God tells us that those who knew the Truth and did not live it will be kicking themselves for down deep knowing better – and somehow thinking they would get away with it. They will find themselves to be *persona non grata* at Christ's wedding Feast.

Matthew 22:11-13 When the King came in to see the guests [at the marriage supper], He saw there a man who did not have on a wedding garment [the **righteousness** of the saints]: And He said unto him, Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into **outer darkness**; there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into **outer darkness**: there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Psalms 112:10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall **gnash with his teeth**, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

## **The Mind of God**

In Chapter Five we looked at the Feast of Pentecost when the New Testament Church of God was established and God poured out His Holy Spirit on the first converts.

1 Corinthians 2:16 Who has known the **mind of the Lord**?

With the pouring out of God's Spirit on His people it became possible for the Church brethren to have the **mind of God**. Without the Holy Spirit, a person **cannot keep God's laws** fully and completely, let alone go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). To really know and obey God with all our heart, a person must have God's Holy Spirit. The coming of God's Holy Spirit made it possible for the first time for converts to fully believe that God exists (Hebrews 11:6), and grasp His Plan and purpose for man. God desires that we obey Him with our whole heart. God's Law is the expression of **His mind**. God's goal for mankind is that we become God-beings, possessing His complete image – in form, in Spirit, and in Godly character. The Feast Day of Pentecost pictures how that is made possible.

Acts 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all **filled with Holy Spirit**. (There is no specific article '*the*' in the Greek before Holy Spirit.)

A dramatic change took place in those brethren who were awaiting the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49). They were of one spirit, with one accord, and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul (Acts 4:32). They were now ready to take up the gauntlet and fight the Christian fight of faith:

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Pentecost is the Feast of the Church—representing its beginning and its resurrection. Pentecost is also called the **Feast of Harvest** because it pictures the spring harvest of the Church of God brethren—the **resurrected** firstfruits saints. The Day of Pentecost following Jesus' ascension into heaven marked the coming of God's Holy Spirit upon the Church brethren. This Day was the founding and establishment of the New Testament Church of God—the **Church of God**—with Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). The Church is a **spiritual entity** of baptized believers, not a physical organization, who have been called to glory by God through the Gospel and given a token of His Life, Mind and Spirit (John 6:65, 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Pentecost shows the conversion process wherein the spirit in man is enlivened, vitalized, animated, given life, impregnated by the Spirit of God making us Children of God (1 Corinthians 2:11). One hundred and twenty New Testament Church of God brethren were empowered and initiated on the first Feast of Pentecost following Jesus death and resurrection (Acts 1:15). They were each sealed with that **Holy Spirit of promise**. (Ephesians 1:13).

The **Holy Spirit** is God's all-presence, His all-knowing and all loving **mind**, His unlimited power, His personality, His manifold traits, His character. God's Holy Spirit is every characteristic of God - His righteousness, gentleness, peace, compassion, excellence, generosity, mercy... the list is endless.

We are totally unable to comprehend every characteristic of God's Spirit with our human intellect for God is far too great. And yet, it is absolutely necessary that we "grow in Spirit" in order to put on the Godly character that is essential to be in the Spiritual Family of God. The complete attributes of God's Spirit are beyond the grasp of our finite minds.

## **The Harvest Begins**

On that **first** Pentecost after Jesus was crucified, God began sending His Spirit into the New Testament Church brethren. Jesus had told them:

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; which the world cannot receive, because it sees it not, neither knows it: but ye know it; for it dwells with you, and **shall be in you**.

On the **last** Pentecost before Jesus returns, the saints will be caught up to God's throne to be accepted just as Jesus was accepted on the fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf (John 20:17). God has inexorably tied the Wave Sheaf day of Jesus' resurrection to Pentecost by the count of fifty days (Leviticus 23:16). Therefore, those faithful brethren in the Church of God today are also an integral part of the early **firstfruits harvest**. In the same way that the wave-sheaf offering—with oil—represented Jesus Christ, the two wave-loaves of Pentecost—baked with leaven, (Leviticus 23:17) represent God's spiritual firstfruits of faithful men and women. Jesus Christ's presented Himself to God the Father as the Wave Sheaf offering to be **accepted for us** as the first of the "firstfruits" resurrected from the dead to eternal life (Leviticus 23:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20).

At His resurrection Jesus was ceremonially clean – having paid for the sins of the world by His death. Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18) – a dead body raised to life with all the wounds and scars of His death, and yet He was a holy perfect presentation to His Father – but not yet fully glorified until He had been accepted by the Father (John 17:5). The wave-sheaf was being offered at about 9 AM in the temple that morning. The wave sheaf grain would have been gathered at the end of the Sabbath, the evening before – at the same time that Jesus was resurrected by His Father and restored to life – the perfect fulfillment of the Unleavened Bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8). And while the wave-sheaf was being offered in the Temple, at the same moment Jesus—in fulfillment—ascended to His Father in heaven. It was an instantaneous spiritual trip – no man saw it.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man [Jesus Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall **all be made alive**.

Just as agricultural crops were harvested in conjunction with the festival seasons, God's Holy Days show us how **He will harvest** different groups of people. Jesus declared the parable of the **spiritual harvest** to His disciples:

Matthew 13:37-40 Jesus answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the Children of the Kingdom; ...the harvest is the end of the age.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The Church of God, including the prophets and the saints of the Old Testament, are a part of the **firstfruits**, and will be in the **better** resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). Then, at the end of the millennium, there will be a much larger **harvest**—including the resurrection of the Great White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:11). [See Chapter Seven] Speaking of the resurrections:

1 Corinthians 15:23 Every man in **his own order**: Christ the **firstfruits**; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.

The incredible truth is that those faithful brethren of the Church of God are begotten by God the Father to be included **with** Jesus Christ—to be among the early harvested **firstfruits** resurrection.

The **firstfruits resurrection** is of Jesus Christ and the Saints: It is to life eternal (Revelation 20:6). It takes place at Christ's return, and will be just before the Millennium.

The vast majority of mankind is not being called to salvation now, but God has not overlooked them. The **second resurrection** is for all who have ever lived without having received God's Holy Spirit. Those dead people will live again on earth at the Last Great Day. It will be a resurrection to **physical life** again, and to judgment – for the first time.

Acts 24:15 Have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Those of the second resurrection will be judged (for good or bad) with all who have ever lived (except for the first resurrection Saints). The second resurrection will be back to physical life for those who have lived and died without being called to conversion by God (Revelation 20:12). The Great White Throne will bring into judgment – both those in this second resurrection and those who lived during the millennium – having had God's Spirit available to them (Joel 2:28) – in order to be tried and tested by Satan – because he's been bound for 1000 years.

The **third resurrection** is to physical life for **condemnation** to everlasting death—by verdict and judgment at the Great White Throne—the second death (Revelation 20:12-13; 21:8). Those once converted people who received God's Spirit and were begotten by God, who then rebelled against God, and those who were called to repentance but refused to do so—will be cast into the lake which burns **with fire** and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). John the Baptist explained:

Matthew 3:11-12 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with Holy Spirit, and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat [faithful Saints] into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

God will show everyone a glimpse of the eternal life they rejected and missed out on—in His glorious Kingdom. The rebellious hoards will weep and gnash their teeth in revulsion and horror:

Luke 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

## **God is Keeping a Record**

Jesus Christ has a Book of Remembrance on each one of us – with every important detail of our lives. That book holds every act of Christianity and Godliness we have done in this lifetime. Every encouraging word, every sacrifice made, every unselfish deed, and every Godly stand we took, are all written therein.

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Also recorded in our book is every un-repentant mean or spiteful action, every cruel or hateful word spoken – it is all there – a complete record of our lives. Our book contains all the evidence we will be **judged on** – for good or for bad. We have the time to make the necessary changes in our lives. God will accept no substitute in place of His sincerity and truth. God is making it abundantly clear to us that He is keeping a full and complete record on each and every one of us. Our personal book is an inclusive dossier or profile of everything about us. They are written in heaven in the Book of Life and our own personal record, journal, register, or ledger. Each of us has a record being kept by God. David referenced his book of remembrance kept by Jesus Christ – with every important detail of his life.

Psalm 56:8 You have inscribed my life's divergences: you have saved my tears in your bottle: are they not in thy book?

This means that God knows our heart and mind. He knows our burdens, shortcomings, tears, trials, gifts, sacrifices, persecutions and pains:

Hebrews 6:10 God is not unrighteous to forget [He remembers] your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name, in that you have served the saints, and continue to serve.

That's a nice example of the kind of things God is writing in our book. God remembers every act of love – every thought of compassion – every prayer of mercy. That is the book on each and every one of us, which is quite extensive, and comprehensive right down to our DNA. God is intimately and intricately involved in our lives – even before we are born – He never forgets a single incident.

He is very much involved in **creating us** at this very moment. He is actively – hands on – continuously in the process of creating us to be in His image.

God is not going to blot anyone's name out of the Book of Life except for those who turn away, reject and forsake God's perfect way. Best of all, the nations will be build-up in preparation for all who have ever lived before. They will be resurrected to physical life, have God's Spirit poured out on them, and for the first time see God Plan in action. Overwhelmingly, they will choose to worship and serve the True God. Then they too, will hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the **Father of lights**, with whom there is no variableness [Greek – *parallage*], neither **shadow** of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of **firstfruits** of His creation.

'*Parallage*' is the astronomical Greek term for our English word parallel. In this case it means that **God's light** is explicit, unswerving, and sure to guide us into His truth—where there is no variable shadow of turning or **darkness** at all (1 John 1:5).

The faithful Church brethren will be resurrected to eternal life as firstfruits. This was pictured when the High Priest took two loaves of bread—firstfruits—for a wave offering to be presented and accepted by the Father (Leviticus 23:20). These wave-loaves of Pentecost picture this:

Leviticus 23:17 You shall bring out of your habitations two **wave-loaves** of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the **firstfruits** unto the Lord.

## **Firstfruits**

Before He died, Jesus knew full well that He would be offered to the Father and be received as an acceptable sacrifice. The acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Wave Sheaf of the first harvest was necessary before the rest of the spiritual harvest could begin. Jesus prayed the night before He died looking forward to that acceptance. Just as Jesus was accepted by His Father on the day of the Wave Sheaf offering, the resurrected Church brethren will be raised on the day of the Pentecost offering and presented to Jesus Christ (Leviticus 23:16-17; Revelation 19:9). The resurrected Saints will be accepted as well.

John 17:1 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.

The Children of God will also appear with Christ in glory when they too are glorified.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also **appear** with Him **in glory**.

Jesus is the first of the firstfruits to be resurrected from the dead and accepted by His Father. God the Father will accept His Church as a Wave Offering as well:

Romans 8:29 For whom [the Father] did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the **firstborn** among many brethren.

The Church brethren are to be **firstfruits** unto God: Speaking spiritually:

Revelation 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb where-so-ever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, **being the firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.

The harvest of firstfruits pictures those who are called and prepared for the Kingdom of God. They are the "**firstfruits of the Spirit**" whom God is calling to salvation (Romans 8:23).

In the same way that Jesus, the Wave Sheaf offering, was the perfect firstfruits presented to and accepted by the Father, we, too, are firstfruits to be presented and accepted by the Father:

Colossians 1:15-19 Jesus is the **firstborn** of all creation. He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

There remains yet a **future fulfillment** of Pentecost! We await the soon-coming day when the Church brethren—the saints—will be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

It has been God's intention from the beginning of creation to present us approved to Himself (on that soon coming Pentecost) as a glorious Church:

Ephesians 5:27 That He might present it to Himself a **glorious Church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God will soon gather all of His faithful saints together at Christ's coming, for He knows His own. Those who yield to Christ and overcome their unrighteous nature and behavior, and have **Christ's righteousness** imputed to them (1 Corinthians 1:30) will be welcomed into the Kingdom and Family to sit with Christ on His throne and help Him as co-saviors to rule in the World Tomorrow as He sees fit – in continuing to build His family and Kingdom. That is His Plan:

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of His empire and peace there shall be no end.

### **Jesus our Great High Priest**

In the same way that Jesus was tested in every way and on every point of God's perfect way (Hebrews 4:15), the collective Church brethren will also have experienced every possible scenario in order to be able to effectively reign and rule with Christ throughout the Millennium. Then, while the saints are instructing everyone on earth saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," no one will be able to challenge or gainsay them by responding, "You do not know what I'm going through" (Isaiah 30:21). Each and every saint will be an overcomer (Revelation 3:21).

Hebrews 4:14-15 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [of faith, Christianity]. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [scrutinized] like as we are, yet without sin.

Generation after generation of Church brethren are individually placed by God where it pleases Him – in circumstances where they too have the opportunity to be overcomers as Jesus was (1 Corinthians 12:18). Jesus said:

John 16:33 ...In the world you shall have trials: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Romans 8:35-37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

### **Endure unto the End**

As the end-time approaches there will be a general weakening of faith among the Church brethren. One would think that the Church, empowered by God's Spirit, would be growing exponentially as the end approaches. That is not what Christ tells us. The Church has always been plagued with the false concept of, "I've got it made," or "once saved always saved." Jesus' teachings are to be taken literally. He said:

Matthew 7:14 Because strait [very restrictive] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and there are **few that find it**.

Matthew 24:13 He that shall **endure unto the end**, the same shall be saved.

Throughout the years there have been many who have abandoned their Christian faith and spiritual warfare. To the Church is given many examples of those who did not endure until the end. Paul wrote:

2 Timothy 1:15 ...All they which are in Asia are turned away from me.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Indeed, much of the history of the New Testament gives evidence of those who have deserted the faith of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, the Church brethren of Ephesus left their **first love**—which the Greek [*protos agape*] clearly shows is **Godly love** of Him and His perfect way. The Ephesians received a scolding note from God the Father about the issue of their having forsaken their first love. That letter is also meant to be a reprimand for us today because God is admonishing us as well to take heed of that warning:

Revelation 2:4-5 I have somewhat against thee, because you have **left your first love**. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, unless you repent.

These instructions, directly from God the Father to Jesus to the Church brethren tell every congregation and every generation to heed these warnings (Revelation 1:1-2). A Christian's first love is a spiritual awakening to the truth of God, including the Commandments and the Feasts of the Lord: The Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. The genuine first love spoken of here is the deep abiding love of God, and love of brethren. God knows that we need to be willing to lay aside—sacrifice absolutely everything—even **our life and reputation** if need be—in order to help one another into His Family and Kingdom. That is the nature of the **first love** of God. In this case, *protos* does not mean first in time, but it means utmost and foremost in importance.

Sadly, in God's Church today there is virtually no love for **all the saints**. Perhaps for **some** of the saints, but not for all of the saints. The love that God has for us is the ultimate love – it is the foremost love – it is the true first love. How did the Ephesian brethren leave off and forsake this supreme gift of God? Will there be any true believers practicing their faith when Jesus comes? Jesus alerts us to the danger:

Luke 18:8 ... when the Son of man returns, shall He find faith on the earth?

Would Jesus find faith among the church brethren that you know? Are their lives shining examples of lives filled with the fruit of God's Holy Spirit? Are they a joyful people who uplift and encourage you? Do they trust in God's principles – or, are they more like the people in the world? As we look around our scattered congregations – how many brethren are holding grudges? Who honors his parents according to God's Commandment? How many refuse to reconcile or to be reconciled? Who is truthful in their words and deeds? Is the fruit of God's Spirit evident in their lives? Brethren, most importantly, we must understand what God's Holy Spirit is – and how it is that we grow in Spirit as Jesus did.

## **Seven Seals**

When studying the Plan of God and the looming return of Jesus Christ to set up His Father's Kingdom on Earth for a thousand years, there is no better framework to scrutinize than the seven seals. They begin with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, followed by the Great Tribulation, Heavenly Signs and finally by the one-year long Day of the Lord. The seven seals are the LORD's pleading with all flesh for **repentance and judgment** on the earth (Isaiah 66:16). Only Jesus is able to open the seals revealing the judgments of God (Revelation 5:4-5). Jesus has told our generation what to watch for. He said:

Matthew 24:33-34 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things [Those in the seven seals], **know that it is near**, even at the doors. Truly I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jesus gave us the outline and overall view of the **Seven Seals** of revelation in His **Olivet Prophecy**, which begins in Matthew 24:3, when He sat upon the Mount of Olives answering the disciple's question, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus concluded the Olivet Prophecy at Matthew 26:1 when He had finished all these sayings.

### The **First Seal**: False Prophets and Religious Deception

Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man **deceive** you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:11-14 Many **false prophets** shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Matthew 24:23-24 If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise **false Christs**, and **false prophets**, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. [Revelation 6:1-2]

### The **Second Seal**: War

Matthew 24:6-7 You shall hear of **wars** and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. [Revelation 6:3-4]

While serving in the central Pacific Ocean near Christmas Island on September 23, 1958, my ministerial cohort/coworker, John Jewell witnessed first-hand, the devastating last atmospheric nuclear test of Britain's Hydrogen-bomb detonations. That H-bomb, utilizing fusion boosted tritium gas, resulted in Britain becoming a world thermonuclear power. Destructive power that dreadful announced the coming last days of the world as we know it.

Mark 13:20 Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved *alive*: but for the elect's sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days.

### The **Third and Forth Seal**: Famine and Pestilence

Matthew 24:7-8 ...There shall be **famines**, and **pestilences**, and **earthquakes**, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. [Revelation 6:5-8]

### The **Fifth Seal**: Satan's Wrath and Tribulation

Matthew 24:9-10 Then shall they deliver you up to be **afflicted**, and shall **kill** you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Matthew 24:21-22 For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. [Revelation 6:9]

The **Sixth Seal**: Great Earthquake and Heavenly Signs

Matthew 24:29-30 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the **sign of the Son of man in heaven**: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [Revelation 6:12-15]

The **Seventh Seal**: Day of the **Lord's Wrath** - Last Year of the Tribulation

Matthew 24:31, 33 [Jesus] shall send His angels with a great sound of a **trumpet**, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other... when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. [Revelation 6:16-17; 8:1-2]

The Seventh Seal consists of the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Vials.

Revelation 16:9 Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they **repented not** to give Him glory. (Revelation 16:11)

Matthew 24:46 Blessed is that **servant**, whom his lord when He comes shall find **so doing**.

What is it that Jesus expects His servants to be **doing**? That is the most important question! The answer that so few understand is below in the section on: "Servants of Jesus Christ."

## **False Ministers within God's Church**

Jesus warned that especially as the end-time drew near many false ministers would plague and abuse His small faithful flock of true believers. False ministers are everywhere, today! At His Olivet discourse, Jesus prophesied that **false ministers** would correctly claim that Jesus was the Messiah, but that they would be preaching under false pretenses. They would seek followings after themselves and use the Gospel message for nefarious means (Acts 20:30). Jesus told His disciples—warning us at the same time—of the religious seduction of the last days—the end of this age. Jesus warns us to be observant and prepared:

Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24 Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [Messiah]; and shall deceive many... Many **false preachers** shall rise, and shall **deceive** many... For there shall arise false Christs, and **false prophets**, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Jesus is not speaking of religious clerics like Billy Graham, Oral Roberts or Joel Osteen who do not know the basics of the Truth or Christianity. God's people cannot be deceived by Catholic or Protestant ministers. It is those many ministers **among God's people** who are not servants of His people, and who are departing from their professed faith, and do not realize that they are departing from Christ's instructions (Matthew 20:25-26):

Incredibly, Jesus spoke of **many** false ministers who would pretend to represent Him. Indeed, we must ask ourselves, "Where are they today?" The beloved apostle John, first cousin of Jesus, reiterated Christ's warnings about the religious imposters.

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1 John 4:1, 6 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but **try the spirits** whether they are of God: because many false preachers are gone out into the world... We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the **spirit of error**.

By 'try the spirits' John warned us to be discerning of those charlatans who are not living lives consistent with the doctrines they purport to teach. Over and over Jesus forewarned us that bad ministers who devour the brethren would be virtually indistinguishable from Christ's true servants. Paul warned the elders at Miletus:

Acts 20:29-31 For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves** enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

The New Testament writers had to continually address this serious problem impacting the Church of God. Preachers were passing themselves off as true ministers of Jesus Christ, while leading the brethren astray by telling the weak members exactly what they wanted to hear – as opposed to what they needed to hear. People say, "That cannot happen today – we would spot a counterfeit minister in a minute." Well, that is not true, because false ministers are not easy to spot.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves** into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Yes, God will certainly judge them, but God included these verses for the very reason that brethren today are being led into grave error by false ministers who walk in craftiness and handle the word of God deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2). It is happening! The true saints do have the spiritual discernment to perceive between false and true ministers of Jesus Christ—if they only would.

We are warned that many shall follow the destructive ways of those **counterfeit preachers**. Not only is it possible for the true people of God to be fooled—we are clearly told that **many** shall follow their fatal ways—giving God's Church a bad name:

2 Peter 2:1-4 ...There shall be **false teachers** among you, who sneakily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **many shall follow** their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:

False ministers are most cunning because they allow themselves to be Satan's agents:

2 Peter 2:18-19 When the [false teachers] speak arrogant words of nonsense, they appeal through much depravity to the basest instincts of the human psyche of those who were at the point of escaping from evildoers. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the **servants of corruption**: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Those false preachers are not the servants of Christ or of the brethren. They serve only themselves – and, at great cost to the spiritual development of God's people. Jesus tells the true Church brethren to beware of those **self-serving ministers** who allow their own personal desires to eclipse God's will. They are not living up to their responsibility to serve the Lord's flock.

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Romans 16:18 They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

‘Serving their own belly,’ means that the minister is looking out for himself, his future, his retirement, and his political standing in his organization. Paul explains further that it is entirely possible for Christians to **fall away** from the truth.

Galatians 4:9 Now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Those brethren, who had once escaped the delusions of the world, turn again to the permissive nature of society – succumbing to corruption; they find themselves in bondage to sin once again.

Jude 1:3-4, 16 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly **contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints. There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, **ungodly men**, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ... These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of [political] advantage.

‘The grace of our God into lasciviousness,’ means that there are things going on in church congregations – both in conduct and appearance – that are **morally reprehensible** in God’s sight. These verses say that some charismatic ministers cleverly articulate the inordinate desires of members by appealing to their baser human senses. The minister who is **an impostor** will twist the meanings of God’s Word so as to appeal to man’s lower nature by providing pretexts like – “Be true to your humanity – God will understand – You are not like others – God will forgive you – God knows your heart.”

The deceitful minister plies his trade, realizing that some church members will be seeking promotion or recognition – as in acknowledgment from the pulpit, advancement in the congregation, esteem among the brethren, or possibly access to the minister’s inner-circle of friends. Because this travesty takes place in the confines of the Church congregation, there is a tendency for some members to let down their caution and be caught off-guard.

Ministers become **false ministers**, not only because of deceptive doctrine, but also when they compromise God’s Word in favor of political expediency. Being ignorant of the true nature of the Gospel – they abuse the brethren. The mistreatment of a member takes place when a conflict arises between following the principles of God on the one hand and dealing in corporate politics on the other. While seeking to curry favor with headquarters, the minister relegates the church member to a non-entity status. They further their careers rather than serving God’s people according to Biblical ethics and guidelines. They do not teach the brethren to look to God – but rather to themselves. This kind of **false minister** seeks **loyalty to himself** – not to God. Paul adds a note of caution to be careful of associating with malicious and political ministers who are self-deluded about their actual spiritual condition:

2 Timothy 3:13 Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

There are many false ministers in the Church of God, especially in these last days. You shall know them by their words and actions—their gospel is not God’s Truth. These impostors shrewdly undermine the true Gospel of Christ. In the book of Galatians, Paul expresses his dismay that the Galatians had left the true Gospel that Jesus Christ brought for a counterfeit gospel – which is no Gospel at all:

Galatians 1:6-8 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another Gospel; but there be some that trouble you, and would **pervert the Gospel** of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

## **Substitutes for Christianity**

Jesus warns us so many times of **false preachers** who have a form of godliness, but they will not enact the personal Gospel of Christ in their own lives. They will not go to their brother – as Jesus directs that we must do (Matthew 18:15-17). Instead of laying up spiritual treasures in heaven, they hoard their money for a rainy day, or allegedly to get to the Place of Safety (Matthew 6:20). They teach that our Lord delays His coming (Matthew 24:48). They relegate the members to the lowest rung of their two-tiered caste system. They teach their followers to dishonor their elderly parents. They do not know the true Nature of God. They love only their own followers, while rejecting many sons and daughters of God who are led by God's Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). Jesus says that in the last days these seducing spirits will pervade His holy congregations of saints. Too many Church brethren today foolishly think that they are beyond being deceived by men like these!

1 Timothy 4:1-2 The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and doctrines of devils. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

The problem with a member saying, "There are no perfect ministers," is that the member is saying in effect, "I'm OK with mediocrity and nonsense – I'll just sit tight in his congregation – and not go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). I'll overlook my minister's sins and shortcomings." The reason that members cannot spot false ministers is because they do not wish to help their Pastor into God's Kingdom. That is the Biblical definition of hate. Members must realize their responsibility to their Pastor—who is their spiritual brother – or should be. Godly love demands that a sinner be turned from the error of his way (James 5:20; Galatians 6:1).

God will punish those ministers who are content to make a good living off of the Children of God, rather than serve them as God's shepherds should. God will chastise those ministers for scattering and neglecting the flock of God (Ezekiel 34:1-10). God is not mocked, for He knows what is in the heart and mind of every minister (1 Samuel 16:7):

Daniel 2:22 God reveals the deep and secret things: He knows what is in the **darkness**, and the **light** dwells with Him.

Most Church members think that their congregations are models of pure religion and Christianity—which is the practice of caring for the fatherless and widows in their burdened lives, while keeping themselves pure from this defiled world (James 1:27). In place of inspiring one another to perform acts of love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), they have **substituted** another form of religion: Beautiful choirs, and sometimes small orchestras to provide accompaniment for the chorale; dances, summer camps and sports programs. Every member knows how long to wear their hair, and every woman how long to wear her skirt. Everyone is an expert on the clean and unclean food laws – and which products contained animal shortening in them. Members are smug and complacent. The apostasy of the late 1980s should have been a wake-up call for all – and yet, many rushed to replicate the practices of a corporate organization that had forgotten to put God and His ways first in their lives. Jesus rightly predicted that His people would need to be awakened out of their contentment and self-satisfaction:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have **need of nothing**; and you do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Why are there so many Scriptural warnings about false ministers? Because false ministers are always a clear and present danger to the people of God. There are many men who portray themselves as servants of Christ while not living Christian lives. Jesus said that **deceivers** would look good and sound good, but they would not be teaching the brethren to look to God and help others into His Kingdom:

Matthew 7:15-16, 20-21 Beware of **religious impostors** which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them **by their fruits**. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ...Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that does the **will of my Father** which is in heaven.

God's warnings and instructions to His people have always been clear. We must discern those who represent God's way of life and holiness:

Jeremiah 23:1-3; 5:30-31 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD... A terrible and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

God is calling very few people out of the world today to walk in His way and stand-alone if necessary. All the others will be called in God's good timing—every man in his own order (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Luke 21:8 Jesus said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: **do not follow after them**.

A Christian guards his heart and mind continuously by drawing near to God:

Mark 13:22 **False Christs** and **false prophets** shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, **even the elect**.

The book of Revelation refers to the lawless mystery religion as "Mystery, Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5) and shows it possessing two horns like a lamb (presenting itself as Christ-like) but speaking like a dragon (Revelation 13:11). The dragon of Revelation is Satan the devil, who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). This describes a great counterfeit religion—a world-dominating false-Christianity led by Satan and his demons, who appear as ministers of righteousness.

Matthew 11:12 [Jesus said,] From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven is acquired with an utmost struggle [a maximum effort – with all your being and strength] on your part; and it is only the most serious and dedicated ones who obtain the Kingdom of God.

These are the last days. We had better believe that they are – because there are many Biblical warnings especially for us:

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2 Timothy 3:1-7 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the **knowledge of the truth**.

This present evil world does not possess a **knowledge of the truth**. The Catholics are taught to pray to Mary and the Saints. That practice does not comport with the word of God because it is a false doctrine. The living saints of God do not pray to the saints asleep in the earth. They are yet in their graves – their thoughts have perished.

Psalm 146:4 His breath goes forth [from his dead body], he returns to his earth; in that very day **his thoughts perish**.

The Bible says nothing about Mary ascending into heaven. She awaits the resurrection of the saints as all the faithful are awaiting. Even King David is not in heaven, nor are any who have ever lived on this earth except Jesus Christ:

Acts 2:34 David has not ascended into the heavens.

Jesus explained to Moses that though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead in their graves as far as man could see, they were as good as **alive** in God's mind and remembrance because to the **coming resurrection** of the saints. Jesus said:

Mark 12:26-27 As touching the dead, that they rise [in the resurrection]: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spoke unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the **God of the living**...

## **Servants of Jesus Christ**

True ministers of Jesus Christ preach that Christianity involves a life of trials, self-denial, persecution, suffering, self-sacrifice and hard work – and every fruit of God's Spirit. We are told to **count the cost** of what Christianity will require of us (Luke 14:28). Jesus gave and gave until He gave His all. That was His example to us of a true minister and servant. Do not accept a substitute minister. Avoid substitutes for true religion. Any minister who influences his members to have no fellowship with the other brethren of God's Church is teaching the false doctrine of separation, and not Christ's doctrine of unity and oneness (Ephesians 4:13). If a minister tells you to avoid fellowshiping with truly converted brethren from other groups – have the spiritual maturity to discern his error and challenge him on doctrinal grounds immediately, because his **salvation** is at stake. A true minister of Jesus Christ teaches the brethren – to **be so doing** (Matthew 24:46). The apostle John put it succinctly. Godly love towards our neighbor is a matter of **eternal life**:

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed **from death unto Life**, because we **love the brethren**. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

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This fact cannot be more straight forward than that. God is very clearly telling us that in order to attain our place in His Kingdom, we must love our neighbor as ourselves by helping them also to reach the Kingdom of God. Remember that your minister is also your brother in Christ, and you have just as much of an **obligation** to help him into the Kingdom of God as you do to all your other spiritual brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we are obligated to **lay down our lives** for the brethren.

How do we go about loving our brother as Jesus desires? In the same way that Jesus **laid down His life** for us, we are required to lay our lives down for others. The more we give of ourselves – the more like Jesus we become. It is not about money, it is about giving of ourselves, our empathy, our emotions, our love, our time our caring, our being, our attitudes, our concerns – our outgoing concern for others. A converted Christian frequently makes sacrifices. He lays his life down every day – sometimes, many times a day – and at great personal cost. He turns the other cheek; he forgives, and lets a matter drop; he is patient with the impatient, the list is endless. The more we give of ourselves, the more we are like God.

Laying our life down, will, in the course of one's life, call for major sacrifices to be made in order to preserve the truth of God, or require that we defend a brother who has been falsely maligned. That great sacrifice may cost one his livelihood or status in the congregation or community. But, making that great sacrifice is how we become followers of Christ. Jesus **served** us by dying for us. He 'put it all on the line' because of our sins. The Biblical principle is clear, we have to 'put it all on the line' often, daily if necessary, for those Church brethren who are sinning and not living up to their Christianity to help them come out of their sin. Paul said it like this:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Christians are to be serving one another in the exact **same way** that Jesus loved us—by giving His all:

John 15:12-13 This is Commandment, That ye love one another, **as** I have loved you. [Jesus died for us] Greater love hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life** for his friends.

Ask yourself this: When did you lay your life down for the brethren – really put it all on the line – your job, reputation, standing in the community, even your very life itself? When a brother or sister has strayed and allowed a serious sin to enter their life – we must serve them by going to their spiritual rescue, no matter what it takes – that is laying down our life for them.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.

The basis of unity and oneness is a genuine care and deep concern for the complete well-being of all the brethren. This kind of unity requires nothing less than putting our very lives on the line for the sake of one another. Oneness demands the right application of Godly principles when interacting with our brethren. In short, oneness requires Christian love.

John 13:4 [Jesus] rose from supper, and lay aside His garments; and took a servant's towel, and girded Himself.

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Jesus was divesting Himself of His customary role as Master and Lord to reveal His great transcendent role as the One who came to this earth for the very purpose of **servicing mankind**. Jesus served mankind setting us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus intends that we serve one another. By His example, Jesus was teaching us how to serve others just as He has done for us.

True Christian service entails helping each other into the Kingdom of God. The Footwashing is about learning to serve one another in a **spiritual** way. Jesus laid His life down for us, so we must lay our lives down for others - but how do we do that? When a brother or sister has strayed and allowed a serious sin to enter their life - we must serve them by going to their spiritual rescue, no matter what it takes - that is laying down our life for them. Jesus was the greatest, and yet He became our servant – it is not asking too much that we become the servants of those in need. See Footwashing in Chapter Five.

### **Mark of the Beast**

Only the true Church of God will recognize the Beast and his mark. God is going to make it evident for those who know and love God, and keep His Commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ—they will know. The world will not know!

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

What is the Truth? We must know it! The world will not know! Jesus said so in:

Matthew 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who said, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and **should be converted**, and I should heal them.

So, the people of the world are blind to the truth of God's revelations, but not us. Notice what Jesus says:

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

This tells us that the world cannot put it all together, but we, brethren, who know the Plan of God, are able to understand the end-time sequence so much better. We must be careful because a single wrong assumption can throw us off terribly. Paul said it this way:

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the [end-time] **Day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night.

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Who could actually call off the radical jihadists threatening the lives of everyone; beheading Christians all around the world? Not the Pope; the radical Islamic terrorists would not listen to him. Not a German chancellor; who would listen? Not the Secretary General of the United Nations—No!

Who could order all the Radical Islamic terrorists – worldwide – to stand down and desist? Only the leader of the Islamic world – the Muslim Caliph, who is the Islamic political and religious leader of the caliphate—or the Mahdi the prophesied redeemer of Islam—he could cause hostilities to cease.

Something like that is going to take place! For a short while everyone will believe that world peace and prosperity have been achieved.

1 Thessalonians 5:3-4 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; (pause) then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in **darkness**, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

The point is that God intends for His people to know! ...No one else will know.

### **Sigh Cry - Moan Groan - Mourn and Weep**

As the Great Tribulation is about to descend upon mankind, one of the main virtues that God seeks among His people is an attitude of abhorrence and repugnance against God-less conduct: crime, amoral behavior, lawbreaking, wickedness and evil abominations, that characterize society today. God is looking for those who like righteous Lot, are tormented with the filthy conduct of the wicked all around them. God seeks those righteous saints who are distressed daily by every lawless deed they see and hear (2 Peter 2:7-8).

Ezekiel 9:4-5 The LORD said unto [indestructible spirit], Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark** upon the foreheads of the men that **sigh** and that **cry** for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the other [spirit beings] He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

If we can infer anything at all from Ezekiel 9:4-5, it is that God will not be sparing the rebellious, godless enemies of His way of life and truth.

Those people who sighed, cried, mourned, wailed, wept, moaned and groaned in their grief, not only over the horrid state of affairs of immoral humanity, but also over the lackadaisical spiritual state of God's Church, were **afforded protection** because God was pleased with their expression of sorrow and consternation. They were given safety from the inferno and the terror. They had God's mark on them, protecting them from His judgment. In the same way, **sighing and crying** over the abominations and the sins of our culture and greater society today must be our stance if we are going to escape the coming Tribulation.

Many people will not make it to the Place of Safety. It is because of Satan's deception that the human race will be brought to the very brink of destruction. A great deal is revealed in the Bible about what will occur during the time of the Tribulation. You can learn how to escape the horrors of the Tribulation, and be nourished in the Place of Safety.

Zephaniah 2:1-3 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the **Day of the LORD's** anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be **ye shall be hid** in the day of the LORD'S anger.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Many seem to think that we are more privileged than other church groups – and that we will just breeze into the Kingdom of God without learning to put God’s will into our lives. When Christ returns there will be a people whose consideration for their fellow brethren – with a true Christian concern – distinguishes them from those who confuse their social life for Godly service. Jesus does not want anyone to miss out. He wishes for everyone to partake of the wonderful promises He has made to the Church. That is the very reason that Jesus issues His warnings to the Church. All the brethren agree that our faith must be **in God only**, but then so many relinquish their faith to the wiles of some organization of men. Our focus must be on God and His will. Do we primarily talk to God in prayer? Do we listen to His response in His Word – the Bible?

Once, people changed their minds, hearts and lives immensely—because they were truly repentant and converted. They made incredible sacrifices for one another. They were humbly willing to travel great distances to serve their brethren who were in need. They prayed sincerely and fasted to draw near to God. The strong brethren helped the weak brethren. Not only did they stand for doctrinal truth, they selflessly exhibited an enthusiasm toward those who oppose themselves. Much of the Church is slated to go into the Tribulation. The signs of the looming Tribulation are all around us. God will send some of our Church brethren into the **Great Tribulation** – make no mistake about that.

Revelation 2:22-23 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into Great Tribulation, **unless they repent** of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

God is not mocked. We have a straight forward choice. We cannot have a pretend religion. We cannot have a substitute religion. We can only have a pure motivation. Everyone else will be cast into the Great Tribulation – according to their works! The Tribulation is going to come on all the world in order to wake them up!

1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 For yourselves know perfectly that the **Day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are **not in darkness**, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the **children of light**, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

The Tribulation is almost upon us. And then it will be too late to avoid it. Jesus gave a parable that describes the Church just prior to His return to establish the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 25:1 Then shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth **to meet the Bridegroom**.

What we find in this parable are the **two attitudes** that are prevalent in the greater Church of God today. One group of people will be eligible for the Place of Safety - the other will not hear the words of Jesus Christ. Satan is subtle and will not be so blatant with his next deception. Last time, the deception was about doing away with the Sabbath and the Law of God, and bringing in the Trinity, etc. Throwing the Sabbath under the bus and embracing the Trinity as the apostate Church of God did was not subtle – that is why we all saw it. Everyone would get that. Satan is much more cunning and subtle than that! That is why so many are headed for the Tribulation. The ‘I’m in the right organization’ attitude is here and it is widespread. We want to make sure that we are doing everything we can to be in the Kingdom.

Matthew 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

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That is the very description of the Church brethren right now. God's Spirit of wisdom is available to us – are we utilizing it?

Matthew 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took **no oil** with them:

Jesus says that many are not utilizing His Spirit – they took no oil with them.

Matthew 25:4-5 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

That is where we are right now – there's not much zeal in God's Church today.

Matthew 25:6-9 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go ye out to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

God's Spirit must be implemented. It cannot be shared with someone that has not been practicing Christianity. Those who draw their line in the sand, when they obviously see much wrong – will continue to slouch toward the Tribulation because they do not see their need to repent.

Matthew 25:10 And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

A saint's loyalty and allegiance must be solely to God and His principled way of life—not to any man or organization. Over and over God tells us to make a difference between the clean and the unclean. Do we think that He is talking about pickled pig feet only? God is speaking of the Holy and the profane. Do we know the difference? Why does God tell His people to come out from among them and be separate?

We are not thinking correctly when we tell ourselves that, "I'll go along with them" out of loyalty to an organization or a man until they reach a certain point. That is tantamount to saying that you are OK with being a part of a group where things are sliding in the wrong direction. That is where we must be so very careful.

## **Great Day of the Lord's Wrath**

Zephaniah 1:14-18 The **Great Day of the Lord** is near, it is near, and hastes greatly, even the voice of the Day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a **Day of Wrath**, a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the **trumpet and alarm** against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the Day of the **Lord's wrath**.

The most foolish justification for changing God's Holy Sabbath worship from Saturday to Sunday is erroneously based on the Scripture where John says:

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the **Lord's Day**, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

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Every serious student of the Bible knows that John is referencing the many, many Scriptures that speak to the day of God's soon coming wrath. John is speaking about the return of Jesus Christ; That Day; In the Day; the Day of the Lord; That Great Day of God Almighty; the Lord's Day, when the wrath of God will be poured out on all evil. These many references to the **Lord's Day** have nothing to do with *Sunday worship* and everything to do with the year that the Lord will unleash His fury against those who are guilty of abominations.

Revelation 16:14 They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of **That Great Day of God Almighty**.

Jesus Christ will overcome all evil kings and rulers of this world. He will conquer the Beast and the False Prophet with divine wrath (Revelation 17:13-14; 19:20). He will bind Satan. He will establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth (Revelation 19:14-16). Jesus will unleash His indignation against all wickedness on the earth described as the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. The seven trumpets signal the day of God's wrath, the Day of the Lord. For serious disciples who wish to glean an understanding by adding precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little we add a few of the verses (Isaiah 28:10):

Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11, 31; 3:14; Isaiah 13:6; 24:4-6; 26:21; 34:2-8; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 14:1; Haggai 2:6-7; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

Revelation 6:17 The Great Day of His wrath is come; and **who shall be able to stand?**

Revelation 8:1-2 When He had opened the **seventh seal**, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given **seven trumpets**.

Joel 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the **Day of the LORD** comes, for it is nigh at hand;

Day of the Lord's wrath, the prophesied Day of the Lord will help all people focus on the sovereignty of God (Isaiah 2:11-17).

## **Time of the Messiah**

God's Plan follows a precise time schedule. Jesus proclaimed at the start of His public ministry:

Mark 1:15 The **time is fulfilled**, and the Kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

At Jesus' **second coming** He will sit upon the throne of David's dynasty establishing the Kingdom of God over the earth—the everlasting spiritual throne, “the throne of the Lord.” (1 Chronicles 29:23)

Luke 1:31-33 ...Jesus shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the **throne of his father David**. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom **there shall be no end**.

Jeremiah 33:17 For thus says the LORD; David shall never want a man [descendant] to sit upon the throne of the House of Israel (Jeremiah 23:5).

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Isaiah 24:23 ...The LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

God has given promises from the time of Abraham and David. Jesus is the seed of Abraham and the son of David in whom God's covenant promises are fulfilled. The word of the LORD came unto the Prophet Nathan, assuring David that He would establish his house [dynasty], and the throne of David's kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:11–16; 2 Chronicles 9:8).

Zechariah 14:9 The LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.

Acts 3:19-21 ...the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The Church is not a movement or an organization. It is a spiritual entity consisting of the chosen Children of God. Jesus is the head of the Church—the called of His Father—led by God's Holy Spirit (John 6:44, 65).

Romans 8:14 As many as are **led by the Spirit** of God, they are the Children of God.

### **Overcoming Satan**

Jesus enumerated **three** things that are necessary to **overcome** Satan because it is absolutely required of all who will enter the Kingdom of God. Each and every saint will be an overcomer (Revelation 3:21). We must overcome Satan as Jesus Christ did. He tells us how to go about overcoming Satan:

Revelation 12:11 They **overcame** Satan by the (1.) blood of the Lamb; and by the (2.) word of their testimony; and they (3.) loved not their lives unto the death.

**First**, Jesus' sacrifice, the **blood of the Lamb** becomes effectual only after one repents of breaking the Ten Commandments. That is when our sins are covered by the **blood of Christ**.

1 John 1:7 If we walk in the **light**, as He is in the **light**, we have fellowship one with another, and the **blood of Jesus Christ** His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**Second**, the word of **their testimony** is the exact same as the testimony of Jesus Christ—every word of God (John 17:17). The word of our testimony means that we embrace every word and teaching of Jesus Christ – making His testimony our own testimony.

1 John 5:10-11 He that believes on the Son of God has the testimony in himself: he that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believeth not the testimony that God gave of His Son. And this is the testimony, that God has given to us – eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

**Third**, they **loved not their lives unto the death**. They laid down their lives daily—following Christ's example (Romans 12:1).

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That third point is the deciding factor as to who goes to the **Place of Safety**, and who will have to wash their robes in the **Tribulation** [martyrdom]: One must overcome Satan by loving his brethren enough to **lay down his life** daily for them.

1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we **must lay down our lives for the brethren**.

We know that a small number of the saints – those who will have already overcome Satan – will be protected by God from Satan and his agents during the Tribulation in a Place of Safety. Somehow, in God's great providence, He will protect that little flock from the horrors of the Tribulation.

The Bible is clear in that a portion of the Church will be protected and nourished in a Place of Safety, and the remainder will not be protected (Revelation 12:14-17). The small group of physically protected saints will, from their refuge, be a light and beacon of hope to their Christian brethren who have not yet overcome Satan. Those brethren in the Place of Safety will be a witness that God has a high standard that He will not deviate from. The rest of the brethren will finally learn that true Christianity is no “gray train.” Jesus says:

Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep [protect] thee from the hour of temptation [tribulation and adversity], which shall come upon all the world, to try [tribulation and testing] them that dwell upon the earth.

When Satan is unable to attack the saints in the Place of Safety, he turns his attack on the **remaining saints** who have been caught in the Tribulation. God gives the remnant of His Church, those who did not qualify for the Place of Safety, time and opportunity to repent in the Tribulation.

Revelation 12:17 The dragon [Satan] was enraged at the woman [the Church], and went to make war with the **remnant of her seed**, [those who were not qualified to be protected in the Place of Safety] which (1.) keep the Commandments of God, and have the (2.) testimony of Jesus Christ.

Notice that those Christians who do not qualify for the Place of Safety only did **two of the three** things that Jesus requires for the first resurrection: They came short. These saints are missing the third necessary component for overcoming Satan. That **missing element** in their lives is: “**they loved not their lives unto the death.**” They refused to lay down their lives to help others into God's Kingdom. They selfishly continued to serve themselves – rather than others—that they would not do. That is why they must be tested in the Tribulation. God will graciously and lovingly present one last opportunity to those Church brethren who have **not yet learned** to lay down their lives, to do so, and become a part of the First Resurrection. Those Christians who go into the Tribulation will eventually see that they had not followed Christ's example of laying down their lives for the brethren.

Too many of our church-going brethren seem to think that we are more privileged than the other Christians, and that we will just breeze into the Kingdom of God without learning to put God's Will into our lives. When Christ returns, there will be a people whose consideration for their brethren with a true Christian concern, will distinguish them from those who confuse their social life for Godly service.

What will happen to those who have not taken a stand for the true faith, or put their own well-being in harm's way to save a brother from ruin? They will not be prepared to be the Bride of Christ. They have not been cognizant of the need to provoke one another unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24). Like Cain, the first murderer, they will have never truly learned to be their brother's keeper

(Genesis 4:9). Laying down our life as a living sacrifice is a prerequisite to qualifying as the Bride of Christ.

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Those who are not willing to lay down their lives as living sacrifices – now – will, in the Tribulation **physically lay down their lives in martyrdom** for having neglected to be spiritual sacrifices prior to that time. That is unconditionally required in order to overcome Satan and be in the First Resurrection (Romans 12:1, Revelation 12:11).

Those relatively few brethren who make it to the Place of Safety will be known by those who find themselves trapped in the Tribulation. Those in the Tribulation will realize that they only kept the Sabbath and the Commandments—but they never demonstrated to God that they were willing to lay their lives down to help others into the Kingdom of God. It will become abundantly clear to them that they have not yet met that one important criterion for God's deliverance and protection. They will finally realize that God wanted them to show that they **believed Him** by laying down their lives as Jesus gave us example.

Brethren, right now we can choose to serve one another with a brotherly-love, and **avoid** the Tribulation. Delaying until the time of the Tribulation to learn to truly love one another **as** Jesus loved us will bring about a physical death sentence. Very soon it will be too late. The choice is ours.

During the Tribulation, those Church members who find themselves caught in the wrath of Satan will be given occasion to exhibit the love of God – shedding their blood, just as Jesus did. It will become abundantly clear to them that they have not yet met the criteria for God's deliverance and protection. They will finally realize that God wanted them to show that they believed Him by laying down their lives for others, just **as** Jesus gave us example by laying down His life for us (John 13:34).

Those brethren in the Place of Safety will be a witness to those Christians left behind that God has a certain level of performance that must be met. The rest of the brethren will finally learn that true Christianity is no “gravy train.”

Revelation 7:14 ... These are they which came out of Great Tribulation [as martyrs], and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

During the Tribulation, physical martyrdom and death will be the **only** way to overcome Satan and gain eternal life. The Tribulation will bring in the unwelcome dystopian future of a terrifying world order. That is a bitter pill. For those brethren caught in the Tribulation it will be too late to escape with their lives because they had been unwilling to lay their lives down for the brethren the way God intends—the way God requires. They will have never truly learned to be their brother's keeper. They had not yet done the **third thing** necessary to overcome Satan – so they must face him again. If we have not learned what it means to lay down our lives for all the brethren, we will also go through the Tribulation.

Many people see the time of horrendous trouble looming on the horizon – it is the Great Tribulation. The nations of the earth are even now posturing for world supremacy, geopolitical control and hegemony.

Joel 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

It is prophesied that at the close of his 6000-year rule, Satan's great wrath will bring destruction on all the unprotected inhabitants of the earth. No one knows the number of brethren who will be able to stand up against Satan and the Beast in the Tribulation – they are the Innumerable Multitude – the **uncountable** or **unknowable** number who will be a part of **wedding supper** and Bride of Christ.

Jesus Christ tells us to be watching and praying always. That is necessary if we hope to be accounted worthy to escape the near annihilation of mankind (Luke 21:36). The devastation will be so great that there would not be a single survivor – except for Christ’s intervention to save an elect few (Matthew 24:22).

## **The Wedding Supper**

Revelation 19:9 He said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the **marriage supper** of the Lamb. And He said unto me, These are the **true sayings** of God. This is not an analogy, metaphor, nor is it allegorical – but the **true sayings** of God.

These Prophetic Scriptures show us the splendor of the ultimate nuptial ceremony. We do not want to miss out on the most splendid and majestic wedding of all time. What an incredible truth that our Lord and Master has chosen to make us His Wife by entering into an eternal Marriage Covenant with us. (Divorce flies into the face of God’s most perfect illustration – that is why it is so wrong (Mark 10:11-12)). Jesus Himself spoke of His wedding day – and how He would adorn His Bride:

Ezekiel 16:8-14 When I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time **of love**; and I spread my garment over you, [a symbolic proposal of marriage] and covered your nakedness: yea, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, said the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I washed you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you **with oil** (Sanctification). I clothed you also with needlepoint work, and placed fur-lined slippers on your feet, and I dressed you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk.

I embellished you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a necklace on your neck. And I put jewelry on you, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you adorned with gold and silver; and your wedding garments were of glamorous, brilliant, radiant, gorgeous and stunning fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; you ate of fine cakes, and honey, and oil: and you were exceeding beautiful, and you did prosper into a Kingdom. And your renowned reputation went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through my grandeur, which I had put upon you, says the Lord God.

Mere words fail to portray the most glorious ceremony ever – which Christ has reserved for His Bride alone. Divine music will reverberate across the heavens, and gleaming, brilliance will illuminate the throne room, as the Bride is presented to her Lord. His Bride will be accepted by Jesus Christ, adorned in her radiant white silk wedding gown – and upon her head she will wear a beautiful sparkling crown. At that soon coming Pentecost ceremony at the throne of God, when the glorified, resurrected saints of God are asked, “Do you take Jesus Christ to be your lawful wedded husband for all eternity to come?” She will answer, “**I do.**” (Exodus 24:3, 7) We are called unto the **marriage supper** of the Lamb.

## **A Magnificent Reality**

Our Church of God wedding ceremony begins with the words, “Marriage is a natural union, but a divine institution, ordained of God.” God created the marriage covenant, not only as the basis of social order for mankind, but also to foreshadow His eternal Plan. The marriage of Adam and Eve as husband and wife was the prototype of the eternal spiritual covenant between Christ and His Bride – the Church.

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That first marriage contract between Adam and Eve was a prophetic sign of Christ's ultimate goal to enter into a perfect spiritual union with all the members of His Body. In Ephesians 5, Paul speaks of how the Bride of Christ and the Church of God are one and the same.

Even now, Christ is preparing His Wife-to-be for their wedding day, "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The language is decidedly matrimonial in comparing a husband's love for his wife – to the love of Christ for His Wife, "He nourishes and cherishes her, even as the Lord the Church" (Ephesians 5:29). God established the intimacy attainable within a blessed marriage as a mere indication of the transcendent unity and oneness achievable only in the **spiritual** realm of the God-plane marriage.

Paul reveals how God is showing us through the physical marriage bond, His intent for all the Church brethren to be joined eternally to Jesus Christ in an eternal spiritual covenant:

Ephesians 5:32 A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning **Christ and the Church**.

There are those who consider themselves to be "doctrinal experts" today who deny that any such marriage will take place. Clearly, God records the first covenant wedding with Israel as being typical of the soon-to-be-fulfilled New Covenant wedding supper with the resurrected Israel of God (Exodus 24:7-11, Galatians 6:16).

Hebrews 10:16-17 This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

There will be a heavenly wedding! The Bible distinctly shows the objective of our going on to perfection:

2 Corinthians 11:2 I have promised you in marriage to one Husband [Jesus Christ], that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

## **Innumerable Multitude**

John saw a great multitude, which no one **could number** from all around the earth (Revelation 7:9) They stood before the throne of God, and before the Lamb, **clothed with white robes** which is the righteousness of the saints – worn by the Bride of Christ (Revelation 9:8-9).

Revelation 7:13-14 ... Who are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And He said to me, These are they which **came out of Great Tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them **white** in the blood of the Lamb. (1 John 1:7; Revelation 3:4-5; 6:11; Isaiah 1:18)

Are the Innumerable Multitude a part of the Bride of Christ and are they in the first resurrection? This is a two-part question. The answer is: In order to be the **Bride of Christ** it is necessary to be in the first resurrection. Paul says that the Church is the Bride of Christ:

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also **loved the Church**, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse [the Church] with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a **glorious Church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

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The Innumerable Multitude does not immediately qualify for the Place of Safety because they have not yet learned to lay their lives down. They will be purified in the Great Tribulation in order to qualify for the Kingdom of God. Innumerable simply means "uncountable or unknowable," since the exact number is not known of those who will stand up and repent during the Tribulation when the Beast Power takes over. We do know that they will be **martyred**.

Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God **shall wipe away all tears from their eyes**.

These people will have all gone into the Great Tribulation and great distress. They will either **repent** in the Tribulation and martyrdom and meet Christ in the air, or go into the Lake of Fire in the third resurrection.

In Revelation 3:21, God grants overcomers the reward of sitting with Him on His throne! Thus, they have at last qualified to be in the **first resurrection**, having been judged to be worthy (1 Peter 4:17).

As firstfruits, whether we die in Christ or are still alive, we will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet – that is at the end of the 3½ year Tribulation. (1 Corinthians 15:49-57).

### **Jesus Died and He Lives Again**

We saw that our Savior **died**, but the important thing is that **He Lives** forever more! He had to die for mankind or the Plan of God—bringing many sons and daughters to eternal glory—could not come to fruition. Man had sinned and the price of sin is the death of mankind. Jesus died to pay that price in our stead. A great deal of the world understands that concept. God became a man with a nature like man's sinful nature, to condemn sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). The world raves about the **resurrection** of Jesus—not knowing when it took place or the significance of it.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 ...We believe that Jesus **died** and **rose** again.

The apostle Paul explained Jesus' direct role in Atonement:

Romans 5:9-10 Much more then, being now **justified by His blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the **death** of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be **saved** by His **life**.

The Day of Atonement is about the complete cleansing of sin through the work of Jesus Christ—alone. Jesus' **death** paid for our sins—He was pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5). He lay dead in the grave for three nights and three days, and man's transgressions were covered (Galatians 3:13). But, that did not **save** us, because mankind was certainly not worthy of salvation or eternal life. Jesus had not yet become man's Savior. Paul said, "**We shall be saved by His life.**"

How is man saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Sin is the crime of breaking law – God's law (1 John 3:4). There are two aspects to sin that must be considered. Sin has a **penalty** and a **stigma** attached to it. Even when the penalty has been paid – the shame, disgrace and carnality remain. Here is an example to make this clearer, suppose:

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Through carelessness someone dies in a traffic accident. Charges are brought against the negligent driver—vehicular manslaughter. Suppose then that some benevolent lawyer pays all the costs and gets the case thrown out of court and the judge says, “Case dismissed!” For a moment the negligent driver thinks, “My slate is clean again.” Not exactly – right? He still has to carry the **guilt** and **shame** of his negligence in causing someone’s death. He killed an innocent person through his fault. That cannot ever be erased from his conscience. Or, can it?

1 John 2:1 ...We have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

So the point is that even when Jesus has paid for our sins, we remain carnal people, and the stigma of our being sinners still stains our reputations with God. That “guiltiness” needs to be eradicated. How do we become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)? Christ’s **death** only paid the **debt** called for by God’s law (Romans 6:23). Because Christ died for us, we do not have to die eternal death – and yet, God the Father still knows what sinners we have been – and why would He want to have anything to do with us? He knows good and well that we are actually guilty of sinning against Him. At that point, why would He give us the gift of eternal life? Jesus announced Himself to the apostle John:

Revelation 1:18 I am He who lives, and was **dead**; and, behold, I am **alive** for evermore.

There is more to the process of **salvation** than just having our **sins paid for** by Jesus Christ’s death. That is because sin against God, not only destroys our relationship with Him, but it leaves us with a residual consciousness of **guilt**. Blaming Satan cannot remove our guilt. How can we ever have a clean conscience? God sees to it that even our conscience is cleansed:

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

What is needed is a complete expunging of the **guilt** of our sins. Our transgressions and iniquities must be forgotten by God. And He does just that! For our sake, He blots out of His mind (Only God can do that) our transgressions and He will **not remember** our sins (Isaiah 43:25).

Peter addresses this by explaining that baptism has two parts: Repentance from dead works (the filth of the flesh), and the faith of Jesus Christ, including His resurrection. He tells us how the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ is the answer to a clean and clear conscience before God. That means that we can now turn to God the Father free from **guilt**, because of the **resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Wow!

1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now **save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the resulting **good conscience** toward God,) by the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ:

Colossians 1:27 ... Christ in you, the hope of glory:

In Leviticus 16 we see the annual **Day of Atonement** ceremony that pictured the covering of Israel’s transgressions. The covering of sin was only a part of what this day depicts. This ritual is all about Jesus and how He brings **justification** and **reconciliation** to the world. A goat was needed to picture the reconciliation process whereby Jesus **died** and **rose** again. But, in Old Testament Israel it was not possible to perform this ritual because once the goat was killed—it was impossible for the single goat to **live** again. Therefore, two goats were needed. One was **slain**, the other released **alive** into the **wilderness** where Israel would wander for forty years. Do not read more into the Scripture than is intended—the goat was released **alive** into the wilderness. It is repeated for emphasis:

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Leviticus 16:10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented **alive** before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the **wilderness**. [The Hebrew for scapegoat is *azazel* from *aiz*, a goat, and *azal*, to depart.]

Leviticus 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the **live** goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the **wilderness**:

Joshua 5:6 The children of Israel walked forty years in the **wilderness**... [A land **not inhabited** (Leviticus 16:22).]

We are **not saved** by Jesus' **death**. We are **justified** by His **death**—our past sins wiped out, making us innocent and right with God (Romans 5:9).

2 Corinthians 5:15 And that [Jesus] **died** for all, that they which **live** should not henceforth **live** unto themselves, but unto Him which **died** for them, and rose again. [Jesus died and rose alive.]

Paul speaks often of Christ's two-fold, life/death combination, which is necessary for our justification and reconciliation with God to take place. It is the fulfillment of the two goats of Leviticus 16. Jesus has to **die** for us to be right with God.

Colossians 1:22 In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight: [That is where we want to be – right with God.]

Colossians 2:12-13 [You are] **buried** with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are **risen** with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him [alive] from the dead. And you, being **dead** in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened [made **alive**] together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

To make Satan's being bound and *carrying our sins* the focus of Atonement would minimize our personal responsibility for sin, and the absolute need for what only God can provide—the resurrection to **life**.

Romans 4:24 But [faith is to be reckoned as righteousness] for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him [God the Father] that raised [to life] Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again [to secure] our justification. [Getting right with God takes both the death and life of Jesus.]

Romans 8:6 To be carnally minded is **death**; but to be spiritually minded is **life** and peace. [Sin brings **death** (Romans 6:23)].

Romans 5:21 As sin has reigned unto **death**, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal **life** by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into **death**: that like as Christ was **raised up** from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of **life**.

“Walk in newness of life” has two meanings. Yes, we are to live our lives as the sinless Christ lived His life. But, it also means that as Christ lives, we will live also. Our death penalty has been taken away, and we have salvation through Christ's life and resurrection.

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Romans 6:5 If we have been buried together in the likeness of His **death**, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection [to **life**]:

Is Paul belaboring the point? I think not!

Romans 6:8 If we be **dead** with Christ, we believe that we shall also **live** with Him:

Paul is making a point. Not only the world, but much of the Church of God is deceived in this matter. That is why Paul goes to such great lengths to drive the point home. Perhaps if Paul doubles up his emphasis – it will come across to us. Paul did not have **bold** and *italics* to stress a point:

Romans 6:10-11 In that He **died**, He died once unto sin: but in that He **lives**, He lives [continuously] unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **dead** indeed unto sin, but **alive** unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have seen clearly in Leviticus 16:5 where Paul finds his inspiration for Christ's two-fold, life/death combination, which is necessary for our reconciliation with God to take place.

In Leviticus 16 the two goats begin by being indistinguishable, but at the end of the ceremony - one is **dead** and the other is **alive**. On Atonement God wished to have a sin offering that would be sacrificed and yet live—to represent both the **sacrificed**, and the **resurrected** Jesus Christ—the two characteristics of Atonement. The two goats comprise one offering—two goats for a [single] sin offering (Leviticus 16:5). God satisfied the single-sin-offering by requiring two identical goats be used to represent each of two characteristics of Atonement. One goat was **sacrificed** unto death – as Jesus Christ was – and the live goat **bore** the iniquities of mankind away as Jesus Christ also does. Only Jesus **bears** our sins (John 1:29). In the Holy Scriptures, Satan is never said to *bear our sins*. Satan plays **no part** in the removal of our sin, nor can his binding expiate either our sins or his. Each person is ultimately culpable for his own sins – no one made him do it – not even Satan.

The Day of Atonement pictures two things Jesus does for us: He paid the price of sin for us; He removes the guilt of sin from us. God the Father declares us legally innocent of all charges. We are completely innocent and exonerated before the High Court of heaven. That is how clean Passover leaves a Christian, and, that is how clean the Day of Atonement will render mankind. It is Jesus who shows up in court as our Advocate and not Satan, our Adversary. Satan does not show up in this court – unless he is the prosecutor – the one doing the accusing (Revelation 12:10).

Romans 8:10-11 If Christ be in you, the body is **dead** because of sin; but the Spirit is **life** because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him [God the Father] that raised up Jesus from the **dead** dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make **alive**] your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.

## Who Bears Our Sin

Within the Plan of God, there can be no greater tenet than that which states that Jesus is our Savior who takes away the sin of the world (1 John 2:2). Jesus **bears** our sin (John 1:29). Sin and transgression are **borne** by Jesus Christ—represented by the second goat:

Leviticus 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the **live** goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, **putting them upon the head of the goat**, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

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Isaiah 53:6 ... the LORD has laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all. [This is an exact picture of **all sin and iniquity** being placed on Jesus' head—a Biblical witness that it is Jesus upon whom the LORD has laid the iniquity of us all.]

Only Jesus is able to **bear** our iniquity:

Leviticus 16:22 And the [azazel] **goat shall bear upon him** all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

They were in the wilderness of the exodus. The Church of God has debated this issue: Is it Jesus who bears upon Himself all our iniquities, or is it Satan who *bears our sins*? There is no Biblical witness or evidence at all that Satan *bears our iniquity*—because he does not – as much as we might want to blame him for our own sins! Jesus bears our sin. John the Baptist brings this to light:

John 1:29 ... Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away [Greek - **bears away**] the sin of the world.

Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered [in sacrifice] to **bear the sins** of many. [Jesus Christ was raised from death for our salvation.] John the Baptist recognized that Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah 53. These verses are specific to both Passover and Atonement.

Isaiah 53:11-12 He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for [Jesus the Messiah] **shall bear** [Hebrew – '*nasa*] their iniquities... because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and **He bare the sin of many**, and made intercession for the transgressors.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which **bears away the sin of the world**. [Bearing away sin is associated with the Day of Atonement, as well as Passover.]

Interestingly, the Orthodox Jewish Bible has this note at John 1:29 concerning the “Lamb of God” taking away the sins of the world: “i.e., as the sa'ir l'Azazel kapporah (Isaiah 53:6, 7, 12; Leviticus 16:22).” The translators understood that Christ was both the Lamb and the azazel goat!

1 Peter 2:24 [Jesus] Who His own self **bare our sins** in His own body on the tree, that we, being **dead** to sins, should **live** unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

There is absolutely no indication anywhere in the Holy Scriptures that Azazel is Satan or a demon. Book of Enoch is unscriptural and was totally rejected when the Canon of inspired Scripture was codified. The apocryphal “Book of Enoch,” is generally dated to a couple of centuries before Jesus Christ – and a thousand years after Leviticus was written. The “Book of Enoch” contradicts the rest of the Bible on multitudes of points, and yet sounds semi-plausible in others. Sadly, the Book of Enoch has had an ill effect on the whole Church of God – teaching that Azazel is Satan! Due to frequent repetition, this error came to be accepted as *truth* by many of the Church brethren. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia has under Hebrew Religion, “There can be little doubt that *Azazel* was an evil demon...”

However, when we follow the Scriptures, Azazel is fulfilled by Jesus Christ! One of Herbert W. Armstrong's favorite versions of the Bible was the James Moffatt Translation. The James Moffatt version contains some gross errors. Notice this rendition:

Leviticus 16:8 Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for Azazel the **demon**.

That part about the *demon* is **not in the Hebrew text at all!** That is not a translation nor an interpretation. It is out and out misleading fraudulence! God demands that foreign concepts like this one in the James Moffatt Translation not be added to His words (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18). The Book of Enoch is of the category of false literature known as pseudepigrapha—spurious false writings. It is not at all inspired by God. In fact, the Book of Enoch does not mention Azazel in the least – as does Leviticus. Instead the Book of Enoch mentions a similar looking name, 'ăzā'zyēl. Azazel and 'ăzā'zyēl are as different as Alabama and Abalone – and yet a major false doctrine of “*Satan bearing our iniquity*” has erroneously grown up in God’s Church.

Leviticus 16:5 Aaron shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel **two** kids of the goats for a **[single] sin offering**, and one ram for a burnt offering.

The two goats equal **ONE** sin offering. Sin must be atoned for by a spotless sacrifice. Two goats constitute to the one offering. The two goats were equal and unblemished. It is never said of Satan that he is unblemished for iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). Therefore, no offering to God could ever be represented by Satan. The live goat is made holy (Exodus 30:29). Satan is never made holy:

Deuteronomy 17:1 You shall not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, **wherein is blemish**, or any evil-favored-ness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

The blood of Jesus Christ is holy:

Hebrew 9:14 How much more shall the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit **offered** Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

This unique sacrifice in Leviticus 16 points to the reconciling Savior who both **dies** and **lives**. Old Testament Israel could not accomplish this sacrifice with a single goat – so God supplied two goats.

Leviticus 16:21-22 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the **live** goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away [let him depart] by the hand of a fit man [a man appointed] into the wilderness: And the goat **shall bear** upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

## **God Forgives and Forgets**

On the Day of Atonement, the two Goats of Leviticus 16 picture how the blood of Jesus Christ covers [forgiveness of] the sins of all repentant mankind during the Millennium and the Last Great Day. The record against mankind will be completely removed—even the remembrance of those sins will be completely **forgotten** by God.

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and **will not remember thy sins**.

Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [the ones that say you will die for your sins] that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.

## **Jesus Shall Rule**

Jesus will sit on the throne of David over the whole House of Israel. God revealed He would build David an eternal house - an indestructible and everlasting dynasty (2 Samuel 7:11-16). God's promise to David is sure - it is still valid today. He reiterated His covenant promise to Solomon:

2 Chronicles 7:18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.

It is always God's intent that we live our lives in imminent anticipation that the soon coming return of Christ is very near. And it is true because life is a flash—even if we live to a good old age. Our course comes to an end—often before everything important is accomplished (2 Peter 3:9, Luke 12:40). Jesus said that He was coming without unnecessary delay:

## **The Throne of David**

God made a great promise to the patriarch Jacob – who was renamed **Israel** (Genesis 32:28). God said that the entire earth would lie at his feet:

Genesis 28:13-15 ... I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your offspring; And your children shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in thy children shall all the **families of the earth be blessed**. And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

The British Empire of England's Elizabethan era began with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Her defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was one of the greatest military victories in English history. Queen Elizabeth I trusted in God and offered Him thanks.

There was an 18th-century revolution known as the American War of Independence (April 17, 1775 to September 3, 1783) between Great Britain and its Thirteen Colonies—the American Revolutionary War. In 1776 the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 41:51-52), birthright grandsons of Jacob, went their separate ways—in fulfillment of God's prophecy to Jacob:

Genesis 35:11 God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a **nation** and a company of **nations** shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

The United States, Manasseh, declared its independence from England, Ephraim. Canada remained loyal to its motherland. Today there is a monument—the Peace Arch—situated on the Canada–United States border with the inscriptions, “**Children of a common mother**,” [Asenath], and “Brethren dwelling together in unity.”

In 1606, King James of England authorized the establishment of the Virginia colony in Jamestown, Virginia, America. The Virginia Charter contains this noble desire: We greatly commend and graciously accept their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of His Divine Majesty, in propagating the Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God and may in time bring the infidels and savages living in those parts to human civility and a settled, government.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The Second British Empire (1783-1815) led to Britain's imperial century (1815–1914) ruled by Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1819-1901), the Empress of India, reigned over the **largest empire** in the history of the world. She was anointed with sacred oil to royal office as kings and priests of old have always been (Exodus 28:41, 1 Samuel 16:13). More than any other monarch, she ruled a **great nation and company of nations**. She often strolled in the Pantiles, a Georgian colonnade in the quaint town of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The Victorian era saw the United Kingdom at its peak. The Victorian era saw a period of industrial, cultural, political, scientific, and military dominance around the globe. The British Empire ruled territories greater than any other empire in history - a quarter of the land mass of the earth, and a third of its population. How did the British throne become so powerful? The answer to that question is a proof of prophecy, and it is remarkably simple.

Few people understand where the British peoples came from. After Israel was carried away captive by the Assyrians they migrated throughout Europe. The ancient nation of Israel lost its home in the Promised Land and the knowledge of their identity – and were carried away into captivity because of their **Sabbath breaking and idolatry**. God said:

Ezekiel 20:16, 20, 24 [Israel] despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols... Keep my Sabbaths holy; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God... Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had **polluted my Sabbaths**, and their eyes were after their **fathers' idols**.

### **Israel Scattered**

Ezekiel 36:17-19 ...When the House of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: ...Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for ...their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I **scattered them among the heathen**, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

The twelve tribes of Israel were scattered toward Western Europe. Reuben settled in France, Dan inhabited Ireland, etc. Ephraim colonized the British Isles with a contingent of Judah and Levi (The royal scepter did not depart from Judah (Genesis 49:10). Ephraim (with Levi, Simeon and Manasseh) also colonized much of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Manasseh came to the United States, also with a contingent of Judah. There are more Jews [Judah] in New York City than in the modern State of Israel. Zebulun migrated to the low countries like Holland in the Netherlands; Gad to Switzerland and Luxembourg; Asher to Belgium. The tribe of Issachar traveled to Finland, Asher, Naphtali, Benjamin moved far to the Northwest, Norway and Iceland; and Naphtali inhabited Sweden.

Those nations that bless Modern Israel will be blessed (not the Jews in the State of Israel) but affiliation with the USA and Britain bring tremendous blessings.

### **Caucasians**

The ancient nation of Israel was banished from their home in the Promised Land and carried away by ancient Assyria into captivity because of their **Sabbath breaking and idolatry**. God punished His people Israel by allowing them to be conquered and vanquished. After the life of Solomon, King Jeroboam divided Israel when he contrived a festival similar to the Feast of Tabernacles – except in the eighth month rather than God's ordained Feast in the seventh month. Jeroboam also introduced calf worship and idolatry causing Israel to sin a great sin (1 Kings 12:32-33).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

2 Kings 17:6, 23 In the ninth year of Hoshea [last king of Israel], the king of Assyria [Shalmaneser] captured Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and resettled them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes [Media – a region of north-western Iran]... Until the LORD banished Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land **to Assyria** unto this day.

The Northern ten tribes of Israel turned away from the Lord their God. The tribe of Judah was in the southern part of the kingdom with the Levites and some Benjamites. After repeated warnings by God, the northern ten tribes of Israel were carried away — out of their country — into captivity and exile.

2 Kings 17:18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the **tribe of Judah only**. [Only Judah remained in the Promised Land.]

Why are the English-speaking peoples of Europe, Canada, North America, South Africa and New Zealand called **Caucasians**? Why is the rate of circumcision (Genesis 17:10) so high among Caucasians – as in the United States, South Africa, the Yukon and Britain? Why are so many white people called Caucasians? It is because when their point of origin is traced back it seems to emanate at the small mountainous region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea that comprises Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan—and the **Caucasus Mountains**. Though today, overwhelming evidence points clearly to the fact that Caucasians did not originate in the Caucasus Mountains, but merely passed through that narrow area north of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers—having come originally from the Promised Land. The evidence is prodigious and incontrovertible that modern Israelites are Caucasians, and vice versa in many cases. The migrating Israelites passed through the deep Darial Gorge—an eight-mile-long granite river canyon on the border between Russia and Georgia as they traveled from Assyria to their new home in Northwestern Europe. The Darial Gorge route lies between Parthia to the south and Scythia to the north. It is easy to find on Google Earth – which belies how tortuous the trek was for the Israelites of the captivity circa 721-718 BC.

The institutions of higher learning are willingly ignorant of anything and everything having to do with God and Israel—they do not want to know (2 Peter 3:3-5; Hosea 4:6). Jesus knew very well where the *diaspora*—the twelve tribes of Israel had journeyed to the British Isles and elsewhere (John 7:35; Amos 9:9; James 1:1). He referred to them in this way when He sent forth His apostles:

Matthew 10:5-6 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the **lost sheep** of the House of Israel.

Yes, they were even lost to themselves having abandoned God's way, their own identity, and where they were from. Jeremiah was instrumental in reestablishing David's throne, and visited Israel in Ireland. Later, Jesus visited these Israelitish descendants in England with His uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, who had business in England. Through Jeremiah God spoke of a yet future day when the lost sheep of Israel would seeking the LORD their God and asking the way to Zion (Jeremiah 50:4-5):

Jeremiah 50:6 My people hath been **lost sheep**: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have **forgotten** their resting-place.

“Manasseh” means forgetful. They have forgotten their identity and who they are. They have forgotten their part in God’s covenant promise to Abraham. They have forgotten their God. Though they have forgotten their heritage God has not forgotten where He has scattered His people (Amos 9:9). God has also not forgotten His promises to Abraham. This concept is described in great detail in other writings but suffice it to say that God spoke of a time period of punishment for 2,520 years wherein His birthright promises would be withheld from the Israelitish peoples before they would finally be fulfilled and come to fruition. [Read the book, *The United States and Britain In Prophecy* by Herbert W. Armstrong.]

## **Ten Lost Tribes**

The “**Ten lost tribes of Israel**” are not lost at all. Their migration is one of those historical facts that has been swept under the rug because intellectuals do not wish to recognize God’s hand in world events today. God is faithful. He keeps His promises – and on time. We today, the United States and Britain, are recipients of the fantastic blessings that God promised to Abraham. The wealth, resources, power and blessings have made it possible for God’s Bible and Gospel message to go to all the world. And, for a brief moment in time the United States and Britain were sitting on top of that world. In 1942, even during World War II, Winston Spencer Churchill realized that indeed the **sun had begun to set** on the Kingdom of Great Britain when he said, “We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” Having begun in 1768, exactly two centuries earlier, in 1968 the British Colonial Office in London overseeing the colonies of the British Empire was shut down – merging into the Foreign Office which is little more than a network of embassies and consulates. The British Empire officially came to a close. All of this took place according to the time table of God’s Plan in order to fulfill God’s promises to Abraham – and make it possible for the end-time Gospel to go to all the world.

## **Louisiana Purchase**

What could the Louisiana Purchase possibly have to do with **the Church Age**? Making the Gospel to the world possible: (fulfillment of promise to Abraham). At the same time that the British Empire was expanding and experiencing its overwhelming heyday – the USA was thriving and developing immensely, as well. It is no coincidence that President Thomas Jefferson orchestrated the largest territorial acquisition in American history by far. The Louisiana Purchase was the procurement of the vast Louisiana territory by the United States from France in 1803. Stretching from the Gulf of Mexico in the south well into Canada in the north, and from the Mississippi River in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west, the territory purchased contained all of present-day Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, parts of Minnesota, most of North Dakota, nearly all of South Dakota, northeastern New Mexico, portions of Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado, and parts of the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. France’s Napoleon Bonaparte sold Louisiana to the United States. France transferred authority over the region to the United States— doubling the size of the country! To this day, Napoléonic Code is the basis of jurisprudence in the State of Louisiana. Incredibly, Thomas Jefferson, the architect of the Louisiana Purchase – one of our nation’s greatest blessings realized the tentative and transient nature of this Divine bestowal when he said, “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever.”

## **Historic Blessing in the Making**

God's hand was in this monumental land accusation long before Thomas Jefferson was born. The French had established settlements in French Louisiana beginning in the 17th century. Louis XV of France secretly proposed to his cousin Charles III of Spain that France give Louisiana to Spain in the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Spain acquired the *Luciana* territory from France, which in turn named it *La Louisiane* in honor of King Louis XIV in 1682. In 1800 and 1801 respectively, the *Louisiane* territory was retroceded to France, under the terms of the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso and the Treaty of Aranjuez. On November 30, 1803, Spanish officials formally conveyed the colonial lands and their administration to France. Less than one month later France turned over New Orleans, the historic colonial capital, to the United States on December 20, 1803. The Louisiana Purchase was signed in New Orleans inside the Cabildo in the historic French Quarter adjacent to the St. Louis Cathedral at Jackson Square. Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase transfer in 1803 finalized the United States' acquisition of the Louisiana Territory and practically doubled the size of the fledgling United States.

## **Sand, Stars and Dust**

Genesis 15:5 The [LORD] brought [Abram] forth abroad, and said, Look up now toward heaven, and **count the stars**, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

The LORD told Jacob that he would be the father of the innumerable dispersed Children of Israel—the *diaspora*—who would colonize foreign lands (James 1:1):

Genesis 28:13-14 ...I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou lie, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the **dust** of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 22:16-18 By myself have I sworn, said the LORD, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the **stars** of the heaven, and as the **sand** which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be **blessed**; because thou hast **obeyed** my voice.

Because Abraham was **obedient** to God, Britain became the greatest **nation and company of nations** to rule the world (Genesis 26:5). Their grandeur was spectacular. God promised not only great physical blessings to Abraham's descendants, but spiritual blessings through Christ as well.

Paul confirmed that God's promises included spiritual blessings when he clarified that the Messiah would be of Abraham's lineage because of his obedience.

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curses thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 17:6-7 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Genesis 17:15-16 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her and give you a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

God renamed Jacob, Israel, meaning, 'A Prince of God.' Israel fathered 12 sons - the children of Israel. The world is hopelessly confused over this simple matter. They commonly make the mistake of assuming that all Israelites are Jews. Yes, all Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. Judah was one of twelve brothers—children of Israel. This single mistake brings about a terrible misinterpretation of prophecy. In Prophecy, the United States, England and the English-speaking nations of the world are Israel. But the modern State of Israel is the world's only Jewish state.

### **Birthright and Scepter of Rulership**

The birthright included a 'double portion' of lands and possessions passed down from the father to the eldest son. The blessings promised by God to Abraham were successively passed down to his son, Isaac and then to his son, Jacob. There was no welfare system in those days. The eldest son received more because the family responsibilities fell chiefly at his feet as well like the care of the elderly and infirmed.

God's promise to Abraham proceeded down through Jacob to the twelve tribes of Israel, and through Israel's son Joseph, to Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh who received the unconditional **birthright promise** of national greatness (Genesis 48). The tribe of Judah, the Jews, is not in possession of the **birthright** blessings and destiny that belongs to the sons of Joseph. Instead, Judah serves as the tribe which retains the **Scepter Rule**, bearing rule over the birthright nations:

Psalms 78:67-68 God refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim [includes Manasseh]: But chose the tribe of **Judah**, the mount Zion which He loved.

Most people incorrectly assign to the modern Jews that which is ascribed to all Israel and vice versa. But, Judah is **only one** of the twelve sons of Jacob, and only one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The world is blinded to the fact that God's promises of world power and abundant riches to Abraham, and through Joseph's sons, are being fulfilled in our day:

Genesis 49:22-26 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall... Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Jacob foretold that his son **Judah**, not Ephraim and Manasseh, would receive **The Staff of Rulership** – the scepter, until Shiloh comes, meaning the **Messiah**, Jesus Christ.

Genesis 49:10 The **scepter** shall **not depart from Judah**, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

The world is also blinded to the fact that the scepter shall not depart from Judah—meaning that even now there remains a throne of Judah—and it will remain until the return of Jesus Christ! Incredible as that may seem, Jesus will soon sit on Britain's very throne ruling the entire world! It is in England today, but will soon be removed to Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The ruling throne will not depart from Judah until the Messiah returns in the last days. The Scriptures are clear in stating that a reigning monarch of Jewish descent of the line of David has ruled in every generation since the reign of King David.

Isaiah 24:23 ...The LORD of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

## **Jeremiah's Assignment**

Roughly 100 years after Israel went into **Assyrian captivity**, God gave the Prophet Jeremiah an assignment like none before or after him. In order for God's covenant promises to Abraham to remain intact, the nation of Israel would have to survive somewhere outside of the Promised Land. God put Jeremiah in charge of bringing David's dynastic throne-rule at Jerusalem to an end, and reestablishing it in a new location (Jeremiah 1:10). The House of Israel, headed by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (who possessed the birthright), flourished in due time. There is a long Biblical record of how David's throne came to be in England—a part of modern Israel. (The reader may search Church of God literature for this fascinating history.) **God's hand is ever present** in the affairs of nations and individuals. God's promises to Abraham were reiterated to his grandson Jacob:

Genesis 35:11 God said unto Jacob, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; **a nation and a company of nations** shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

## **The Round Trip**

The Prophet Jeremiah foretold that David was promised by God that one of his offspring would always and forever rule over His people Israel (1 Chronicles 17:10-14). That does not mean that the throne would have to remain in Jerusalem. In fact, Jeremiah also prophesied that David's throne would move around a bit.

Jeremiah 33:17 Thus says the LORD; David shall **never** want a man to sit upon the throne of the House of Israel (Jeremiah 33:20-22).

In God's own words He tells us that He established an everlasting Davidic dynasty – and that there will always be someone of David's line ruling Israel (2 Chronicles 7:18).

Psalms 89:3-4 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up **thy throne to all generations**.

God established His covenant promise throne with Solomon, David's son, adding that Solomon would build the Temple for the LORD's name (2 Samuel 7:13). In that way, the LORD established David's dynasty and kingdom. The Lord told King David that through Solomon his dynasty and kingdom would be established forever:

2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Where is David's dynasty and kingdom today? World history has been so varied and altered throughout the centuries – is it even possible to find that throne now? Israel's United Kingdom under David and Solomon soon began to shatter, and because of Sabbath breaking and idolatry, the ten northern tribes of Israel were carried into captivity from 721-718 BC.

The Prophet Ezekiel explained that because Israel had fallen to Assyria and carried away out of the Promised Land into captivity, there had to be an **overturning** of the location of the throne of Israel (Ezekiel 21:24-27). In fact, he prophesied that the Lord GOD would overturn it three times:

Ezekiel 21:27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him [Jesus Christ the Messiah].

We see that the throne will be returned to Jerusalem when Christ returns. But, where has the scepter, the staff of rulership, been all these ensuing years. We find that it was overturned by Jeremiah, first from Jerusalem to Ireland. From Ireland it was overturned to Scotland, and then finally it was overturned to England – where it remains until this day. And, of course Jesus Christ will complete the **round trip** when He establishes His throne in Mount Zion at Jerusalem. Then:

Isaiah 2:3 Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Joel 3:17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God **dwelling in Zion**, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

### **The Throne of the King and Queen of England**

It is an incredible thing in the Plan of God that the very throne of Jesus Christ is surviving on the earth today! Few know of this oath. Jesus swore:

Psalms 89:34-37 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and **His throne** as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.

Jesus Christ will take His rightful throne and rule the nations on earth as King of Kings and continue His office as High Priest. The kingdoms and nations of this evil world will be subdued and Jesus will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 17:14).

Revelation 11:15 ... The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

Daniel 2:44 In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Jesus Christ will sit upon the throne of His father David with His resurrected saints and we will reign and rule with Him as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6; 3:21; 5:10).

Luke 1:32-33 He [Jesus] shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him **the throne of his father David**. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

## **Queen Victoria and Thomas Jefferson**

Abraham lived circa 2,000 BC. The number of years from the time Abraham lived until the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will be approximately 4,000 years. The birthright blessings that God promised to Abraham were suspended when Israel sinned and was banished from the Promised Land and carried into captivity by the Assyrians from 721-718 BC. The promises were put on hold for 2,520 years before their realization in Ephraim and Manasseh—England and the United States—beginning in the early 1800s AD. To a great extent, the British and American peoples are still enjoying the fruits of God's blessings which He bestowed on these descendants of Abraham. We have won World Wars and become the richest and most powerful nations the world has ever witnessed. With England heavily embroiled in war against Germany and now Japan as a result of the attack against allied United States at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Winston Churchill declared before the United States Congress on December 26, 1941:

“He must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below of which we have the honor to be the faithful servants.”

The most extraordinary realization for some people is the fact of **God's continuous** involvement in world affairs, not only in bringing about the fulfillment of His covenant promises, but for the coordination of both the **blessings** and **punishments** working out so precisely to bring us to the place we are today. Thousands of years of overlapping prophecies have come together accurately just as God said they would. For that fulfillment of prophecy to have happened in the exacting and precise way it has, shows indisputably God's unceasing **active hand** on the world scene – down to each and every individual along the way! The histories of nations and continents were written in advance—and they have come to pass. The promised blessings are so clear in the Bible, and yet so few have understood these words – and fewer yet have believed what God said. When Abraham's servant found a wife for his son, Isaac, her family blessed her and sent Rebecca on her way with this blessing:

Genesis 24:51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the **LORD has spoken**.

It is phenomenal how these kinfolk of Abraham, 4,000 years ago, utilized modern concepts of today's world such as populations in the 'billions,' and strategic **sea gates** critical to shipping lanes, defense, and national commerce.

Genesis 24:59-60 They sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, You are our sister, be thou the mother of **thousands of millions**, and let thy seed [children] possess **the gate** of those which hate them.

Those who do not accept that English Royalty are the rightful descendants of King David's throne have not scrutinized their bloodline, pedigree or coronation rituals.

## **Royal Coronation Ceremony**

The Coronation Ceremony of the King or Queen of the United Kingdom contains remarkable language—evidence of the Plan of God in action:

The Archbishop asks: “Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon [Sri Lanka], and of your Possessions and other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, according to their respective laws and customs?”

In her capacity as queen of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth II is: “Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.”

An excerpt of: The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Tuesday, the second day of June, 1953. After the Queen is anointed the Archbishop shall say:

“LET US PRAY. O Lord and heavenly Father, the exalter of the humble and the strength of thy chosen, who by anointing with Oil didst of old make and consecrate kings, priests, and prophets, **to teach and govern thy people Israel**: Bless and sanctify thy chosen servant ELIZABETH, who by our office and ministry is now to be anointed with this Oil...”

It is important in the Plan of God to understand how we have gotten to where we are today in the world order. Our forefathers in England knew their ancestry and heritage well. Few realize today that England’s royalty sits on the very throne of **King David**.

## **Gone with the Wind**

Up until WWII, the United States and Britain controlled **every** major **sea-gate** and maritime trading **port** in the world. But like the Clipper Ship, Man-o-War, Galleon, Privateer, Frigate and Merchant Trader that once plied the seven seas, they are now **gone with the wind**. God had promised Abraham that his direct descendants would control the world’s sea-gates. Britain brought the English language, civilization, trade and commerce, culture, science and technology to the entire globe—the **sun never set** on the British Empire.

Genesis 22:17 In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall **possess the sea-gates** [strongholds] of his enemies.

The United States and Britain controlled all of the strategic sea-gates and waterways, such as the Panama Canal (dug by the United States), Singapore (major port established by Britain on the Far East trade route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea), Hong Kong (a rich trade center), English Channel, Suez Canal (built by the French), the Bosphorus and the Straits of Gibraltar controlling shipping at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope, Australia, New Zealand, Straits of Magellan... which are vital to strategic global trade, commerce and defense.

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Because of their rejection of **God and His Law**, the United States and Britain have been systematically stripped of most nearly every important sea-gate and port around the world. The now-defunct British Empire and America's declining hegemony is God's warning punishment for disobedience:

Leviticus 26:14-21 If ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these Commandments... I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall **reign over you**; and ye shall flee when none pursues you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will **break the pride of your power**; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.

America and Britain's ongoing decline today is not the first time that God has carried through on His warning to strip Israel of their blessings. Though God brought severe punishment for disobedience upon ancient Israel, His promises to Abraham were sure. God knew in advance how He would bestow His blessings on modern Israel. That is why we can know that His Plan for all mankind is certain.

### **Seventh Trumpet**

Revelation 15:4 You are holy Lord, and all nations shall come and worship before you.

The seventh trumpet blast heralds the pouring out of the seven last plagues. The seven angels receive seven golden vials full of **the wrath of God**, who lives for ever and ever (Revelation 15 and 16). God completes His wrath upon a rebellious and disobedient mankind. All of the armies of the world will gather at Armageddon and wage war against Jesus Christ. The armies will be vanquished and Christ will be victorious over the angry nations who fight against Him (Revelation 11:18-19).

Then, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church, will reign and rule in the Kingdom of God over this entire earth for a thousand years. The inhabitants of this Kingdom will be the surviving remnant of the Tribulation. They will each be called to conversion. Their primary task will be to restore the earth in its original Garden of Eden state in preparation for the great resurrection of all who have ever lived.

### **King of kings**

Jesus will be King and rule in the Millennium and His saints will be there with Him. Jesus is not yet ruling the kingdoms of this world (John 18:36).

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection:... they [the resurrected saints] shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall **reign with Him** a thousand years. (Revelation 1:6)

Before that can happen, Satan must be bound. When will Jesus become King of kings, and when will Satan be bound? For Jesus to begin His reign, it is necessary that Satan be vanquished, subjugated and bound – and no longer be the ruler over this world. Right now, Satan has the power and authority to rule over the world. Jesus told His disciples:

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John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the **prince** of this world be cast out. (John 14:30; John 16:11)

But, Jesus first coming two thousand years ago it was not the correct time to destroy and replace Satan. Satan is not the King of this world, but **prince**. That means that he is subject to higher authority. Namely – God’s authority. When He was on earth, Jesus knew and understood that Satan possessed authority over the world – and Satan knew it as well:

Luke 4:5-6 The devil, taking [Jesus] up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power [authority] will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

That power, authority and glory was Satan’s to give to whomsoever he would give it. But, it is not within the Plan of God for Jesus to receive **anything** from the hand of Satan. Jesus overcame Satan and qualified to rule. God the Father has anointed Jesus Christ Messiah to be King of kings (Acts 10:38, 42; Revelation 2:27).

Matthew 4:10-11 Jesus said unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall you serve. Then the devil left Him...

Paul explained that Jesus would die before He took any action to replace Satan:

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus also Himself likewise took part of the same [flesh and blood]; that **through death** [the death of Christ] He might **destroy him** that had the power of death, that is, **the devil**.

## **Satan Bound**

Satan has the power of death. We know that Satan “bruised Jesus’ heel” at His crucifixion. But through the **resurrection**, Jesus received the authority to crush Satan’s head (Genesis 3:15). When that takes place, Satan will no longer be prince of anything. When will Satan be bound for the duration of the 1,000-year Millennium? When will Jesus Christ begin to reign and rule as King of kings? Satan will be bound at the implementation and realization of the **Day of Atonement** when the entire world will finally be qualified and entitled to be reconciled to God the Father. Scriptural evidence is that Satan will be bound at the Day of Atonement when all mankind will be reconciled to God.

It was just a short while before Jesus’ 30th birthday when He was baptized in the fall of 26 AD (Mark 1:9; Luke 3:23). This is significant because Jesus began His forty days and nights of fasting – culminating on the Day of Atonement – immediately after being baptized.

Matthew 3:16 Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him:

Matthew 4:1-3 **Then** was Jesus led up **of the Spirit** into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And having fasted **forty days and forty nights**, He was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Jesus had not yet **overcome** Satan – and would have to be exceedingly spiritually strong to do so. In preparation for His monumental challenge, Jesus was propelled into rigorous fasting and prayer in the wilderness in order to be intimately close to His Father.

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Mark 1:12-13 And, **immediately** the Spirit **drove** Jesus into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, **tempted of Satan**; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.

Jesus was spiritually prepared to take-on Satan. Satan's temptations were exceedingly powerful and horrendous. In full faith of His Father's protection, Jesus willingly faced an awful tête-à-tête with the Adversary.

Jesus withstood Satan's attacks (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:12). After the climactic battle, Jesus returned to Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. When John the Baptist saw Jesus returning after the Day of **Atonement** he announced, "Behold the Lamb of God, who bears away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 35). John the Baptist understood that Jesus was the Messiah by whom **atonement** would be made for the sins of mankind (Leviticus 16:22).

The annual Holy Days carry great significance with regard to the **Plan of God**. There are no coincidences in the Bible. God the Father and Jesus Christ perform meaningful actions on the Feast Days that point directly to the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. In the same way that Jesus cloaked the meaning of parables from the public, significant happenings on the **Day of Atonement** are not readily available to the world (Matthew 13:13-15). God deliberately follows His Plan to a T on His Holy Days – or better yet, down to very last jot and tittle (Matthew 5:18).

Jesus dealt with Satan at the completion of His forty days and forty nights of **fasting** as the Day of Atonement came to a close. That defeat of Satan by Jesus would be the first of the three times that Satan would be bruised/crushed by Jesus (Genesis 3:15).

Satan will be **bound** for a thousand years on the **Day of Atonement** just prior to the start of the Millennium. Once Satan is bound, God's Kingdom of peace may be formally established on earth. That binding of Satan will be the second time that Jesus overcomes over him (Revelation 20:2). Then, the final time that Jesus will overcome Satan is when Satan is dispatched forever! All three of Satan's defeats occur on the Day of Atonement.

Revelation 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night **forever and ever**.

Because Jesus has not yet removed Satan as ruler of the earth he continues to rule this earth. Satan cannot be overcome without God's help. Satan is still active – not bound yet – until the end of the tribulation when the two witnesses complete their work (Revelation 11:7). But then, after three and a half days the two witnesses are resurrected in the first resurrection (Revelation 11:11). That first resurrection marks the juncture at which Satan is bound and Jesus begins to rule! Satan's kingdom will be no more (Matthew 12:26).

Revelation 11:15, 17 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of this world** are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever... We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who are, and was, and are to come; because you have taken to you your great power, and have **reigned**.

Jesus Christ begins reigning when the Two Witnesses are resurrected and Satan is cast down. Who is the accuser of our brethren? It is none other than the prince of this world:

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Revelation 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the **accuser of our brethren is cast down** [Satan], which accused them before our God day and night.

Satan is cast down immediately after the marriage supper of Revelation 19:9. After that, Jesus will unleash His indignation against all wickedness with the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He [Jesus Christ] that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies [Saints who have fought the good fight] which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and **He shall rule** them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**.

Jesus will reign as King of kings in the Millennium with His saints who will be kings and priests. That means that we will be involved in civil and religious service. Jesus will be King and rule in the Millennium – and we will too.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection:... they [the resurrected saints] shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 1:6)

The Feast of Trumpets pictures a most significant event in the Plan of God—Christ's victorious return. It is the dramatic second coming of Jesus Christ in supreme power over all the earth. When Jesus begins reigning as **King of kings**, we hear no more of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, until he is released after the Millennium. With Satan bound – deception ceases for 1,000 years. Satan is bound in preparation for the entire world to be reconciled to God the Father—beginning at the Day of Atonement.

## **Kingdom of God Established Over all the Earth**

Matthew 6:10; Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the **Kingdoms of our Lord** and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

The seventh clearly defined and separated **period** in the Plan of God is that of the one-thousand-year Millennial reign of Christ with His saints over the Kingdom of God on earth.

Revelation 20:4-6 I saw thrones, and [the resurrected saints] sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the **thousand years** were finished... Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

## **The Messianic Age**

The covenant promises to Abraham will come to their full when the Kingdom of God is established over all the earth. With God's Spirit being poured out on all, all will be the spiritual children of Abraham—fulfilling the Covenant promises. The birthright blessings of populations, wealth and prosperity that came so bountifully beginning in the early 1800s to America and Britain were only a token of the ultimate **spiritual** fulfillment of the covenant promises God made to Abraham and his descendants. All we have to do is look at history and look all around the earth to see that God's promises to Abraham are not yet complete. But, they will be fulfilled in the Millennial age when the entire earth will be restored to an Eden-like Garden of paradise.

## **Eden-Like Earth**

In the one-thousand-year millennium, Jesus Christ will be establishing His Father's Kingdom over all the earth. The entire physical earth will be re-created exactly as the original Garden of Eden was for Adam and Eve. There will be peace, justice, hope, pureness, happiness, law/rules of protection, reconciliation.

Isaiah 60:5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because **the abundance of the sea shall be converted** unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

Ezekiel 36:34 The desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

Ezekiel 36:35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is **become like the Garden of Eden**; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

Isaiah 41:15 Behold, I will make thee a **new sharp threshing instrument** having teeth: thou shalt thresh the **mountains**, and beat them small, and shalt make the **hills as chaff**.

Isaiah 41:16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

## **Inherit the Kingdom**

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the Kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall **not inherit the Kingdom** of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall **inherit the Kingdom** of God.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood **cannot inherit the Kingdom** of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

Galatians 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall **not inherit the Kingdom** of God.

## **Nebuchadnezzar's Image**

During such times of tumult and upheaval as these are, we who have been called by God begin looking for events to start lining up with what we understand of prophecy about the time of the end, and it is right and good for us to do so. Let's take another look at what God has revealed about the **Final Beast Empire**. What are we to learn from the dreams and visions God has sent?

Daniel 12:4 You, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Hopefully, knowledge shall be increased refers to a better understanding of the Plan of God. But, at the same time we are seeing mass refugee and illegal immigrant migrations that threaten the stability of national societies and economies. Does that count for "many shall run to and fro?" The unprecedented eruption of personal computers and the World Wide Web has come about recently. Does that count for "knowledge shall be increased?" What special significance does the beast have to do with the **saints** in the last day? We need to know – these things are in the Word of God. Daniel showed that God's Kingdom will come to this earth.

Daniel 2:28 There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

The saints can know what Daniel saw – because it was sealed up until now – "closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Daniel 2 reveals that the first gentile empire that ruled over the holy land was Babylon. Assyria, before that, did not rule over the Promised Land. They were left out of Nebuchadnezzar's dream – even though they had conquered Israel and carried away the ten northern tribes of Israel.

The Beast of Revelation has everything to do with world empires. The Final Beast Empire is also represented as "Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5). When looking for the appearance of the Final Beast, the Church of God has watched for the rise of a powerful political and military figure in Europe. Will he have ties to the Roman Empire which will be rising again? Will he be allied with the Roman Catholic Church? We see that scenario in the Book of Daniel and Revelation. We have to be careful – because we have been wrong before. What if we have overlooked something? What if new information is coming to light? How would that affect what we should be watching for? Nebuchadnezzar's dream is told by Daniel in Daniel 2:

Daniel 2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Daniel 2:23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

Daniel 2:28 There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets.

Daniel 2 represents the great world-ruling kingdoms with the first starting in Daniel's time. Let us be careful because nowhere does Daniel 2 mention "**Four**" kingdoms. There are other characteristics that we will look at with regard to the end-time beast... – it is said to have great iron teeth; it devours the whole earth, it tramples down (that is what feet do) and breaks in pieces.

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Daniel 2:31 Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great [metallic] image. This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was awesome!

Daniel 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his chest and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of bronze,

Daniel 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of ceramic clay. [The legs and feet are comprised of different materials – (1) iron, and (2) an amalgamation of iron and ceramic clay]

So we see that each section of the body consists of a different material. Five in all. Notice that the characteristic of the Final Beast Empire before Christ's return is that it is part iron and part ceramic clay.

Each different section and element together represents a subsequent kingdom or empire. Then, Jesus Christ returns and destroys the Final Beast Empire!!! Daniel gets ahead of the story here and gives us the final ending when Jesus conquers all and sets up the Kingdom of God – and then Daniel will get back to interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel 2:34 Thou [Nebuchadnezzar] saw till that a Stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and ceramic clay, and brake them to pieces.

Daniel 2:35 Then was the (1) iron, the (2) ceramic clay, the (3) bronze, the (4) silver, and the (5) gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the Stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Verse thirty-five is a prophecy of Jesus Christ obliterating the Final Beast Empire, and all that has gone before—and establishing the Kingdom of God over all the earth. The Stone of verse thirty-five represents Jesus the Messiah, who will establish His Father's Kingdom over the earth and will subjugate all other authorities.

Genesis 49:24 calls the Messiah the "Stone of Israel," and it is in the prophetic context of God strengthening the peoples of Joseph in the "last days."

Psalms 118:22 likewise prophesies, "The Stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."

Isaiah 8:14 says "He will be as a sanctuary, but a Stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

The fact that the stone was "cut out without hands" illustrates that no human effort was involved—it was solely an act of God. The divine Stone strikes the image upon the feet of iron and ceramic clay, which are **broken into pieces** (Daniel 2:34). [stamp something very small, such as into powder or dust]

Exodus 32:20 [Moses] took the [golden] calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and **ground it to powder**.

This shows that at His return, Jesus is going to grind the kingdoms of this earth to powder. Thus, complete destruction of the image—and what it represents—is pictured.

The five stages and materials in Nebuchadnezzar's image represent kingdoms, or empires, as we see in the interpretation that God gave to Daniel. Worldly 'eschatology' [big word meaning the study of end-time prophecy] sees only **four** elements – not five – because they have come to the conclusion that Daniel 7 – which has **four** beasts, is another version of Daniel 2 – the same dream. It is not.

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Daniel 7:3 And **four** great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream is separate and different from Daniel's dream.

Daniel 2:36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. [It is God's interpretation]

And so Daniel explains Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian or Chaldean Empire (625-538 B.C.) and a succession of world empires (ruling over the Promised Land) depicted by different metals composing the giant image.

Daniel 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

Daniel 2:38 And where-so-ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou [Nebuchadnezzar] art this head of gold.

Gold is the most noble of all the elements. Daniel, in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, tells him that he is represented by the head of gold, which defines the first of the **five stages** of his dream, and its associated material component—head of gold.

God decreed that Jerusalem be taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and He further decreed that Babylon would be the dominant empire on earth—for as long as He willed it.

According to Josephus, Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar ruled over Egypt, Syria, modern Lebanon, Spain, southeast Europe, India, Arabia, and all of North Africa, in addition to the Holy Land in Palestine, and thus his conquests surpassed all that of the Assyrians, Chaldeans and those Babylonian kings who lived and reigned before him.

Only those gentile powers which controlled Jerusalem are shown in Nebuchadnezzar's dream—right up to Jesus Christ who's right it is to rule from Jerusalem.

In short, the image in the dream is a representation of the "times of the Gentiles," which is God's punishment that will last until the Stone smashes them (Daniel 2:34), and the entire system of Gentile dominion is blown away like chaff.

Though Nebuchadnezzar's empire was of great extent, it was not of long duration, ending during the life of his grandson Belshazzar—prophesied in Jeremiah 27:7.

That gold head was the first empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel 2:39 And after thee shall arise another [The second kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream] kingdom inferior to thee.

The metal composition of Nebuchadnezzar's image becomes less valuable as we move from the head downward. But, even as the relative value of the kingdoms decrease, the relative strength of the metal increases. As time proceeds through history, the splendor decreases but the ability to wage war and terrorize the world increases. Nebuchadnezzar—the head of gold—was an absolute ruler whose word was law.

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However, during the time period of the chest and arms of silver, Darius the Mede did not have the same absolute reign that the Babylonian king had. For instance, he lacked the ability to free Daniel from the lion's den because he was constrained by a Medo-Persian law, which once written, could not be changed (Daniel 6:8). This Medo-Persian empire also ruled over Jerusalem.

That chest and arms of silver was the second empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel 2:39 ...And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. [The third kingdom is numbered – but not all of them are numbered.]

Then comes Greece—the belly and thighs of bronze—was an aristocracy based on individual merit rather than birth. Greece was even less despotic (in terms of absolute rule), yet it conquered more territory than its predecessors. Most significantly, Alexander the Great conquered the known world—including Jerusalem in 332 BC.

That belly and thighs of bronze was the third empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be hard as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and crushes all things: and as iron that smashes all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

That is describing the Roman Empire, the government of Rome—the legs of iron—it was largely dependent upon popular choice, with the emperor being elected by the military. The entire area previously ruled by Greece was conquered by the Romans, and they certainly broke in pieces, bruised, and subdued all things.

The legs of iron—Rome is the fourth empire, and fourth material (iron) out of the five previously counted.

Roman Emperor Pompey took over much of the Middle East, including Israel, in approximately 63 BC. The Roman Empire, while not as noble or splendid as the ones it succeeded, was obviously stronger in terms of military might than all the others. Roman rule prevailed over Jerusalem – even when Jesus was there.

Those legs of iron were the fourth empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Now, we come to the **fifth** empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream—with a further degrading of the elements that represent it—the feet, and the fifth materials, the iron and the ceramic clay.

This **fifth** empire is the coming Final Beast Empire that Jesus will destroy at His coming. Is it made of two parts – two feet and ten toes.

Daniel 2:41 And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the hardness of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

Verse 41 is frequently seen as a further expounding of the fourth kingdom of verse 40, but notice that a definite shift has taken place. Verse 41 provides a contrast, rather than a clarification: "...the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of iron shall be in it..."

This is clearly different from the kingdom that was "hard as iron". Verses 40 and 41 are describing two different empires.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Even though this last part of Nebuchadnezzar's image contains iron—the fourth material; the symbol of hardness—there is no reference to it “breaking in pieces” and “bruising” in the same way that the Roman Empire did during the fourth empire.

The emphasis is on the divided nature of this last empire. It is one that has elements of hardness and might, and is to be feared in its own way, yet it does not have the unity, nobility, or quality of the previous empires. There is not the same discipline or honor. There is not the same cohesion of leadership. It is an unnatural amalgamation.

There are five regions of the image, and five materials, but verse 41 does not directly state that there is a fifth kingdom. The second kingdom is not numbered – but it is clearly there. Because verse 41 has the word “kingdom,” but not the word “fifth,” **many** have assumed that it is still talking about the fourth kingdom.

But it is clearly different from the fourth kingdom; it is a fifth region, and it contains the fifth material of ceramic clay, even though the word “**fifth**” does not appear in its description.

Instead, it begins with “whereas you saw the feet and toes...” However, because of the counting we have done, we could just as easily paraphrase this, “Whereas you saw the fifth part of the image, containing the fifth material—the kingdom shall be divided...”

Daniel 2:42 And as the toes of the feet were a portion of iron, and a portion of ceramic clay, so the kingdom shall be partly hard [strong], and partly broken [brittle or fragile].

This fifth empire is definitely an unholy alliance – not formed in unity but of unnatural and antagonistic parties. There will not be true cohesion in the empire.

Daniel 2:43 And whereas thou saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mix themselves with the **seed of men**: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with ceramic clay.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream is typically interpreted to illustrate four successive empires or kingdoms. A simple exercise in counting the component parts of the image reveals something else. Again, notice the **five** distinct materials found in verse 35:

Daniel 2:35 Then was the iron (1), the ceramic clay (2), the bronze (3), the silver (4), and the gold (5).

We see the return of Jesus Christ and Kingdom of God being set up:

Daniel 2:44 In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume **all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand forever.

A second testimony can be found in Daniel 2:45, where Daniel is then interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar:

Daniel 2:45 Forasmuch as thou saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron (1), the bronze (2), the ceramic clay (3), the silver (4), and the gold (5); the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter [in the end-time]: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Daniel 2:28 There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

Three times God reiterates that there are **five materials** – for emphasis. Each time the materials that make up Nebuchadnezzar’s image are listed, there are five. We saw in verses 32 and 33 that the five stages of the image were listed.

Daniel spells out the head (First Kingdom), the chest and arms (Second Kingdom), the belly and thighs (Third Kingdom), the legs (Fourth Kingdom), and the feet (Fifth Kingdom). The image, then, consists of five regions of the body, and five different materials. **Nowhere** does the Bible number these parts of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as being **four** in number.

Hundreds of years ago ‘four’ became the accepted number because of a wrong association with a personal vision that Daniel had much later. There is also **nothing** that would indicate that the Final Beast Power would be located in northern Europe per se. The traditional explanation only accounts for four kingdoms. One widely-held viewpoint is that the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, would continue on until the return of Jesus Christ through a series of revivals.

This perspective holds that the fifth region, and the fifth material, are both really just the latter end of the fourth region and material. That assumption is inconsistent with Scripture. Those who see only four kingdoms say the fourth kingdom starts out strong but it devolves into weakness. However, degrading over time is normal for all earthly kingdoms and empires, and there is no explanation as to why this natural entropy should be highlighted in only one empire.

The explanation is that the feet are not part of the legs, but that they are in fact a **fifth** empire that is partly fragile and partly hard, contrasted with the fourth empire which was only hard [strong].

In order to determine whether the feet of iron and ceramic clay are in fact a fifth empire, or merely an extension of the fourth, we have to first answer what this image as a whole represents. All of Five kingdoms have two things in common:

First, they are **Gentile** powers. However, this does not help much, because there have been hundreds of Gentile kingdoms, the overwhelming majority of which the Bible makes no mention at all. The second factor is **Jerusalem will remain trodden down** by them. The second commonality can be found in Luke’s version of the end-time Olivet Prophecy. In it, Jesus Christ prophesies:

Luke 21:24 And [those in Judea, and particularly in Jerusalem] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be **trampled** down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Luke 21:27-28 Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near.

The translation “will be **trampled**” (or “shall be trodden down” in the King James Version) gives the impression of a future event. However, according to E.W. Bullinger’s Companion Bible, the Greek here indicates, “shall be and remain trodden down,” in a way that it had never been before. The reference is to the Mohammedan possession since A.D. 636 in succession to the “fourth” or Roman possession.”

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

E.W. Bullinger has in Daniel 2:41, "The fifth power is now to be described (the "feet and toes"). It came into possession of Jerusalem in A.D. 636 (Rome having held the city for 666 years: viz., from the battle of Actium, 31 B.C.—A.D. 636). Its character as described in Daniel 2:41 is exact; and, as represented by the "feet", Jerusalem has indeed been "trodden down" (Luke 21:24) as was never done by any of the other four powers."

In other words, the "trampling" of Jerusalem would not be an event only near the time of the end, but Jesus Christ was predicting—prophesying—that Jerusalem would continue to be "trampled" by the Gentiles, just as it had been since Nebuchadnezzar's day, was in Christ's day by the Romans, and until the pre-appointed duration of Gentile dominion over the city was complete at the return of Jesus Christ.

Put more plainly, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are all linked by the fact that these kingdoms or empires have all ruled over the **Promised Land**, and particularly over **Jerusalem**. They have been the instruments of God's punishment on Judah in prohibiting her from being sovereign over the land given to her. And, in the sixth empire—that subdues them all—Jesus will rule from the throne of David!

It is interesting that Bullinger recognized these **five partitions** to Nebuchadnezzar's dream—and who would rule. E.W. Bullinger's Companion Bible has this with regard to Daniel 2:

"The fifth [Empire] is revealed in vv. 41—43. The power which was to succeed Rome in the possession of Jerusalem was to be the Mohammedan power, which was still in the future when our Lord referred to it in Luke 21:24..."

God was very specifically using Nebuchadnezzar. Recall Daniel 2:37, where Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory." Babylon was one of the oldest kingdoms in existence, first mentioned in the Bible all the way back in Genesis 10:10.

But Nebuchadnezzar was not the first king of Babylon. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar was the first Gentile king who held dominion over the land God promised to the fathers—namely Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of the Gentile reign over the Promised Land. He was the first king to capture Jerusalem (in 597 BC), in accordance with God's decree of Judah's punishment.

Jeremiah 21:10 For I have set my face against this city [Jerusalem] for evil, and not for good, says the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

The consecutive kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream are significant only as they obtained possession of Palestine, and particularly possession of Jerusalem. This world has had many kingdoms, and yet only a handful of kings are considered significant in this vision.

The Bible says nothing about the Incas, the Mayas, or the Aztecs. It is silent about the Mongols. There is no mention of the powerful and enduring dynasties of the Orient. Even the great kingdom of Assyria—the kingdom that took the northern ten tribes of Israel captive long before Nebuchadnezzar—is not mentioned here.

Only those powers which controlled Jerusalem are shown in this image.

In short, the image is a representation of the "times of the Gentiles," which is God's punishment that will last until the Stone smashes them, and the entire system of Gentile dominion is blown away like chaff.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Even now, when the nation of Israel owns much of its historic land (since the U.N. mandate in 1948), it still cannot claim complete control over Jerusalem—specifically East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, upon which sits the al-Aksa Mosque. Thus, even though Jerusalem has changed hands numerous times throughout its history, ever since falling to Nebuchadnezzar, it has essentially been under the power of Gentiles. This will continue until the return of Jesus Christ (the Stone) when the “times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

These two identifying characteristics of the five kingdoms are (1) Gentile peoples, who (2) control Jerusalem and prevent a re-establishment of the kingdom of Judah. These distinguishing traits provide the framework for understanding Nebuchadnezzar’s image. But this framework also requires that there be a **fifth** empire, for it has been almost 1700 years since the (Western) Roman Empire has held sway over Jerusalem and the Promised Land.

About, circa 636-638 AD, tribes of Arabic Muslims, under the Caliph Omar ben Al Khattab (or Kaliph Umar ibn al-Khattab), conquered Jerusalem. Since that time, Jerusalem has been ruled by various Muslim nations such as Jordan and Egypt, and especially the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

Remember how the fifth empire is described as being comprised of dissimilar properties—and divided—and the strange language (Daniel 2:43): they shall mingle themselves with the **seed of men**: but they shall not cleave one to another? Interestingly, the Ottomans are described as heirs to both Roman and Islamic traditions—an incompatible mixture if there ever was one.

In The Cambridge History of Islam, under the article, "The Rise of the Ottoman Empire," it is observed that:

“The [Ottoman] empire was at the center of interactions between the Eastern and Western worlds for six centuries. The Ottoman Empire was in many respects an Islamic successor to earlier Mediterranean empires—namely the Roman and Byzantine empires. As such, the Ottomans regarded themselves as the heirs to both Roman and Islamic traditions, and hence rulers of a "Universal Empire" through this "unification of cultures”.”

Thus, since the early seventh century, Jerusalem has essentially remained under Islamic rule. The Byzantine Empire continued to hold sway over Jerusalem after the fall of Rome and the Western Empire, but eventually the Ottoman Empire became the dominant force in the region. Rome has been off the radar of Jerusalem since the fifth century.

Even today, Jerusalem is a divided city with the Muslim al-Aksa Mosque—a pagan temple—is sitting on top of the Temple Mount. The Jews have nuclear weapons, and the best-trained and equipped army in the region, but the Muslims wield the power when it comes to the Temple Mount—the focal point of Jerusalem.

We can see, especially in the face of such a bizarre match-up, that the Muslims actually have the authority to be there—for now—just like Nebuchadnezzar had the authority to do what he did because of God’s punishment on Israel and Judah.

The “times of the Gentiles” of which Jesus spoke have not yet been fulfilled. Understanding this aspect of Nebuchadnezzar’s image does not actually tell us who the Beast of Revelation will be. What it shows us is, in general, where one power is located that has been given the authority to oppose Judah.

But God’s people have always had many enemies, and just knowing who will generally control Jerusalem until Christ returns does not tell us concretely who the Beast will be.

But, what it does tell us is that Nebuchadnezzar's dream is not synonymous with Daniel's dream found in Chapter 7. However, both Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision do contain a prophecy of the Final Beast Empire.

Daniel 2:41 Whereas you saw the feet and [ten] toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the hardness [strength] of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay. [Trampling down with the feet is the characteristic of the Final Beast Empire.]

## **Daniel's Vision**

Daniel 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

In Psalms we find a prophetic list of ten largely Islamic nations listed. (no historical example exists)

Psalms 83:4-8 [The enemies of the Lord] have said, Come, and let us cut them off [exterminate them] from being a nation; that the **name of Israel may be no more** in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also is joined with them: they have helped the children of Lot. Selah.

Once we understand that Nebuchadnezzar's image of Daniel 2 describes **five kingdoms** rather than four, we suddenly find a major difference between the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and that of Daniel in Chapter 7. In fact, there are several other significant differences that confirm that Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar were seeing two different things. There is an overlap, because the time of the end is contained within both dreams, but the dreams are not synonymous.

In our Church of God narrative, we historically tried to shoehorn Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 to be one prophecy with totally different symbols. The head of gold becomes a lion; the chest and arms of silver are a bear; the belly and thighs of bronze are a four headed leopard; and the legs of iron are the ten revivals of the Roman Empire – because of the ten toes.

The overall difference between the two dreams is that Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream of the beginning and the duration of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem and the Promised Land, while Daniel was given a vision of the very end of that dominion.

Nebuchadnezzar saw five consecutive Gentile kingdoms, spanning two and half millennia. On the other hand, Daniel saw four beasts that are all in existence at the same time when the Messiah returns.

According to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a revived Roman Empire is not our concern. The Roman Empire has gone the way of Greece, Persia, and Babylon, and a different, stubborn, violent, disorganized, partly–strong–and–partly–weak power now holds sway in the Promised Land. We saw in Daniel 2:44-45 the fulfillment of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God coming to fruition. Then, the time of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem or the holy land will be entirely ended. The entire system of Gentile domination over the holy land—Jerusalem, specifically—will be blown away like chaff, never to have a place again. The kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God, and ruled by Jesus Christ forever in peace, prosperity and right judgment.

## **Two Witnesses**

It is clear in Revelation 11:10 that the Two Witnesses are "prophets." They will be killed and their bodies will lay in the street of Jerusalem (verse 7). The Spirit of life from God enters them upon resurrection (verse 11). God says:

Revelation 11:3-11 I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth [1,260 days]. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the Beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified [Jerusalem]. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

We have come here to the first and better resurrection. It is the time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). As we read on it becomes clear that the third woe yet remains to be poured out before the return to this earth in great power of Jesus Christ is fulfilled. The seven vials of Revelation are yet to come (Revelation 16:1):

Revelation 11:12-15 They heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

## **Mystery of the Kingdom of God Revealed**

This book helps to explain how the mystery of God is being worked out for the saints of God and all humanity.

Luke 8:10 Jesus said unto His disciples, Unto you it is given to know the **mysteries of the Kingdom of God**...

Ephesians 3:4-5 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery of Christ** which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets Spiritually.

It is the observance of God's Holy Days, more than anything else, that has opened up the understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to the Children of God.

*Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast **revealed them unto babes**.

Colossians 1:26 Even the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made **manifest to His saints**.

Jesus is coming soon to establish His Father's Kingdom over all the nations of the earth. All will go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feasts of the Lord (Zechariah 14:16).

Isaiah 2:2-5 It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us **walk in the light** of the LORD.

## Chapter 7

# Millennial Kingdom of God on Earth

### Passover Fulfilled

The evening before He died, the **Kingdom of God** was very much on Jesus' mind.

Luke 22:8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.

Fully knowing the horrendous suffering and passion that lay immediately before Him, Jesus greatly anticipated and desired to eat the Passover with His apostles (Isaiah 53:4-8). Jesus will observe Passover each year for a thousand years with His resurrected Saints—looking forward to the Last Great Day when Passover will be **completely fulfilled** in a Kingdom of those redeemed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

Passover is observed once each year at a specific time. As the sun set at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib (Numbers 9:2-3), Jesus and His twelve apostles were gathered together in the guest-chamber:

Luke 22:14-16 When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said unto them, with intense desire **I have desired to eat** this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not eat of it again until it finds **fulfillment** in the **Kingdom of God**.

Christ's emphasis was on enjoying a meal in close fellowship and warm affinity with His apostles. There was no mention of death, suffering or forgiveness of sin—only of harmonious friendship, closeness, love and esprit de corps—showing us that our drinking of the Passover cup and eating of the unleavened bread are acts of camaraderie with Christ. Jesus was looking forward to the future day when the purpose of Passover would be entirely fulfilled.

As the significance of that awesome privilege truly sinks in, it motivates the Christian to likewise honor the fellowship of the entire spiritual Body of Christ—the Church. The Passover is a memorial of our unique and undeserved standing with God, and a reminder of the redemptive process He is faithful to complete in us as we continue to abide in Him. Because of Christ's perfect dedication and devotion to the point of death, we can now gratefully enjoy **fellowship with God** because of the **peace** Jesus Christ has provided (Ephesians 2:14; Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:21-22;

2 Corinthians 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Hebrews 7:2).

This indeed was Jesus' last Passover on earth, but Jesus greatly anticipated taking the Passover again at the very beginning of the Millennium when the Kingdom of God will be established on earth.

Luke 22:18, 30 I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until [I drink of it anew when] the Kingdom of God shall come (Matthew 26:29)... That ye may **eat** and **drink** at my table in **my Kingdom**, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

## **Millennial Kingdom of God on Earth**

In this chapter we will be transitioning from the world today into the wonderful world tomorrow. The seventh clearly defined and separated **period** in the Plan of God is that of the one-thousand-year Millennial reign of Christ with His saints over the Kingdom of God on earth. Everything we have seen up through Chapter Six is past history – up to our age. Everything that we will see in Chapter Seven, we know from the prophecies in God’s word—the Bible. Divine prophecy reveals how the **Plan and Purpose of God** will come to fruition. We are fast approaching the time when Jesus Christ will return in power and great glory to break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of this world and set up the **Kingdoms of our Lord**; and He shall reign forever and ever (Matthew 24:30; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15). Satan, the **power of darkness**, will be bound and ineffective (Luke 22:53; Revelation 20:3).

Mark 1:14-15 ...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Good News of the **Kingdom of God**, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

The preaching of the Good News of the Kingdom of God was so all important to Jesus that He continued to teach His apostles even **after** His resurrection!

Acts 1:2-3 Until the day in which Jesus was taken up, after that He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the **Kingdom of God**.

Zechariah 14:9 The LORD shall be **King over all the earth**: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.

Luke 1:33 He shall reign over the **house of Jacob/Israel** forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.

The Millennium will usher in an unprecedented continuation and expansion of the Plan of God over the whole earth. The time will have arrived for the **refreshing** and **restitution** of those wonderfully undreamt-of things begun with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Acts 3:19-21). Since the beginning of the world eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love and wait for Him—the Kingdom of God on earth (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9).

At the beginning of the Millennium, God will grant His Spirit to everyone alive. Everyone who ever lived will receive God’s Holy Spirit for the first time. They will each be called to conversion—providing them opportunity for eternal salvation (Joel 2:28-29).

## **Thy Kingdom Come**

The **Kingdom of God** administered by Jesus Christ will consist of five essential elements:

1. **A King** – the all Glorious Jesus Christ
2. **A Seat of Authority** – the Dynastic Throne of David in Jerusalem
3. **A Territory** – the domain of rulership is the entire earth
4. **Laws of the Realm** – the Ten Commandments and the word of God
5. **Subjects** – the remnant Israelites and their servants (Isaiah 14:1-3)

The greater population of the earth will be devastated with multiple billions dead, but among the survivors of the atrocities of the Tribulation will be an **elect remnant** of modern-day Israelites. They will be the **subjects** of the new world order—the Kingdom of God.

More than the other chapters in this book, this chapter is impossible for our friends in the world to understand. They have too many impediments in their way to truly understand the coming world tomorrow. They cannot understand because their learned premise is *ab initio* – invalid from the very beginning. The first impediment to understanding the meaning and purpose of the Millennial rule of Christ is the false doctrine of **heaven and hell** as mankind's eternal reward. They believe that all men are *being judged* at this time. Our friends think that when you die, *you go to heaven*. Therefore, the Gospel news of God's Millennial Kingdom on earth is the farthest thing from their minds. The teaching that *heaven is the reward of the saved* is not Biblical.

Another obstruction to knowing what God will be doing for a thousand years is their rejection of God's Law. People in the world have been taught that the Ten Commandments were **nailed to the cross**, and therefore need not be kept. They believe that Jesus fulfilled the law, *declaring the law no longer valid*, so that they do not have to be obedient to God.

Our friends do not like to mention the Government of God in the lives of men because it smacks of obedience and works which they are careful to avoid, believing that salvation comes with believing and faith *by grace alone* (James 2:14, 17). Their rejection and disobedience of God's Law blocks their understanding. God states that obedience to Him, and understanding the truth of God, go hand in hand (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). It is a terrible thing to deny God's Law which is an expression of His love. God's Law is the lamp which lights our way, and without it there is the inability of living a Godly life in accordance to the will of God (Proverbs 6:23).

Another terrible hindrance that prevents one from seeing what God is doing is the **Trinity** heresy. Not understanding the nature of God, the religious world teaches that God is a *closed trinity* of *three persons*, and that there cannot be *any other members* of God's family. Too many of those who seek God's Truth in the Bible **cannot find it** because they begin with the false premise which they have heard and been taught.

They have learned incorrectly that the nature of the Godhead is a **closed trio** consisting of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy *Ghost*. The Bible teaches no such doctrine. They miss the most important point that God's Family is **open to others**. God is creating man to be an integral part of His expanding inner circle—**His Family**. We are the offspring of God (Acts 17:29). Because we all have the same **spiritual Father**, we are literally brothers and sisters to Jesus Christ within whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:11). The very purpose of God's Plan is to bring many sons and daughters to glory in His eternal Family (Hebrews 2:10).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the last century, God was doing an extensive work of calling many to be His sons and daughters (John 6:29). In support of that work, there was Ambassador College with three branches. The motto of the college was, Recapturing True Values. There were handsome and beautiful young people taking classes suitable for royalty – learning the word of God, and busy with extracurricular activities such as archaeological excavations, singing in lovely choirs, and visiting the elderly. Ambassador Hall in Pasadena exhibited a stone sculptural relief carrying the foundational phrase, The Word of God is the Foundation of Knowledge.

There were striking buildings, stately mansions, and delightful gardens with lawns too precious to walk on. In addition to the college at Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire, England, there was the unspoiled campus at Big Sandy, Texas. The Pasadena Auditorium featured its elegant inlaid carpet, world class acoustics, crystal chandeliers, precious stone from around the world, accoutrements from Persia, a towering fountain and reflecting ponds. Prominently displayed inside the foyer of its portico was its dedication – **“A House for God.”** In the 1980s this “writer” spoke there for his first-ever Sabbath message. There were evangelists, Pastors, an overflowing congregation, cameras, sound equipment, lights... it was awe-inspiring.

This “writer” was the first minister to be fired and subsequently disfellowshipped from the Worldwide Church of God when the fallacious Trinity creed was used to assault the doctrine of God’s true nature. He was “put out” of the organization when he rightly supported the clear Biblical belief that God the Father had raised His Son from death—and that Jesus had not raised Himself – as was being widely published (Ephesians 1:20). For various reasons, including fear of loss of tenure, or taint of character and reputation, most Worldwide Church of God ministers continued to give lip service and allegiance to the apostate corporate headquarters. Mostly because of the stigma associated with disfellowshippment, not a single one of this writer’s ministerial colloquies came to his defense—though many of them soon purported to agree with his doctrinal stance. Within a year, when their flocks were scattering, most of those ministers joined or formed other church groups.

Why did the entire Church not pull together? How could so a great work be so easily dismantled? Could it be that the evangelists and leading ministers did not comprehend the wide-ranging command of God to **strive for the unity of the Spirit**? How could they not have understood the importance of the integrity of the body of believers?

Ephesians 4:3-6 Endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Another point of perplexity is that the “Christian” world thinks that **Israel has already returned** to the Promised Land. They are hopelessly confused because they make no distinction between the Jews and Israel. Judah and Israel *are all one and the same* to Protestant evangelists. Television evangelists believe that when the United Nations passed the partition resolution followed by the end of the British Mandate in 1948, the *“Birth of Israel”* fulfilled the many prophecies which speak of Israel’s return to the Promised Land—they do not! It was only some Jews of the tribe of Judah who established a Jewish State.

Most people do not know that the tribes of Israel are still completely dispersed around the earth! In fact, there are more Jews in New York City than in the entire nation in the Near East. When the millennium begins, Jews and Israel will be reunited in the Promised Land (Ezekiel 37:16-21; Jeremiah 3:18).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Our friends in the world cannot conceive of the reason to prepare the face of this earth for the resurrection of thousands of millions of flesh and blood humans on the Last Great Day. They have been taught that they have an **everlasting soul** and will be judged by God as soon as they die. Many people believe in a '*Jesus*' who is with His **mother Mary in heaven** (John 3:13). Mary was not "ever virgin," as she had at least **seven** children: Jesus, James, Joseph junior, Jude and Simon and at least two daughters (Mark 6:3).

Luke the physician, using a medical term, records that in an inspired utterance, Elisabeth exclaimed in a forceful acclamation, "Mary is mother of my Lord." Mary was not just a surrogate vassal but rather a sacred vessel of the flesh and blood lineage of King David (Luke 3:31).

Luke 1:41 It came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit: And she sang out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the **mother of my Lord** should come to me?

Jesus was the Son of God (Luke 1:35; Mark 1:1), and acknowledged to be the Son of man eighty-nine times in the New Testament.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

John 1:14 The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Not understanding the Plan of God revealed by His Holy Days is a barrier to anyone whose mind has not been opened by God's Spirit. The worldly holidays of **Easter and Christmas** war against the deeply significant Biblical Holy Days—the Feasts of the Lord. The word "**Easter**" would not be in the Bible except for the willful mistranslation of *pascha*—Passover (Acts 12:4). Most people miss the concept and picture of God's great final harvest of resurrected beings – spiritual Children of God (Luke 10:2). All these factors, and others, preclude the true understanding of the nature of the Millennium.

With all of these obstacles working against them, how could they possibly grasp the wonderful things God has in store for His people – Israel – in the wonderful world tomorrow? Our friends do not realize that Satan is the ruler of this present evil world who holds the power of death (Ephesians 2:1-3, 6:12; John 12:31-33, 14:30, 16:11; Hebrews 2:14). And as such, Satan has hidden from the world the understanding of the Plan of God to bring mankind into His Family.

A good and right understanding of the **Plan of God** has not been given to every age of His Church. One-hundred years ago the Church brethren did not understand God's desire that even New Testament Christians observe His appointed Holy Feast Days. This knowledge is a tremendous blessing for God's people, unlocking so much information and prophecy contained in the pages of the Bible.

Another hurdle to overcome is the understanding of who will make up the Israelitish stock of the Millennium's populace. The identity of the Israelitish peoples today must be understood because the **remnant** will come from them. The **American** and **English** speaking peoples of the world are mostly descended from the original **Israelites**. This is a difficult concept to grasp because all things "Jewish" are abhorred by many so called "Christians." It is a strange irony indeed that it is among actual Israelites that much anti-Semitism is found!

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The **remnant** will be the first people to live in a Satan-free environment of peace and abundant prosperity. The desert shall blossom as the rose, young men and women will be blessed exceedingly in every work of their hand, in the fruit of their bodies, and in the production of their cattle, and in the harvest of their land and they will not be displaced from it (Isaiah 35:1; Deuteronomy 30:9).

Daniel 7:27 The Kingdom and Dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Saints of the most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

### **Jesus Will Rule from Jerusalem**

In Genesis we find a prophecy of Christ's return to rule this earth. In the Millennium, all Israel will worship and **praise Him** – after He has put down all of His enemies (Revelation 19:15-16). Jesus was born a Jew of the tribe of Judah. In prophecy, Judah is a type of Jesus Christ who is to be praised:

Genesis 49:8-9 Judah, you are He whom your brethren **shall praise**: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you...

Jesus will rule with power and authority over all the earth. These verses also foretell that the throne of David will exist until Christ's returns to take His rightful place upon it. The Millennium is the work of the Messiah fulfilled.

Genesis 49:10 The scepter [sovereign leadership and rulership] shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh [Messiah] comes; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.

Zechariah 8:2-8 Thus says the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus says the LORD of hosts; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the **midst of Jerusalem**: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain... There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof (Isaiah 54:13)... If it be marvelous in the eyes of the **remnant** of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? says the LORD of hosts... Behold, I will save my people from the **east** country, and from the **west** country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

The millennial age to come, will be a **time of peace**, abundance, justice and righteousness, where the human spirit will soar—motivated by God's Spirit. Jerusalem, the "**city of peace**," shall be safely inhabited (Zechariah 14:11). The river originating in the Temple is a picture of God's Holy Spirit going out to everyone. In addition to its spiritual meaning, the ecology of the region will be healed (Ezekiel 47:8). It is a tremendous Revelation of what is coming in the Millennium

(Ezekiel 40-46). Great geographical changes will occur when Christ returns. There will be an earthquake splitting the Mt. of Olives, opening the fountains of the great deep – a great spring of water under the Temple Mount where the Holy of Holies once stood (Genesis 7:11).

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Joel 3:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and **a fountain shall come forth** through the Temple of the LORD...

Ezekiel 47:1 ...the **waters** issued out from under the threshold of the Temple eastward: for the forefront of the Temple stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the Temple, at the south side of the altar.

This fountain of water will be directly under the Millennial Temple in Jerusalem – picturing God’s Holy Spirit flowing from Jesus Christ (John 7:38). Also, the importance of this literal river of water to the ecosystem cannot be overestimated. This is a wonderful revelation. Notice what will happen:

Zechariah 14:4 The LORD’s feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall **cleave through the middle** thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

This divide in the Mount of Olives will open the way for a great river flowing eastward to the Jordan valley, and ultimately cascading downward 3,700 feet to the Dead Sea.

Zechariah 14:8-9 It shall be in that day, that **living waters** [God’s Holy Spirit] shall go out from **Jerusalem**; half of them [flowing eastward into the Dead Sea], and half of them [flowing westward into the Mediterranean Sea]: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the **LORD shall be King** over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.

Like Mammoth Spring in Arkansas, one of the world’s largest springs with nine million gallons of water flowing hourly—the Temple Spring will flow out in two directions. Moving eastward away from Jerusalem the river will become deeper and deeper:

Ezekiel 47:5 ...It became a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

In the same way that **rivers of living water** spring forth from Jesus Christ to give eternal Life to all, the literal river flowing from Jerusalem will bring life to the Dead Sea area and ultimately, the oceans. The water will eventually make its way down to Ezion Geber at Gulf of Aqaba, and on to the Red Sea. However, there will be some brackish marshes near the southern end of the Dead Sea that will **not be healed** of the salt water – and that is important to note:

Ezekiel 47:11 The **miry places** thereof and the **marshes** thereof shall **not be healed**; they shall be given to salt-water.

How can it be that God will **fail** to heal the marshes? Does this represent a weakness of the part of Jesus Christ to bring all things to perfection? Not at all. This is similar to the time that Jesus had to heal a blind man – **twice** – laying His hands on him each time. Jesus had not failed to heal something that was wrong each time. Jesus healed the blind man the first time and asked him what he saw, and looked up, and said, “**I see** men as trees, walking.” The blind man was seeing – and yet there was another problem:

Mark 8:25 After that Jesus put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

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Yes, there was another important matter to address. That is what is going on here with the marshes. The **marshes** will serve another very important concern in the Millennium. The wetlands, bayous, and estuaries are meant to be saline marshes for organisms requiring brackish water.

This reveals that the ecosystem in the area of the Holy Land will also be rejuvenated. Salt water marshes are extremely important to the environment. In fact, that is precisely why the fishing will be so good there (Ezekiel 47:9). There will be plenty of nourishment for the fish. In south-central Louisiana there is an important marsh called the Atchafalaya River basin. It is one of the largest swamp and marsh areas in the United States, and a habitat for many “creeping things.” It is so shallow and strewn with cypress knees in places that it takes a pirogue to get through.

Much of the ocean’s food chain – a succession of creatures from microscopic organisms to 15-foot-long alligators – originates in the brackish waters of swampy wetlands. For example, the marshland is home to a great array of flora and fauna which help support the entire ecosystem. Here is a sampling of life that thrives in the Atchafalaya Floodway between Baton Rouge and Lafayette, Louisiana:

There are many species of fish (the number now stands at 16,764), shrimp, blue crabs, oysters, clams, crawfish, snakes, eels, salamanders, and turtles living in the marsh. There are migratory fish and prehistoric choupique and alligator gar.

Other wildlife species include mink, muskrats, beavers, armadillos, foxes, coyotes, cougar, possums, rabbits, squirrels and flying squirrels, nutria, skunks, foxes, beavers, civet cats, bobcats, black bears, coons, white-tailed deer, and river otters.

There are hundreds of species of birds, including bald eagles, wild turkey, ducks, brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, woodcocks, snipe, geese, great egrets, great blue Herons, the white ibis and the poudeau. The Plan that God has in store for the Dead Sea basin will be wonderful and exciting. Not only there, but other “petting zoos” will abound in every climate of the earth, for children of every age to, not only observe, but to interact with God’s beautiful array of exotic animals in their natural habitats. God says:

Ezekiel 34:25 I will ...cause the **evil beasts** to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Isaiah 11:9 They **shall not hurt** nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the **earth shall be full** of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

## **A Glorious Day for the Elect**

Who will Jesus rule over in the Millennium? Where will the people come from? Who are those people whom Jesus calls the **elect**?

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the **glorious appearing** of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus explained to His disciples that He would not let the Great Tribulation run its full course. And He also tells His people that it will be **shortened** for a certain group of people – the **elect** – who will still be alive at the end of the Tribulation:

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Matthew 24:21-22 Then shall be Great Tribulation [Jacob's Trouble], such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [alive]: but for the **elect's** [selected and chosen's] **sake** those days shall be shortened.

Who are the **elect** of Matthew 24:22? Many have felt that the elect referred to the Church brethren, and that the terrible Tribulation would be shortened for their sake. However, those faithful saints who have overcome Satan will be in a place of safety and protection (Revelation 12:14), having flown there at the beginning of the Tribulation – 3 ½ years earlier. Other saints will be martyred during the Tribulation, so the Tribulation could not be shortened for their sake either. Not everyone will die in the Tribulation. These **elect** are a **remnant** of Israelitish stock with whom God will begin anew in the Promised Land in the World Tomorrow. Those disciples hearing Jesus' Olivet Prophecy knew Deuteronomy like the back of their hand – and they knew where the **elect remnant** would be restored to – the Holy Land. In context we can see where the elect will be brought (Matthew 24:31):

The soon coming World War will see so many of our young men and women carried away captive into all parts of the world – but an elect remnant will survive and be spared the horrors – to become **New Israel**. Beginning after the Tribulation, in the world tomorrow, there will be a small remnant of physical people who will multiply and fill the earth once again.

When one surveys both the Old and New Testaments, they get a flavor of just how much God has planned to **spare a remnant** through the Tribulation and safeguard them for the beginning of the Millennium. God will choose a selection of physical individuals who will survive the time of Jacob's trouble and then begin to populate the 1,000-year Millennium.

### **The Coming Second Exodus**

What does the Feast of Tabernacles picture in the Plan of God? We get our first glimpse of the wonderful changes coming to this earth in Isaiah 2. People will begin to **look to God**. These verses speak of the wonderful world tomorrow. The Church brethren, of all people, are most **appreciative** and **grateful** – not only for the fact that this knowledge has been revealed to us, been made open to us, but we are most **thankful** to God that He has **called** us now to be a part of His soon coming Kingdom in Tomorrow's World. The Kingdom of God administered by Jesus Christ on earth is referred to as the “mountain of the LORD's house:”

Isaiah 2:2-3 It shall come to pass in the last days, that the **mountain of the LORD's house** shall be established in the top of the mountains [nations], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Jacob/Israel; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Jesus is returning to rule! God gave these prophecies to Isaiah for us, for our **hope** and **encouragement**. They tell us that God's way will be the rule of the Earth. In the Millennium, there will be universal peace as there was at the end of King David's rule when God granted David rest from all his enemies round about (2 Samuel 7:1, 11):

Isaiah 2:4-5 And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the **light of the LORD**.

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This is what the wonderful world tomorrow will be like when all mankind will be able to live long and rich lives to the fullest. Our imaginations cannot comprehend how gloriously peaceful and abundant life will be when Jesus Christ rules. Scripture records that a “**second exodus**” is coming soon that will eclipse the first exodus— when Jesus delivered His people, Israel (Exodus 3:7-8).

Jeremiah 16:14-15 Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD lives, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; [that was the **first exodus**]; But, The LORD lives, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers [This is the **second exodus**].

There is nothing in these verses to indicate that the second Exodus will be much greater in numerical scope than the first exodus—only that the Lord will **restore Israel**. God says:

Isaiah 13:12 I will make human beings **more scarce** than pure gold, and people more scarce than gold from Ophir.

The great multitude spoken of in Revelation 7:9 refers to converted and resurrected Saints – not to those in the second exodus. God promises to gather only a relatively **small remnant** of Israel from all the nations where He has scattered them, and He promises to return them to the Holy Land of Israel. This **gathering** will indeed be more **glorious** in that the returning Israelites will be entering the Lord’s Rest, and all that entails about—the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Isaiah 11:10-11 In that day there shall be a root of Jesse [Jesus Christ], who shall stand for an ensign of the people; to Him shall the foreign nations seek: and His [Millennial] **rest** shall be **glorious** (Hebrews 4:9). And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the **second time** to **recover** the **remnant** of His people, which shall be left from... [many nations] and from the islands of the sea.

Captive modern-day Israelites will be terribly scattered all over the face of the earth – and difficult to round up after the earth-wide upheaval of the Tribulation, but God will seek out and find every last one:

Jeremiah 16:16 Behold, I will send for many fishers, says the LORD, and they shall **fish them**; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall **hunt them** from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

There will be the **sound** of a **great trumpet** blown. At the end of the 3½ year Tribulation, this second Exodus of elect Israel will begin on the Day of Pentecost – when the Saints are being raised.

Isaiah 27:12-13 It shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and you shall be **gathered one by one**, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the **great trumpet** shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

On the last Pentecost as Jesus returns in power, the Saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and brought before God’s throne (Revelation 4:6; 15:2) to be accepted just as Jesus was accepted on the fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf Day (John 20:17). In the same way that the wave-sheaf offering— with oil—represented Jesus Christ, the two wave-loaves offered on Pentecost—baked with leaven, (Leviticus 23:17) represent God’s spiritual firstfruits. The faithful brethren of God’s Church will be spared the horrors of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 3:10).

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Their resurrection to reign and rule with Jesus Christ will come at the sounding of the very **last trumpet** (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Trumpets (Plural) begin to sound on a Feast of Trumpets, but the last trumpet, the resurrection trumpet, (singular) will be **sounded** on a Feast of Pentecost. That same trumpet blast also signals the beginning of the **gathering** of the physical elect whose lives will be spared throughout the Tribulation.

Matthew 24:29, 31 Immediately after the tribulation of those days... the Son of man shall send His angels with a **great sound** of a **trumpet**, and they shall **gather** together His **elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

It will be a great gathering – first the Saints, and at the same moment – the **elect remnant**—destined for the Millennium. As with the Saints, being chosen to receive God’s seal of protection will not be a random process, but a very selective one.

### **God Loves Israel – His Wife**

Jesus not only created Israel, He took her to be His lawful wedded wife. And, though she was unfaithful by being idolatrous, He will remarry spiritual Israel—the Church of God (Jeremiah 3:8; Revelation 19:7; Galatians 6:16).

Isaiah 54:5-10 Thy Maker is **thine husband**; the LORD of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says thy God. [God divorced unfaithful Israel for idolatry.] For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I **gather** thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, says the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with thee, nor rebuke thee. [God keeps His Covenant promises.] For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on thee.

Isaiah 60:4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they **gather** themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons **shall come from far**, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. (Zechariah 10:6-9)

Zechariah 10:10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and **gather** them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them [Too crowded].

Jeremiah 50:5 They shall ask **the way to Zion** with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a **perpetual covenant** that shall not be forgotten.

New Israel will say, “We are not going to make the same mistake Israel of old made – breaking God’s Covenant – and going into captivity... And, We are not going to make the same mistake the USA and Britain made...”

With God’s **Holy Spirit** being poured out on New Israel – they will be able to **keep covenant** with God.

## **I Will Gather You**

Jesus reiterated that it is He who **gathers**. There is an attention-grabbing prophecy that came about as a result of the trial of Jesus Christ which took place at His last Passover:

John 11:51-52 ...Jesus... **will gather** together in one the **Children of God** that were scattered abroad.

The **gathering** of Israel spoken of here was a fervent desire and hope of the people of Christ's day:

Jeremiah 23:3 I will **gather** the **remnant of my flock** out of all **countries** whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

To be fruitful and increase speaks of a rapid increase in population as the remnant begins to multiply in the Millennium – that has not yet begun. The land will once again produce abundantly. Israel and Judah will once again possess the Promised Land, they will have peace and prosperity—because their enemies will be destroyed, which Israel failed to do the first time they came into the Promised Land.

Isaiah 5:26-27 The LORD will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss [whistle for] them **from the end of the earth**: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken.

God promises Israel over and over that He will miraculously **gather a remnant** unto Himself. How much more encouraging could He be than to repeat this assurance so many times? For those who take God at His word, there can no more comforting pledge than this. Just as assuredly as God Himself wrought great miracles to open the Red Sea and drown Pharaoh's chosen captains when delivering the children of Israel from Egypt; though He may have employed a rare meteorological phenomenon when doing so; He will miraculously **gather His elect people** again (Exodus 14:21; 15:4). Here is a sampling of the Scriptures that demonstrate the great emphasis God places on this gathering as the Millennium begins:

Jeremiah 29:14 I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and will **gather you** from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from where I caused you to be carried away into captivity.

God's chosen people will be gathered out of all the nations of the world. In order to give hope and encouragement to Israel, God spoke a great deal about the return of a **remnant**. These verses of the return of Israel will offer great consolation to those caught up in the soon coming Tribulation.

Ezekiel 11:17 Thus says the Lord GOD; I will even **gather you** [New Israel] from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 20:33-35 As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will **gather you** out of the lands wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

Those gathered will loathe themselves, repent and possess a new heart (Zechariah 7:12).

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Ezekiel 20:40-44 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, says the Lord GOD, there shall **all the House of Israel**, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you as a soothing aroma when I bring you out from the people, and **gather you** out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathens. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you **into the land of Israel**, into the country for which I lifted up my hand to give it to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled [Sabbath breaking and false religion]; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have worked with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O you House of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

When God repeats a matter three times it is for emphasis. Note the refining process that New Israel will be put through:

Ezekiel 22:19-21 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will **gather you** into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I **gather you** in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will **gather you**, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

There are many places where God gives His Specific Purpose Statement, declaring that He will, "**Gather You.**" New Israel will become the renown people of the earth – prominent among all people:

Zephaniah 3:20 At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I **gather you**: for I will make you **a name** and **a praise** among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the LORD.

When the Millennium begins, Jesus will have returned to the earth in great power, and will be ruling from His throne in Jerusalem as King of kings.

Zechariah 8:3 Thus says the LORD; I am **returned unto Zion**, and will  **dwell in the midst** of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

Jesus Christ will be establishing His Father's Kingdom and Law. He will be King, and David will be His Prince (Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Jeremiah 23:4-5; 30:9; Hosea 3:5; Micah 2:12-13). Additionally, the twelve original apostles will be resurrected and sit as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel, ensuring that proper judgment is given (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). Before we look at more of the awesome transformation that the Bible reveals about the marvelous changes to our planet that will occur during the Millennium, we need to address the question of **who** the inhabitants will be.

One of the **best kept secrets** of all is that Jesus will **gather a remnant** of physical Israel from all over the face of the entire earth – and eventually, He will gather all who have ever lived before (Ezekiel 37:3-14). It is a huge subject throughout the Bible but it is not known because it does not fit the scenario of *orthodox doctrine* which states that one *goes to heaven* after death.

The Tribulation will leave the face of the earth scarred, obliterated and desolate. The days at the beginning of the Millennium will require a courageous and resolute people. 'Joshua' in the Hebrew language is the same as 'Jesus' in the Greek language – so much so that the King James translators confused the two (Hebrews 4:8). Joshua was a type of Christ:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Deuteronomy 31:7 Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a **good courage**: for you must go with this people unto the land which the LORD has sworn unto their fathers to give them; and you shall cause them to **inherit it**.

God will be **extremely selective** when choosing those He gathers to Himself to constitute His people until the times of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Ezekiel 20:36-37 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, (particularly discriminating) and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

Passing under the rod is a phrase indicating the tenth part shall be holy unto the LORD (Leviticus 27:32). Therefore, the **remnant** will be a clean people – repentant and faithful – with a desire to seek God and His perfect way. They will be a wholesome population – fertile, with good genetics and with all the good traits of inventiveness, creativity, talent, honor – but most of all, they will be an entreatable people easily persuaded by God. They will have been purged of infectious ailments: Syphilis, the incurable human immunodeficiency virus infection / acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), Herpes, and all the diseases of the Egyptians (Exodus 15:26).

There will be no communicable diseases – which will have run their course in the Tribulation. God's New World Tomorrow will begin with a clean slate. Yes, there will be scars. Jesus has scars (John 20:27) – true marks of valor and honor.

Ezekiel 20:38 And I will purge out from among you the **rebels**, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and **they shall not enter** into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

God's people will return to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When He is bringing the **remnant of Israel** out of the countries of their **scattering**, He will scrutinize His people to ensure that any **rebels** that transgress against Him will not be allowed into the land. God desires a pure people. From the nations of Israel's captivity, some insurgents and renegades will try to sneak in, but they will be discovered and prevented from entering the Promised Land:

### **It is God Who Scatters – It is God Who Gathers**

Repeatedly, God reveals that it is He who will **scatter** His people Israel for their godlessness in the last days – only to **gather** a repentant remnant of them for the Millennium.

Jeremiah 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, **He that scattered Israel will gather him**.

Ezekiel 34:12-14 As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver [‘Jesus’ means Deliverer] them out of all places where they have been **scattered** in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and **gather** them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

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Ezekiel 11:16 Therefore say, Thus says the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although **I have scattered them** among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

We do not find this situation ever existing in post-exilic Israel. Instead, we see that there are those who will be protected in the day of the wrath of the Lord. In Ezekiel's day, the **Sealing Mark** in indelible ink from the inkhorn on their foreheads afforded them protection – and their lives were spared by God. Notice what God is doing:

Ezekiel 28:25 Thus says the Lord GOD; When I shall have **gathered** the House of Israel from the people among whom they are **scattered**, and manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob.

Zechariah 7:14 I **scattered** them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land **desolate**.

Isaiah 24:6 The curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and **few men left**.

When our children, grandchildren, and those whom God has **gathered** of the tribes of the Children of Israel, see the destruction of the world taking place, they will also sigh, cry, mourn and weep for the abominations that are in the land. They will be mostly strong young men and women who had been carried into the captivity of slave labor camps of **enemy nations** around the globe. How will a physical **remnant** of Israel survive the Tribulation to live-over into the world tomorrow? The survivors will be the physical **remnant** of Jacob/Israel.

### **The Lord God Will Seek Out His People**

Ezekiel 34:11 Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and **seek them out**.

The peoples of modern-day Israel enthusiastically **reject** God's truth and law. They also do not wish to believe the historical fact of their ancestry—closing their eyes to the fact they are indeed *Caucasian*—having originated in the captivity of ancient Israel. This predisposition, even among the religious leaders, is so set against the reality of who God's people are that it will take something extraordinary for the **veil** to be removed from their eyes (2 Corinthians 3:14-15; Isaiah 25:7; 44:18). They marvel that the **Plan of God** is so intricately woven throughout the entire Bible—without ever a hint of contradiction. That is because it is God who is bringing His word to fruition:

Ezekiel 12:25 I am the LORD: I will speak, and the **word** that I shall speak **shall come to pass**; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious House of Israel, I will say and I will and accomplish it, declares the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 36:24, 28 I will take you from among the heathen, and **gather you out of all countries**, and will bring you into your own land... And ye shall **dwell in the [Promised] Land that I gave to your fathers**; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

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Amos 9:14-15 I will bring my people Israel back from **captivity**, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall **plant vineyards**, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make **gardens**, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them **upon their land**.

Revelation 7:1, 3 After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth [bringing plagues], holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind [that blows the seven trumpet plagues] should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. [‘Do not exterminate the families of the earth just yet – because some need **to be protected** to make it through to the Kingdom of God’]... Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **until we have sealed** the servants of our God **in their foreheads**.

It is only those servants who will receive the **seal** of our God in their foreheads who will survive to the end of the Tribulation:

Revelation 9:4 It was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which **have not** the **seal of God** in **their foreheads**.

Ezekiel 20:42 You shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall **bring you into the land** of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.

Ezekiel 34:15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will **seek** that which was lost, and **bring again** that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.

Jeremiah 1:12 Then said the LORD unto me, You have discerned keenly: for I am ready to **perform my word**.

Many will soon recognize that the modern Israelitish nations of England, Wales, America, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada, Finland, Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Denmark, France, South Africa, Judea, Australia, the Netherlands, and others of the world, will be **decimated for their sins** of Sabbath breaking and idolatry, again. At the very end of his life, Jacob/Israel prophesied that which shall befall his sons in the last days (Genesis 49:1).

Modern Israel and Judah will be brought to the full realization that they have forsaken God entirely and have been living the wrong way. Most will die in the coming **distress of nations** just as ancient Israel perished in the wilderness, except for their sons and daughters who went into the Promised Land. God said:

Numbers 14:22-23, 29 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it... Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me.

After a select group of people has endured the coming Tribulation—the chastening accompanying Jacob's Trouble—they will be liberated and brought back to the Millennial Promised Land. The Tribulation will be so horrendous that entire countries will no longer exist. An **elect remnant** will be **saved out** of the ravages of the Tribulation:

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Jeremiah 30:11 I am with you, says the LORD, to **save** you: though I make a **full end of all nations** where I have **scattered you**, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

The devastation will be near total – with only a **remnant** of the strong and the young people surviving – and all those upon whom God is merciful. Alliances, leagues and treaties [God calls them ‘lovers’] will be on no affect because God had said, “You shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.” (Exodus 23:32)

Hosea 8:9-10 They are gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey alone by himself: Ephraim has hired lovers [leagues, defensive coalitions, and pacts]. Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now **will I gather** them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

Jeremiah 30:14-15 All your lovers [parties to treaties] have forgotten you; they seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities; because thy sins were increased. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because **your sins were increased**, I have done these things unto you.

God says that Assyria will be too harsh and go too far in its destruction of Israel, so God turns their violence back upon them:

Isaiah 10:5-7 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit **he means not so**, neither does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations **not a few**.

Germany is on the ascendancy, posturing for supremacy, but they are moving toward the power politics that dominated their drive for thousands of years... Nevertheless, the LORD will have the final retribution against the enemy of His people:

Jeremiah 30:16 Therefore all they that devour you **shall be devoured**; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey.

God will come to the aid of the **scattered remnant** who are the focus of worldwide anti – Semitism. Jacob/Israel's children will be thankful, rebuild and be happy again as their population soars (Jeremiah 30:18-19).

Jeremiah 30:22, 24 You shall be my people, and I will be your God... The fierce anger of the LORD will not diminish until it has finished all He has planned of the intentions of His heart. In the **latter days** you will understand this.

## **The Marvelous Gathering**

Not only are we seeking the coming Millennium, God Himself is looking forward to it.

Zechariah 8:6-8 Thus says the LORD of hosts; If it be marvelous in the eyes of the **remnant** of this people in these days, should it also be **marvelous** in mine eyes declares the LORD of hosts. Thus says the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and **they shall be my people**, and **I will be their God**, in truth and in righteousness.

Genesis 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Messiah] come; and unto Him shall the **gathering** of the people be.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

## **The Repentant Gathered from the Four Corners of the Earth**

Isaiah 11:12 The Lord shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall **assemble** the **outcasts of Israel**, and **gather** together the dispersed of **Judah** from the **four corners of the earth**.

Isaiah 65:9 I will bring forth a progeny out of Jacob/Israel, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and **mine elect** shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

Where will the **elect remnant** be during the Tribulation? The end-time desolation will be worldwide.

Isaiah 43:5-7 [Thus says the LORD,] Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And **gather** you from the west. I will say to the north, Give them up; and to the south, Do not hold them back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created [Israel] for My Glory.

Luke 21:24 [Jesus said] They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations:

Jeremiah 30:10 Therefore fear you not, O my servant Jacob, says the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your children from the land of **their captivity**; and Jacob/Israel shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid [in the Millennium].

Nehemiah 1:8-10 Remember, I beseech you, the word that you commanded thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will **scatter** you abroad among the nations: But if ye **turn unto me** [repent], and keep my Commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the utmost part of the heaven, yet **will I gather** them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

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Here we see a **change of heart / attitude** that God has always required of His people (Jeremiah 31:9; 50:4). In the Millennium, there will be a new nation, made up of our children, grandchildren, and those whom God has **gathered** to the Land of Israel to once again grow into a glorious People of the Lord. They will be weeping and seeking the LORD their God. That is who will live through and survive the Tribulation. It will be those who have a repentant attitude and **call upon** the name of the LORD. Their hearts will have turned to God – not in haughtiness – but in humility – for that is what He desires:

Jeremiah 50:4 In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and **weeping**: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.

**The heavenly signs** signal the last year of the Tribulation – and the Day of the Lord (Luke 21:25-27):

Joel 2:30-32 I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever **shall call** on the **name of the LORD** shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, and in the **remnant** whom the LORD shall call.

God does not change—His word remains forever true. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, we find this necessity for a deep desire to draw near to God and His way (Acts 15:17; James 4:8-10). God says:

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are **called by my name**, shall humble themselves, and pray, and **seek my face**, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

We find that Isaiah 66:18-23 further portrays this re-gathering of those of Israel who refrained from paganism and idolatry. In the captivity of the Great Tribulation there will be a **remnant of Israel** who will come to themselves and begin to obey the voice of the Lord, keeping His commandments. They will be of such a heart to sigh and cry over the iniquity and abominations in modern Israel. Those are the ones upon whom God will have pity and save from the rigors of captivity. The rest of the world's populations will receive the undiluted wrath of God (Revelation 14:10; Ezekiel 5:13).

Nehemiah 1:9 But if ye **turn unto me** [that is repentance], and keep my Commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet **I will gather** them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

Few realize how remarkably extensive the theme of the selection and preservation of a **remnant of Israel** is. God gives us a plethora of Scriptures about the remnant being recovered in the pages of the Old Testament and New. Old Testament Israel was a physical people – nonetheless, they were God's people. When they were carried into captivity by the Assyrians it seemed that they were lost forever. Over and over God assured His people, Israel:

1 Kings 6:13 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and **will not forsake** my people Israel.

God in His wisdom and mercy sent hope of Israel's future restoration. However, Israel never returned to the Promised Land. These prophecies of Israel's reestablishment in the Holy Land all point to the time of the Millennium when they will be fulfilled.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and before Israel entered the Promised Land, Jesus Christ knew that they would not be able to keep His law perfectly, and would be carried away captive for their sins. Israel has not returned to the Promised Land to this day [only a part of Judah has]. And yet, Israel was promised by Jesus that after their captivity He would return and **gather a remnant** of His people together from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other:

Deuteronomy 30:1-2 It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse [captivity and scattering], which I have set before thee, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, where the LORD thy God has driven you, and shall **return unto the LORD** thy God [this has not happened yet], and shall obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, you and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Quoting Deuteronomy 30 in His Olivet Prophecy of Matthew 24, Jesus repeated the fact that He would restore an **elect remnant** of Israel at the end of the age – the **latter days** – for a very important function—to multiply and will repopulate the face of the earth.

This theme of **gathering the elect**, and restoring a **remnant**, is an often repeated topic throughout the pages of the Scriptures. In the same way that Adam and Eve were initially given one-thousand year lives, had they not sinned, the **elect remnant** will be given very long life spans – conceivably the entire Millennium.

Isaiah 65:22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine **elect shall long enjoy** the work of their hands.

There are so many verses that demonstrate God's promise of hope to Israel.

Deuteronomy 30:8-10 **You shall return** and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all His Commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make you prosperous in every work of your hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep His Commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

As the Tribulation comes to an end, all the world will see the Two Witnesses slain and then resurrected three and a half days later. It will be a terribly fearful sight to behold (Revelation 11:9-12). Can you imagine the consternation and trepidation of the **remnant** Israelites who are still in their internment camps around the world? They have never had the pleasure of Sabbath fellowship or Bible Studies that might have told them what to expect. They will not yet realize that their lives will be spared momentarily. Their fear and apprehension will be overwhelming. It is an understatement to say the remnant will be terrified when every other Israelitish person on earth is dying. Somehow, they will find the wherewithal to praise God:

Revelation 11:13 The same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the **remnant were affrighted**, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Ezekiel 39:28-29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into **captivity** among the heathen: but I have **gathered** them unto their own land, and have left none of them anymore there. Neither will I hide my face anymore from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the House of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

## **Captive Israelites Joyfully Liberated**

There can be no Millennium without this **gathering** of the **remnant** of Israel. God will yet gather Israel again. How is He going to do it? When and where will He gather Israel? Who will live over into that Wonderful World Tomorrow? God married Israel – He is going to make good on that marriage covenant.

Jeremiah 31:7-10 Thus says the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the **remnant of Israel**. Behold, I will bring them from the **north country**, and **gather** them from the remote parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and women in labor: a noble company shall return here. They shall come with **weeping**, and with **supplications** will I lead them... He that scattered Israel will **gather** him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

These people will enjoy much peace and become rich in cattle and goods (Ezekiel 38:12). But before that, the soon coming final World War will see so many of our young men and women carried away captive into all nations. Beginning after the Tribulation, in the world tomorrow, there will be a **small remnant** of physical people who will multiply and fill the earth once again. We find an early prophecy of God gathering His people at a time when they shall obey His voice:

Deuteronomy 30:3-5 The LORD your God will liberate you from captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and **gather** thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God has **scattered** you. If any of yours be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God **gather** thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into **the land which thy fathers possessed** [the Promised Land], and you shall possess it; and He will do thee good, and **multiply thee** above thy fathers. [A veritable population explosion.]

## **Who Are the Remnant**

Who are the **remnant** so often spoken of in the Scriptures? What is the purpose of a remnant people and what are they a **remnant** of? The remnant is also referred to as the **elect**, but they are not to be confused with the **very elect**, who are the Church brethren (soon to be Saints) of God who will be resurrected at the last trumpet (Matthew 24:24).

God told Ezekiel that his message was primarily aimed at the **House of Israel** (Ezekiel 2:3, 3:1, 4-7). However, Ezekiel was a young Jewish hostage in Babylon about 130 years after the ten northern tribes of Israel—the northern kingdom—had been deported from the Holy Land by the Assyrian empire. Israel as a nation existed no more. There is no evidence that it was even possible for Ezekiel to take his warning prophecies to widely scattered Israel. What then was God's intent? God was showing Ezekiel what would happen to Israel in the **latter days** (Ezekiel 38:16).

Israel was not able to know what would befall them in the latter days until the Bible was widely disseminated after the invention of the printing press. Israel is being **warned today!** In showing what will befall Israel during the Tribulation, God instructed Ezekiel to shave his head and beard. God prophesied that there would be **three** major categories of devastation brought to bear upon Israel:

Ezekiel 5:1-2 You, son of man, take thee a razor-sharp sword as sharp as a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take **thee balances** to weigh, and divide the hair. You shall burn with **fire** a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a **knife**: and a third part thou shalt **scatter** in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

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When Ezekiel writes, “I will draw out a sword after them,” the inference is, “coming war.” Ezekiel shows us that fully **two-thirds** of our modern-day physical Israelites will die in the upcoming **pestilence**, famine and war – that is hundreds of millions of people – and one-third of the Israelites will go into war-torn **captivity** (Ezekiel 5:12; Deuteronomy 28:59-61; Revelation 7:4-8). Jacob’s name, “Israel,” was placed primarily on the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh.

The Bible prophesies of deadly diseases in the Tribulation. Health departments and the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Antibiotic Resistance Lab Network are finding hundreds of germs with antibiotic resistance genes in the United States that are able to cause infections that are difficult or impossible to treat. Little or nothing can be done about emerging viruses. Smallpox is an example of an extremely contagious and deadly virus for which there is no known cure. Supposedly eradicated due to worldwide vaccination programs, the virulent serum is readily available to those disposed to resort to **germ warfare**. Smallpox vaccinations ceased in 1970 leaving a huge percentage of the human race vulnerable and in jeopardy.

Numerous threats to our survival are immediately evident. Look at our ecosystem alone. Americans, British, and indeed the world are being warned of danger to the world’s ecosystem. Insects are vanishing at an alarming rate. Beetles, bees, wasps, spiders, centipedes, grasshoppers, and butterfly numbers are plummeting. Overuse of herbicides and insecticides are among the culprits. Many insects are vital pollinators. Others recycle our ecosystems, and are the staple building blocks of insect-eating animals such as insectivorous birds, lizards and other animals. They too are in decline. Louisiana State University Entomologist Timothy D. Schowalter says that much of our food supply depends on pollinators such as honeybees, and that there is compelling evidence of decline in insect populations. Some species have altogether disappeared and become extinct! This trend is leading to a catastrophic failure of the entire world’s ecosystem.

**How will some survive** when God promises near total destruction? Where is the hope? Where is the encouragement? We are given an example in the Old Testament of a people who were **spared** from annihilation when a terrible destruction came upon all Israel because of the abominations of the nation (Ezekiel 9). In Ezekiel 5, God inspired Ezekiel to mention an **additional** very special group of people who are the **remnant** which would be **sealed**, physically survive the Tribulation, and return from captivity with songs and everlasting joy to the Promised Land (Isaiah 35:10). God says:

Ezekiel 5:3-4 You shall also take thereof a **few in number**, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them **again**, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into **all the House of Israel** (Deuteronomy 32:22).

Where God tells Ezekiel the third time to “Take of them again...” it implies that the last third suffers the same fate as the first two-thirds. How can that be—that is three-thirds—all of Israel? We find a precedent in the Exodus where **all Israel perished** in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29; 26:65; 1 Corinthians 10:5). In Moses’ day, all those older than 20 years of age died in the wilderness. These remarkable verses tell us that almost **all** of modern Israel will perish in the soon coming Tribulation.

Ezekiel 20:36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the Lord GOD.

Hebrews 3:17-19 With whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

It will only be after Jesus destroys the entire Babylonian system (Revelation 18) that a remnant of Israel will be able to return to the Promised Land. Ezekiel reiterates the near total destruction and annihilation of modern Israel. Only a very small number will be exempted:

Ezekiel 5:12-13 A **third** part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a **third** part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a **third** part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

It is **never** too late to turn to God. The answer to being saved in the Tribulation is to **seek God**.

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 When you are in Tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if you **turn to the LORD** thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them.

## **A Small Remnant**

Jesus Christ with His Saints will be establishing His Father's glorious Kingdom over the earth for newly called Israelites. The horrendous memories of their experiences in the Tribulation, coupled with their miraculous rescue and almost unbelievable regathering into the Promised Land will eclipse and replace the first Exodus story of history.

Jeremiah 23:7 Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that they shall **no more say**, The LORD lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; ['Forget the first exodus' (Isaiah 11; Jeremiah 16; Amos 9:14).]

During the captivity of the Tribulation, young Israelitish men and women will be scattered to every nook and cranny around the globe. These will be our children, grandchildren, and those whom God has **gathered** to the Land of Israel—having survived the Tribulation. The young people of the world tomorrow will not have horrible diseases to spread. They may have deep scars, but God will heal them and make them a clean and healthy population (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15).

Jeremiah 23:8 But, The LORD lives, which brought up and which led the children of the House of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring the third part **through the fire** [Tribulation], and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. (Ezekiel 5:2)

The Book of Ezekiel was not written to the Jews among whom Ezekiel found himself – but to the whole House of Israel. The Book of Ezekiel is written to us today – modern America, England and the rest... Ezekiel's words have reached Israel today, but he never did go and preach to all the "lost tribes of Israel." All Israel today has the printed Bible with the words of warning from Ezekiel. They are receiving the warning – if only they will heed it!

Israel was not "lost." Ezekiel knew exactly where the northern ten tribes of Israel had been scattered, just as Jesus and the apostles knew nearly six-hundred years later where the scattered *diaspora* were located (James 1:1). James, the half-brother of Jesus sent his epistle to all Israel of his day.

Matthew 10:5-7 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the **lost sheep** of the House of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The Jews of Christ's day were very aware that they were only one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob their father had twelve sons. The Gospel message is intended for all twelve sons of our patriarch, Jacob/Israel.

## **Tribulation Survivors**

A number of young men and women are slated by God to physically **survive** the ravages of the Tribulation. Because they will be **sealed**, they will be protected in the Tribulation. Remember how in the Book of Ezekiel the Lord said, "Set a **mark** upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations?" That was an example in the Old Testament of a people who were spared from annihilation when a terrible punishment came upon all Israel because of the abominations of the nation.

Ezekiel 9:1-3 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's **inkhorn** by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon He was, to the threshold of the house. And the God of Israel called to the man clothed with linen, which had the **writer's inkhorn** by his side.

We see **how** it will be possible for a physical remnant of Israel to survive the soon coming Tribulation, and live-over into the world tomorrow—they will be protected by the seal of God?

Ezekiel 9:4-6 The LORD said unto [indestructible angel], Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark** upon the **foreheads** of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof. And to the other [angelic beings] He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the **mark**; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

Revelation 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have **sealed** the servants of our God in their **foreheads**.

We infer from Ezekiel 9:4-6, that God will not spare the rebellious, godless enemies of His way of life and truth. In Ezekiel's day, the **sealing mark of indelible ink** on their foreheads afforded them protection – and their lives were spared by God. This example was prophetically preserved for us so that we might understand the process of **sealing** employed in Revelation 7 where the angel, having the **seal** of the living God, will set a mark upon the **foreheads** of the servants of God – exactly as in Ezekiel's day. God will seal some in their forehead (Revelation 7:3) for divine protection from what is about to befall all the evil inhabitants of the world, just as He did in Ezekiel's day. God did not have to give us all the details of the **sealing / marking** process in Ezekiel Chapter 9, but He did. God could have left Revelation Chapter 7 entirely out of the Bible, and simply said, "The men that sigh and cry will be spared." But, God wanted us to be able to draw the parallel and see how He will **preserve** His people.

Ezekiel's warnings are meant specifically for the rebellious end-time people of modern Israel. Ancient Israel had already been carried into captivity by the time God gave Ezekiel His prophecies. Ezekiel's time period of writing was before, during and after the fall of Jerusalem. His prophecies concerned the future of both Judah and Israel. We have seen before that Ezekiel's writings are for us today – because they were given to Ezekiel way too late to have been heard by Israel before their going into captivity beginning in 721-718 B.C. As such, they were evidently meant in a dual sense – applying in part to Jerusalem's fall to ancient Babylon, but also, the fall of Judah and Israel to end-time Babylon. The catastrophe that strikes our nations is going to be unprecedented in the annals of history.

Ezekiel 2:3-5 The Lord God said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the **children of Israel** [think – the modern Israelitish nations today – England and the United States], to a **rebellious** nation that has rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiff-hearted. I send you unto them; and you shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

Today's nations of modern Israel are being warned. When Ezekiel wrote these words, ancient Israel had been in captivity for about 125 years. Ezekiel's message is to modern-day Israel – America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand etc.

We are answering **how** will a physical remnant of Israel survive the soon coming Tribulation to live-over into the world tomorrow?

## **Reunification of Judah and Israel**

Genesis 48:16 [Jacob/Israel said:] The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and **let my name be named on them**, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

An understanding of the history of the descendants of Jacob/Israel, and who they are, is essential to **understanding the Bible**. It is the descendants of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh—modern Israel—who have received the great blessings of national power and wealth, and who will bear the brunt of the main force of the enemy's attack and the resulting captivity (Genesis 48:3-5; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). It is the United States and Britain—modern Israel—who will mainly yet face this national **captivity**—followed by God's gathering and restoring of a remnant for the Millennium. However, it will not be only the birthright Israelites consisting of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh who are impacted by the Tribulation. All the other tribes of Israel are not necessarily precluded including: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. The tribe of Dan is specifically omitted in Revelation, possibly because of their persistent idolatry, namely, "the sin of Samaria" (Amos 8:14). Nevertheless, some from **all** the tribes will be sealed for protection:

## **144,000**

Revelation 7:4 I heard the number of them which were **sealed**: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of **all the tribes** of the children of Israel.

'**Sealed**,' means that this select number of people will be physically protected during the Tribulation, as they were in Ezekiel's day, because they worship the true God – and they hate what is going on in a godless society. They will go on to become the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of New Israel in the Millennium.

God will not cut the tribe of Dan off forever. We find that God will provide them a homeland in the Millennium (Ezekiel 48:1). **All twelve tribes** will have their place in the Millennium. God will work it out as He did when the tribe of Benjamin was once about to vanish (Judges 21:3, 23). There is much more of God's theme of the gathering of the **remnant** of Israel.

The people of Judah and Israel have not been unified for thousands of years. The restoration of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel as they were in the Days of King David and King Solomon will be a glorious reunion when it takes place. God tells Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3:18 In those days the **House of Judah** shall walk with the **House of Israel**, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

A crucial key to understanding Biblical prophecy is knowing the **identity** of modern-day Israel. The House of Israel has forgotten its identity. Because of sin, Sabbath breaking, and idolatry, God allowed the nation of Israel—the ten northern tribes—to be taken **captive** and deported from the Promised Land. Israel has never returned from their Assyrian captivity to the land on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Jesus sent His twelve apostles to preach to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 10:5-7).

Isaiah 5:13 Therefore my people are gone into **captivity**, because they have no knowledge [of God's way and truth]: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst [for the knowledge of spiritual things].

### **I Will Gather a Remnant**

It is God who says, "I will take you from among the Gentiles, and **gather** you from all the nations and bring you into your own land." (Ezekiel 36:24) The Prophet Ezekiel and the beloved apostle John give us the key to understanding who will be **sealed** for protection, and to make up the post-Tribulation **remnant** Israelites.

Mark 13:27 And then shall He send His angels, and **shall gather** together His **elect** from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

This gathering will commence on the same day, at the end of the Tribulation, that the first resurrection takes place on **Pentecost**.

1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This remnant will be the most excellent and unique group of physical individuals God has ever called, selected, and assembled at one time. The elect remnant will be the survivors of the Tribulation and the first people who walked in darkness to see the great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the **light shined** (Isaiah 9:2).

Those of the remnant will have come to see the **light**, and begun to choose God's way of excellence. It will have become abundantly clear to them that this world's society has brought nothing but chaos and misery. For the first time, they will begin to believe that Jesus Christ will usher in an entirely new set of **moral standards** in His coming Kingdom:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Stop deceiving yourselves! Neither the sexually immoral people, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor passive homosexual partners, nor sexual molesters, nor anyone practicing homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy of gain, nor any who are addicted to hard drinking, nor slanderers using denigrating language, nor swindlers, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

That filthy, sick and sorrowful immorality will be replaced with the gracious decency produced by God's Spirit: a world of love, empathy, joyfulness, peaceful living, tolerance, mercy, patience, altruism, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, modesty, chastity, self-discipline and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). There will be a right worship of God, honor of parents, no anger, hatred, murder or abuse, no sexual immorality or adultery, no theft, lies, or false witness, or desire to possess anything that belongs or pertains to another person.

When those of the physical **remnant** see the destruction of the world taking place all around themselves, they will sigh, cry, mourn and weep for the abominations that are in the land. How and when will this remnant be **sealed** so that they may be afforded protection from the destruction which will come upon all the earth? Revelation Chapter 7 is an inset chapter that does not follow the timeline sequence established by the rest of the book of Revelation. We find that the earth, sea, and the trees are about to be hurt – but the damage has not yet begun. When our children and grandchildren, and those who will comprise the tribes of the Children of Israel see the destruction of the world about to take place, their hearts failing them for fear – and seeing Jesus coming with power and great glory – and realizing that their redemption is drawing near, they will sigh, cry, mourn and weep for the **outrageous depravity** and the abominations that are in the land (Luke 21:25-28; Ezekiel 9:4). When we study who has been sealed and protected, we see that a physical **remnant** is preserved alive at the last possible moment—God granting them repentance so that they turn from their detestable sins (Ezekiel 18:21; Acts 3:19).

Revelation 7:2-3 I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the **seal** of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **until we have sealed** the servants of our God in their foreheads.

God is greatly looking forward to the day that He will **gather His remnant** out of the nations where they have been miraculously shielded and protected during the Tribulation. There are so many references and details about this restoration of a **remnant** of Israel at the very beginning of the Millennium that it is a wonder that this epoch event has gone unnoticed by the professing "Christian" world.

God says, “I will **gather** the **remnant** of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase [in the Millennium].” (Jeremiah 23:3) A soon coming World War will see our young men and women carried away captive. They will not be members of the Church of God. How will they survive throughout the Tribulation to be able to see a new day in the Kingdom of God on earth? In order to receive protection, they must be **sealed** by God.

Ezekiel 6:8-9 Yet will I leave a **remnant**, that ye may have some that shall **escape the sword** among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. And they that escape of you shall **remember me** [the LORD says] among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which has departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

### **The Saints Are Sealed before the Millennium**

When the Tribulation comes upon the entire earth, the faithful Church of God brethren who have overcome Satan (Revelation 12:11), will be safe because they will have already been spiritually **sealed** in their foreheads and physically protected. All true saints are sealed, but God’s seal is not physical. It is not a visible mark, implanted chip, or emblem. Paul explains that the converted Church brethren have **already been sealed**:

“God has also **sealed** us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts... In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that Holy Spirit of promise.” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Ephesians 1:13).

These verses refer to all the saints of God—all those converted Church brethren who have ever lived—whether Old Testament or New Testament Christians. When the Millennium begins, these physical saints will have been resurrected—becoming spiritual Saints:

Revelation 14:1 I looked, and, lo, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with Him a **hundred forty and four thousand**, having **His name** and His **Father’s name** written upon their foreheads (Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 22:4).

There are **two groups** of 144,000 spoken of in the Book of Revelation. Here is the scenario that is Scripturally consistent: Notice first that the Saints – the converted brethren – have **Jesus’ name** and the **Father’s name** (Revelation 14:1). They are before the throne of God in heaven – having been changed from mortal to immortal (verse 3). They are **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb (verse 4). They sing the **song at the Father’s throne** (verse 3). They are spiritual **virgins** (verse 4). They are always with the **Lamb** (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The Millennium marks the onset of their everlasting honeymoon—the time of intimate harmony following their nuptials. And they have been **redeemed** from among men (verses 3 and 4). These factors clearly define the resurrected Saints.

Revelation 14:2-3 I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new **song** before the **throne**, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were **redeemed** from the earth.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The firstfruits are the 144,000 of Revelation 14. They are all the **converted Saints** from Abel throughout history - up to the Two Witnesses. The Two Witnesses are the **last** martyrs to die in the Tribulation – and they are the **first** saints to be resurrected in the **First Resurrection** (Revelation 11:12).

The Prophet Daniel explains that those of the first and better resurrection will awake to **everlasting life**—those whose names are found written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 3:5; 21:27). The resurrection of the Saints corresponds with that of the Two Witnesses at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 11:11):

Daniel 12:1-3 At that time shall [the archangel] Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble [the Tribulation], such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [Lamb’s book of life]. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to **everlasting life**...

One hundred and forty and four thousand firstfruit Saints will be redeemed!

Revelation 14:3-5 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and **no man** could learn that song except the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women [false doctrine]; for they are **virgins**. These are they which follow the Lamb where-so-ever He goes. These were **redeemed** from among men, being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

### **Guillotine Reinstated for Christians**

It is impossible to describe the terror that will sweep the earth during the Tribulation. The **remnant** will be petrified with fear (Revelation 11:13). Decapitation is slated to return in a big way during the Tribulation. It will not be utilized on the lawless as much as its brutal horror will be meant to intimidate Christians and those disposed to be sympathetic to followers of Christ.

The one hundred and forty-four thousand are the total number of the **First Resurrection** of Saints. There will be a considerable number of believers who will bravely yield their lives by taking a stand against the Beast power. Their number will fill up the 144,000 firstfruits (Revelation 7:9). Though the Bible describes their number as a “great multitude,” it is the same Greek phrase used to describe the number of people that sought Jesus, and the priests who were obedient to the faith after Pentecost (Matthew 8:1; John 12:12; Acts 6:7). They will also be in the First Resurrection and thereby **reign with Christ** in the Millennium.

Revelation 20:4-5 I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were **beheaded** for the **witness of Jesus**, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they **lived** and **reigned with Christ** a thousand years... This is the First Resurrection [of the Saints].

The great multitude of Revelation 7:9 are clearly righteous, converted and resurrected Saints, having overcome Satan by laying down their lives in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:11; 7:14) and having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How many people will take a stand? The number of people that will witness for Christ is yet to be seen. John saw in vision:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Revelation 7:9-14 I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with **white robes** [righteousness], and palms in their hands And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb... And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which **came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

They, too, will attain to eternal salvation! The language of Revelation 7 then transitions to beyond the final adjudication of those who will be judged righteous on the Last Great Day and the Great White Throne Judgment – to the very end of God’s Plan for this earthly realm in which man has existed for seven-thousand years – to God’s eternal Kingdom:

Revelation 7:15-17 Therefore, they are before the **throne of God**, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall **the sun light** on them, nor any heat. For the **Lamb** which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto **living fountains of waters**: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Compare the language of Revelation 7:15-17 to that of Revelation 22:1-5.

Revelation 22:1-5 He shewed me a pure **river of water of life**, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb... There shall be no more curse: but the **throne of God** and of the **Lamb** shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither **light of the sun**; for the **Lord God gives them light**: and they shall reign forever and ever.

### **Captives Sealed**

Those of the **remnant** are the 144,000 of Revelation 7. They will be the physical survivors of the Tribulation who will live over into the Millennium.

In Revelation 7, the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be served throughout the Millennium by Jesus Christ and the resurrected Church Saints (Jeremiah 23:4; Isaiah 30:20-21). These tribes of the children of Israel are mostly today’s citizens of English-speaking nations. They are descendants of the physical tribes of Israel. Their countries of origin are the countries of modern day America, England, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc. One hundred and forty-four thousand survivors of the Tribulation are enough for 72,000 families to begin the Millennium.

A physical **remnant** of modern Israel will survive the Tribulation, and to live-over into the world tomorrow? God will choose the selection of physical individuals who will survive the Tribulation and then begin to populate the seventh Millennium. The face of the earth is going to be drastically changed and the composition of its civilization will be something extraordinary. The peoples and nations will be unrecognizable when God acts to restore the children of Jacob/Israel. We see how and when the Saints are raised (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The resurrected Saints are not the elect who are saved alive at the end of the Tribulation to live into the world tomorrow. The survivors of the Tribulation will be the physical **remnant** of Jacob, or as we see most often – the physical **remnant** of Israel.

## **The Remnant Shall Return**

It is the LORD God who is the **Light of Israel**. It is He alone who calls His people out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Isaiah 10:17-19 The **Light of Israel** shall be for a fire, and His Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour His thorns and His briars [evil men] in one day [Day of the Lord]; And shall consume the glory of His forest [evil families and society], and of His fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard bearer faints. And the rest of the trees of His forest [the **elect remnant**] shall be few, that a child may write them. [a small number, a very few people]

When reading, “gather” and “remnant” – look for the context of entering into the Millennium. Isaiah witnessed Israel's fall, captivity and deportation to Assyria. Yet he speaks of **another future gathering** where the remnant will begin to look to God and no longer rely on Assyria:

Isaiah 10:20-22 It shall come to pass in that day [Day of the Lord], that the **remnant** of Israel [USA and the UK etc.], and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob/Israel, shall no more again rely upon him that smote them; But they will faithfully trust the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. The **remnant shall return**, even the **remnant of Jacob/Israel**, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea [God's promise to Abraham of great nations, Genesis 15], yet [only] a **remnant** of them shall return: Destruction of the people [of Israel] being fully deserved. (Romans 9:27-28)

We have seen over and over that God's retribution for the abominations of Israel is coming in the Tribulation.

Isaiah 10:23 For the Lord GOD Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the entire land.

Assyria will inflict terrible suffering on the captives, but God will cut those days short so that the **elect remnant** lives to tell the tale (Matthew 24:22):

Isaiah 10:24-25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwell in **Zion**, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet **a very little while**, and the indignation shall **cease**, and mine anger in their destruction.

God will act again just as He did in Ezekiel's day to **preserve** a people unto Himself. Where in the Bible can we find a passage that clearly shows a **remnant of physical Israel**, in the end-time, being **sealed** by God as He did in Ezekiel's day? We see here a time of absolute peace:

## **Israel's Three Captivities**

At the time when God appeared to Abram and made His Covenant Sacrifice (Genesis 15:13, 18), He revealed that Abraham's offspring would be in **captivity** and slavery in Egypt some four hundred years later. That was Israel's **first captivity**:

Genesis 15:13-14 The LORD said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, where they are **enslaved**, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

The **second captivity** of Israel took place beginning about 725 BC during the time of King Hoshea when he was vanquished by the Assyrian forces of Shalmanesar (2 Kings 17:6, 23, 18:10). Judah went into Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 24 & 25) more than a century afterward by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, although backsliding Israel justified herself more than her treacherous sister Judah (Jeremiah 3:10-11). Much earlier, even before Israel entered into the Promised Land, God prophesied through Moses that Israel would go into a **second captivity** because of their Sabbath breaking and idolatry.

Deuteronomy 28:36-37 The LORD shall bring you, and your king which you shall set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.

Then, remarkably, because prophecy is often dual in nature, Moses jumps way forward into the future prophetic time speaking of modern day Israel in the Tribulation of the **latter days**. Moses speaks of a **third captivity** during the coming Tribulation:

Deuteronomy 4:27 The LORD shall **scatter you** among the nations, and ye shall be left **few in number** among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

The only time that Israel is described as “**few in number**” is here, and Ezekiel 5:3, referring to the **remnant** of the Tribulation.

Ezekiel 5:3 You shall also take thereof a **few in number**...

Writing at approximately the same time that John wrote Revelation, the historian, Josephus wrote, “the ten tribes [of Israel] are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an **immense multitude** and not to be estimated in numbers.” (Josephus, Flavius. *Antiquities*. p. 11:133) Moses continues:

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 When you are in Tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the **latter days**, if you turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the Covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.

The Bible does not record Israel having ever gone through the terrible siege that is yet to come, but Moses speaks of it in the Blessings and Cursing chapters (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). A contingency of Judah did return to Jerusalem after seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10), and then again in 1948, but the **twelve tribes of Israel** have not returned to the Promised Land—but they will! That is where the world is incorrect – believing that Israel has already returned to Palestine. God said:

Leviticus 26:33 I will **scatter you** among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Leviticus 26:41-42 ...If then their uncircumcised hearts **be humbled**, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my Covenant with Jacob, and also my Covenant with Isaac, and also my Covenant with Abraham will I remember...

Though the whereabouts of Israel is lost to this present evil world, God is faithful to remember His Covenant, and in the end – will yet make Israel as the stars of heaven for multitude.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Leviticus 26:44-45 Yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my Covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the Covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.

Continuing in the Blessings and Cursing chapters, God speaks through Moses of the latter day **captivity**. Though some of these curses could be applied to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, the horrendous nature of the torment exceeds the second captivity and therefore must, in duality, apply to the coming captivity during the impending Tribulation:

Deuteronomy 28:47-48 Because you served not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies [in slavery] which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He has destroyed you.

Read Deuteronomy 28:49-57 for the description of the enemy and his horribly cruel treatment of modern Israel – the peoples of America and England.

### **Saved out of Tribulation**

Deuteronomy 28:64-66 The LORD shall **scatter you** among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there you shall serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And your life shall hang in doubt before thee; and you shall be terrified day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God prophesies that Israel and Judah will yet again go into captivity and Tribulation – and after that has run its course, a **surviving remnant** will return to the Promised Land:

Jeremiah 30:3 Lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the **captivity of my people Israel and Judah**, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers [Holy Land], and they shall possess it.

God asks, “Do men go through labor pains? No! Why then do I foresee him in such pain?”

Jeremiah 30:6-7 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is the Great [Tribulation], so that none is like it: it is even the time of **Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be **saved** out of the [Tribulation].

These days will extend throughout the Tribulation and up to the resurrection of the Saints—the time when King David will once rule:

Jeremiah 30:9-10 They shall serve the LORD their God, and **David** their king, whom I will **raise up** unto them. Therefore fear you not, O my servant Jacob, says the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will **save** you from afar, and your children from the **land of their captivity**; and Jacob/Israel shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid [in the Millennium].

## **God Will Gather the Outcast, Lame, Feeble, Weak, Crippled and Handicapped**

We are all familiar with the Exodus and how God **delivered** Israel from Egypt. We speak about it every Passover. What we do not often speak about is how God will **again** deliver a **remnant** of Israel to begin the New World Tomorrow. What will become of repentant Israelites who are too weak and afflicted in the Tribulation?

Micah 4:6-7 In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble her that **halts**, and I will **gather** her that is driven out, and her that I have **afflicted**; And I will make her that **halted** a **remnant**, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.

In His compassion for those of the Tribulation, the Lord will spare all the **repentant Israelites** – though they be near death's door.

Isaiah 35:5-6 Then the eyes of the **blind** shall be opened, and the **ears** of the **deaf** shall be unstopped. [God's Spirit will also bring spiritual hearing and seeing.] Then shall the **lame** man leap as an hart, and the **tongue** of the dumb sing.

Most of the sick, weak and elderly will not survive the rigors of the captivity, exportation, and slave-labor work camps. Ancient Israel **never** repented - and were **not gathered** from among the nations – but God knows His contrite sheep and will not lose a single one (John 17:12).

Jeremiah 30:17 I will restore health unto you, and I will **heal you of thy wounds**, says the LORD; because they called thee an **Outcast**, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.

Psalms 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and **gather** us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.

Psalms 147:2-3 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: He **gathers** together the **outcasts** of Israel. He heals the broken in heart, and **binds up their wounds**.

Zephaniah 3:18-19 **I will gather** them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that **halts**, and gather her that was an **Outcast**; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

## **Millennial Families**

It is interesting that God numbers both groups – the physical remnant at the beginning of the Millennium, and the resurrected Saints – as each being **one hundred and forty-four thousand** (Revelation 7; Revelation 14). The 144,000 physical remnant are slated to repopulate the earth by marrying and reproducing many children. Early in the Millennium, expect there to be about seventy-two thousand weddings. The one hundred and forty-four thousand resurrected Saints, from Abel to the Two Witnesses, are the co-Saviors with Jesus Christ. The LORD said of those New Israel citizens of the Millennium:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jeremiah 23:4 I will set up shepherds over them which shall **feed them**: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD.

There will be spiritual Saints shepherding and teaching the men and women of the Millennium. Nowhere in Scripture is the Father given the title of Shepherd (Psalm 80:1).

Isaiah 30:20-21 ...Yet your teachers **shall not be removed** into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

The coming "**Second Exodus**" is about the 72,000 families that will come together from those whom God will **gather** from around the earth. They are most often referred to as the **remnant** in the Scriptures. Prophesying more dearly than the spoken word can tell, Jesus distinguishes them as the **elect**, select or chosen ones (Mark 13:20). This explains the exciting Biblical narrative of how the Millennium begins! Seventy-two thousand might seem a small number to repopulate the earth, but when we consider that God originally began with only **two** people, Adam and Eve, and then after the great flood He replenished the earth with only Noah's three sons and their spouses, seventy-two thousand family units are certainly more than adequate to be fruitful, and replenish the earth.

Beginning after the Tribulation in the world tomorrow, there will be this **small remnant** of physical people who will multiply and fill the earth once again. The parable of the pounds reveals the early administration of the Kingdom of God under the rule of Jesus Christ.

Luke 19:12-19 A certain nobleman [representing Jesus Christ] went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and to return. And He called His ten servants, and delivered them £10, and said unto them, Engage in business until I return... And it came to pass, that when He was returned, having received the Kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained £10. And He said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, you have authority over ten cities. And the second servant came, saying, Lord, thy £ has gained £5. And He said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities.

As the Millennium begins, each of the Saints will manage the new cities allocated to them. The cities of young New Millennials will be relatively small – but increase rapidly with lots and lots of little children, free from the ravages of danger and disease, playing in the streets of Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:5). The Sabbath and Holy Day observances will be first on the agenda, as that is when and where the **Way of God** will be taught – and a new Godly culture established over all the earth (Acts 18:26).

Doing the math. In the beginning of the Millennium there will be a Saint for every New Israelite – in many cases, a Husband and Wife for every new family. That is why the Scriptures say of God's married people:

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being **heirs together of the grace of life**; that your prayers be not hindered.

Resurrected husbands and wives will be serving together in the Millennium.

## **Promise of Perpetuity**

The Prophet Amos wrote before either Israel or Judah went into captivity. Before his calling, Amos was a cattleman and a fig-pricker who produced sweeter figs (Amos 7:14-15). He lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah but prophesied against the wild party-going entertainment culture of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Amos 6:5-6) – warning them of their coming **captivity** (Amos 5:27, 9:8-9). Not appreciated, Amos was told to go back where he came from (Amos 7:12). Through Amos, God speaks of His promise of the Millennial **restoration** and the abundant prosperity of future **Israel**:

Amos 9:13-15 Behold, the days will come, says the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I **will bring again** my people Israel back **from captivity**, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I **will plant them upon their land** [the Promised Land], and they shall no more be uprooted out of their land which I have given them, says the LORD thy God.

When God says, “I will bring again my people Israel back from captivity,” He is speaking primarily of England and the United States. Our nations carry the name “Israel.”

The final fulfillment of these prophecies applies primarily to Great Britain and America. God directed Jacob/Israel on his death-bed to place the **birthright** on Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Genesis 48:13-16 Joseph took them both, **Ephraim** in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and **Manasseh** in his left hand toward Jacob/Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and **let my name be named on them**, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And that is exactly what has taken place in the earth. In the final captivity, **every sinful Israelite will be slain** (Amos 9:1-10). But, “I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says the LORD.” God promises to seal and save a **remnant** only. God knows who the seed of Israel is:

Amos 9:8-9 ...I will **not utterly destroy** the house of Jacob, says the LORD. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the House of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall **not the least grain fall** upon the earth.

God will **spare a remnant** for His purpose of beginning anew in the world tomorrow. The House of David will be restored through the resurrection:

Amos 9:11-12 In that day will I raise up the **tabernacle of David** that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will **raise up** his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the **remnant** of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are **called by my name**, says the LORD that does this.

## **I Will Yet Choose Israel**

This choosing by God lies immediately ahead of us. These hand-picked modern Israelites – some British, some Canadians, some French, some Americans, some Welsh, some Flemish, some Dutch, some Swedes, some Swiss, some Finns, some Scots, some New Zealanders, some Icelanders, some Danes, some Hollanders, some Jews, some Afrikaners, some Australians, and many other nationalities of the world – even those who were enemies of Israel – will be selected by God for the beginning of the Millennium.

Isaiah 14:1 For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet **choose Israel**, and set them in their own land: and the strangers [**foreigners**] shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob/Israel.

The captives will realize that the God of Jacob/Israel is the True God. Some conquered foreigners will willingly subordinate themselves to the Israelites. They will also be **gathered** and treated with respect and fairness; unlike the hard bondage they had **imposed** on the remnant Israelites (Isaiah 56:1-8).

Isaiah 14:2 And the people [New Israel] shall take them [the foreigners], and **bring them to their place**: and the House of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids [slaves and slave girls]: and they shall take them **captives**, whose **captives** they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

Isaiah 14:3 It shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give you **rest** from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the **hard bondage** wherein you were made to **serve**.

Hebrews 4:8 If Joshua had given them **rest**, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day [the Millennium (Psalm 95:9-11)].

In World War II, and our conquest therein, the United States of America and Great Britain did not subjugate the entire nations of Japan or Germany when they could have easily done so. That is because Israel and the children of Israel have a kinder and gentler nature and spirit than the nations that do not know their God. The historical evidence of man's inhumanity to man on Japan and Germany's part is well known. Had Japan and Germany won the war—England would have been annihilated and the USA would have been vanquished – at the least.

But, in the soon coming World of Tomorrow, the slaves will be treated kindly – according to God's Laws – but they will not have possession of the land. They will have a good living (Exodus 21:5-6; Deuteronomy 15:16-17).

Micah 2:12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob/Israel, all of you; I will surely **gather the remnant** of Israel.

In God's sight, the United States, and all of modern Israel are becoming ever more despicable day by day. God and faith, truth and honor, are being utterly rejected. In every election cycle, we clearly see that Christian principles are losing out to the perverse and ungodly world, more and more. God tells us:

Jeremiah 16:12-13 You have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his **evil heart**, that they may not hearken unto me: Therefore **I will cast you out of this land** into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve [in slavery] other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favor.

## **The Face of the Earth Renewed**

In the same way that the entire face of the earth was renewed in the course of Noah's flood, during the Millennium mountains will be removed and extensive lands will be recovered from the sea. Jesus Christ will send out construction battalions to reshape the face of the earth. Vast areas of land will become capable of being farmed productively and inhabitable for the first time.

Isaiah 27:6 The LORD shall cause them that come of Jacob/Israel to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and **fill the face of the world** with fruit.

Weather patterns will be changed for the good. The hand of the LORD will direct the global landscaping, yes, even an all-inclusive earthscaping—literally reversing the formless and barren face of the earth, just as He did in Genesis 1:2. There are tremendous spiritual implications in this concept of renewal. God says:

Jeremiah 12:10-11 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a **desolate wilderness**. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourns unto me; the **whole land is made desolate**, because no man lays it to heart.

When the face of the earth shall be renewed, all men will know that the Kingdom of the Most High rules over all (Psalm 103:19).

Ezekiel 36:6-11 Prophecy therefore concerning the **land of Israel**, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys... ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and you shall be **tilled** and **sown** [plowed and planted]: And I will **multiply men** upon you, all the House of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the waste places shall be **re-built**: And I will multiply upon you man and animals; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and you **shall know that I am the Eternal**.

Ownership of the land will revert to the original family names to whom it was originally deeded (Numbers 26:53). The population of Israel will surge. The face of the earth will be transformed and reshaped:

Psalm 104:30 You send forth thy **Spirit**, they are created: and you **renew the face of the earth**.

Jesus, Himself, will design the bulldozers, front end loaders and draglines:

Isaiah 41:15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having [diamond/carbide-like] teeth: you shall **thresh the mountains**, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

From Jerusalem, Jesus will see that every detail; from water supplies, to building materials; from wood for furniture to wood for musical instruments, is taken care of. Just for example: What if a part of the Mississippi River was diverted through the Gulf of Mexico intercostal canals and lifted up the Rio Grande and Pecos Rivers via locks and dams to the most arid regions of the southwestern United States? A new source of water coupled with an existing year-round warm climate over much of the Southwest due to a quasi-permanent subtropical high-pressure ridge would convert that desert region to a veritable garden paradise. God promises these changes in the Millennium:

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Isaiah 41:18-20 I will open **rivers** in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, and the myrtle, and the olive tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the evergreen pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Mountain ranges will be moved, great parts of the sea reclaimed, deserts irrigated, and the flora and fauna of God's heavenly Garden of Eden shall fill the earth. God is creating man in His image, and in doing so He desires man's home on earth be a reflection of heaven (Matthew 6:10). Gold will be so plentiful – being mined from the earth, and recovered from the sea, that it will be used for common electrical wiring because of its superior conductivity and high corrosion resistance (Genesis 2:11).

### **The Lord Will Turn Sorrow to Happiness**

Jeremiah 31:1-4 At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of **all the families of Israel**, and they shall be my people. Thus says the LORD, The people who **survived the sword** found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest. [That is those who lived through the Tribulation.] The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again **I will build thee**, and you shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the **dances** of them that **make merry**.

Jeremiah 31:13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their **mourning into joy**, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they **sing**: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again **Zion**.

### **New Covenant with New Israel**

Because of the sinful human nature that ancient Israel continuously reverted to, God declared that they would require a “heart transplant.” God said:

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were **such an heart** in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

Hebrews 3:10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always **err in their heart**; and they have not known my ways. (Mark 7:21-23)

A “new heart” means that New Israel will undergo a spiritual rejuvenation, just as the true Church of God has been privileged to enjoy.

Hebrews 8:10-11 This is the **covenant** that I will make with the **House of Israel** after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their **hearts**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people... for all shall Know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.

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Jeremiah 31:31-33 Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a **new covenant** with the **House of Israel**, and with the **House of Judah**: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my Covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it **in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

God's Covenant provided for Israel to receive a **new heart**. God's Holy Spirit will be poured out on New Israel, giving them a new heart and converted attitude. (Ezekiel 11:19-20). God says:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A **new heart** also will I give you, and a **new Spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh (2 Corinthians 3:3). And I will put **my Spirit** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

The New Covenant does not do away with the law of God as Protestants have been taught. With God's Holy Spirit, the New Covenant gives Christians the motivation and means, not to merely obey God's law, but to accept it, believe it, and make it a part of their lives (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17).

Ezekiel 37:26-28 Moreover, I will make a **Covenant of Peace** with them; it shall be an **Everlasting Covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they **shall be my people**. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary (Exodus 25:8) shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

God will give the people of New Israel (including Judah) a new heart and the capacity through His Spirit to finally be able to follow and conform to His way, and have a genuine relationship with Him. God will forgive their sins, and New Israel will finally be the **light to the world** that God intended her to be from the beginning (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Isaiah 62:1-2).

A vast and all-inclusive building and reconstruction project will render the entire earth extremely beautiful and entirely functional for the immense population to come in the Last Great Day.

Ezekiel 36:35-38 They shall say, This land that was **desolate is become like the garden of Eden**; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD built the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus says the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the House of Israel, **to do it for them**; I will increase them with men like a flock [accelerating birthrate]. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn Feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 16:62 I will establish my Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

Isaiah 59:20-21 The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob/Israel, says the LORD. As for me, this is my **Covenant** with them, says the LORD; **My Spirit** that is upon you, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of your children, nor out of the mouth of your grand-children, says the LORD, from henceforth and forever.

Jeremiah 32:37-42 Behold, **I will gather them out of all countries**, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath [in the Tribulation]; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: They shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them **one heart**, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an **everlasting Covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put reverence for me in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this [Promised] Land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus says the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them **all the good** that I have promised them.

## **The Garden of Eden of God**

During the Millennium the entire face of the earth will be restored and refashioned, from being virtually destroyed, back to the Garden of Eden-like former grandeur and perfection at the time of its creation (Genesis 1:31). From the beginning, God has shown that He **dwells** with **His People**.

Genesis 3:8 They heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the **Garden** in the cool of the day.

Exodus 29:46 They shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may  **dwell among them**: I am the LORD their God.

Isaiah shows the LORD restoring the earth in the fashion of the Garden of Eden – after the ravages of the Tribulation:

Isaiah 51:3 The LORD shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like **Eden**, and her desert like the **Garden of the LORD**; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Numbers 35:34 Do not defile the [Promised] Land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I  **dwell**: for **I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel**.

Zechariah 2:10-11 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and **I will dwell** in the midst of thee, says the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and **I will dwell** in the midst of you, and you shalt know that the LORD of hosts has sent me unto thee.

The Garden of Eden in Genesis mirrored the Garden of Eden in heaven, but it was very limited in scope – being only localized:

Genesis 2:8 The Lord God planted a **Garden** eastward in **Eden**; and there He put the man whom He had formed.

In Genesis, the entire earth was not restored—only a relatively small portion dedicated to the purpose of God instructing man in His perfect way. The beautiful Garden of Eden was physically fashioned to be an exact replica of the spiritual **Garden of Eden in heaven**. God planted a breathtaking garden on earth, the Garden of Eden, making a place of beauty, tranquility and comfort for His children. The beautiful Garden of Eden of Genesis was fashioned to be a facsimile of the spiritual Garden of Eden in heaven. Satan was in the “mountain of God,” as a covering cherub angel before he fell.

Ezekiel 28:13-16 You have been in **Eden the Garden of God**.

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This present world does not resemble God's beautiful Garden of Eden at all. Take a snap shot of today's society – and what will you find? Widespread poverty, ignorance, immorality, crime, war, disease, misery, lying, pain, confusion, pride, poverty, foolishness, theft, envy, rebellion, disobedience, lawlessness. Satan is doing his dirty work. He influences people toward hate, anger, selfishness, violence, competition, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, murder and deceit. Therein is the origin of enmity against God inviting His wrath:

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Joel 2:3 A fire devours before them; and behind them a flame burns [Tribulation]: the land is as the **Garden of Eden before them** [Millennium], and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

In the Millennium the only reason for even the mention of many past negative deeds will be for teaching purposes. Think of a world where these undesirable traits no longer exist. In fact, the concept of these things being widespread and prevalent in the world will be as outlandish to the Millennials, as a world without them is to us. Add to our horrible culture the other factors we commonly face: wars, revolts, mobs, famine, plagues, terrorists, hurricanes and typhoons, invasions, earthquakes, tsunamis, drought, blizzards, floods, genocide, abortions, death, looting, along with sexual depravity and perversions. What a horrible ugly world we live in! When God speaks of the restoration of Israel (Acts 3:19) He is speaking of the Millennial time when Israel will become a converted nation.

Ezekiel 36:34-35 The desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become **like the Garden of Eden**.

### **Return of the Remnant from Captivity**

God intends that **Israel** be a **light to the world** (Deuteronomy 4:6) and ultimately assist Christ in the Millennium in setting an example of wisdom, understanding and righteousness for the whole world.

Isaiah 49:5-6 Now, says the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be not **gathered**, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And He said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to **restore the preserved of Israel**: I will also give thee for a light to the nations, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The time will arrive for Israel's restoration at the end of the Tribulation when the earth will be desolate. The remnant will be gathered from around the earth. They will make up the Israelitish stock of the Millennium's populace (Isaiah 60:21-22). Jesus Christ will have mercy on them and shall **guide** and lead them home.

Isaiah 49:8, 10 Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you: and I will preserve you, and give you for a Covenant of the people, **to establish the earth**, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages... They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the **springs of water** shall He **guide** them.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Isaiah 35:7 The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land **springs of water**: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

After most of Israel has perished in the Tribulation, a new Israelitish stock of Israel's offspring will constitute the Millennium's populace:

Isaiah 49:20 The children which you shalt have [in the Millennium], after you have lost the others [in the Tribulation], shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

This verse shows how Israel will become too numerous for the Promised Land and will need to migrate (27:6) throughout the earth – turning **all the earth** into a veritable Garden of Eden. God will bless New Israel with large families just like He did when the population of Great Britain tripled coming up to the 1800s when He fulfilled the birthright Covenant made to Abraham.

### **Millennial Pictures**

The Old Testament provides many portrayals and factors of how the **remnant** Israelites will come to redemption, while the New Testament focuses on the way Church brethren become the spiritual Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). Many Scriptures give us apt depictions of life in the Millennium. It will be the time of Godly knowledge, peace and safety for all. For the Saints of God, sinful human nature will no longer exist – having been replaced with the nature of God (2 Peter 1:4). Previously ferocious animals will be as domesticated as puppies and kittens.

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child shall play on the burrow of a poisonous snake, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 65:25)

These verses are not written solely to show the nature of animals being changed, but for us to realize how different the world tomorrow will be with mankind being led by God's Holy Spirit. Millions of acres of arable Land will be reclaimed from the deserts, mountains and sea.

Isaiah 11:16 And there shall be an **Highway of Holiness** for the **remnant** of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 19:23; 35:8; 49:11; 51:10-11 "Highways" are plural as from many nations.)

In the same way that water brings life to a parched land, **God's Holy Spirit** will bring to **light the promise of glory** and the excellency of our God. Speaking of God's promises to His resurrected Saints:

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the **Divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through inordinate desire.

Isaiah speaks in allegory of a great change that will actually overtake the earth in the Millennium, and he speaks especially mankind's spirit and character which will develop and thrive through God's Holy Spirit which will be poured out on all flesh:

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Isaiah 35:1-2 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

Isaiah 35:6-7 Then shall the disable man leap as an deer, and the tongue of the voiceless man sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert [God's Holy Spirit]. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land **springs of water**: in the habitation of wolves, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Satan will be bound for a 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2).

Isaiah 35:9-10 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there (1 Peter 5:8) And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and **come to Zion** with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 9:2 The people that **walked in darkness** have seen a **great light**: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

Isaiah 9:6-7 ... Jesus is, The **Prince of Peace**. Of the [inestimable] increase of His dominion and **peace** there shall be no end, He will reign upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish and sustain it in justice and righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jesus Christ (*YHVH*) is the **Light of the world**. In the Millennium He will be ruling from Jerusalem (John 8:12) having overcome darkness—darkness is past (Ephesians 5:8).

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for thy **light is come**, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. The nations shall come to thy **light**, and kings to the **brightness** of thy rising.

### **For My Name's Sake**

Ezekiel 20:44 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you **for my name's sake**, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye House of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 36:22-24 Therefore say unto the House of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but **for mine Holy Name's sake**, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went [By your conduct you are ruining my reputation and good Name]. And I will **sanctify my Great Name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and **gather** you out of all countries, and will bring you into **your own land**. [the Millennial Promised Land]

God's intent from the beginning that man remain in perpetuity on his **own family land**.

Ezekiel 36:28 You shall dwell in **the** [Promised] Land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

There will be a new language – a **pure language** – so that ambiguities, uncertainties and misunderstandings will be eliminated.

Zephaniah 3:9 Then will I turn to the people a **pure language**, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent.

### **The Shepherds will be Held Responsible**

God tells us that He will hold the shepherds of Israel, including church ministers and public officials, responsible for not providing properly for the flocks—especially His people.

Ezekiel 34:2-6 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were **scattered**, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or **seek** after them.

### **All Will Be Tested for Faithfulness**

In the same way that Jesus was tested in every way and on every point of God's perfect way (Hebrews 4:15), the collective Church brethren will also have experienced every possible scenario in order to be able to effectively reign and rule with Christ throughout the Millennium. Then, while the saints are instructing everyone on earth saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," no one will be able to challenge or gainsay them by responding, "You do not know what I'm going through." (Isaiah 30:21) Each and every Saint will be an overcomer (Revelation 3:21).

At the end of the Millennium, New Israel will have never faced the trials and temptations that Satan brings. They will have enjoyed peace and security for a thousand years. God will allow them to be tested just as He allowed Job to be tested.

Job 2:3-5 The LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? ...And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

At the end of the Millennium will New Israel have grown in faith and Godly character, having become strong enough to withstand and overcome Satan's temptations (Revelation 20:7-9)? As always, God will protect His faithful people against every adversary, and give them the victory. We see an early example of God fighting the battles for Israel when they were attacked by the Egyptians:

Exodus 14:13-14 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and **see the salvation of the LORD**, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall **fight for you**, and ye shall hold your peace.

## **Satan Released a little While at the end of the Millennium**

Satan the devil is an evil spirit being who is the enemy of God and an adversary of the children of God. He led a rebellion against the very throne of God. He appears as an angel of light, but in reality, he is the **power of darkness**. God had created him to be perfect – but he sinned and iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15).

In order for man to build Godly character, God, in His infinite wisdom has seen fit to allow Satan to test the Church brethren now – and to test the world at the end of the Millennium. Because of the devil's own iniquity, he has been judged as evil - and only awaits his final fate. Satan and his demons are spirit beings. They will be so utterly “cut-off” in a spiritual destruction that is beyond our comprehension – sent away into the dark wilderness that is so remote as to be equal to annihilation – like ashes under our feet (Matthew 25:41; Mark 1:24; 2 Peter 2:4; Malachi 4:3). At the end of the Millennium, Satan will impose one last great deception on men. He will then receive his ultimate and final punishment from God for his rebellion and sin:

Romans 16:20 The God of peace shall utterly crush Satan under your feet shortly.

When Satan and his demons will be placed in the 'abyss' at the beginning of the Millennium, they will be as good as dead – unable to influence and deceive the nations any longer during that time period (Revelation 20:1-3).

## **Last Great Day**

At the end of the Millennium mankind will come to the concluding phase of what God has in store for mortal man. The Last Great Day will be the culmination of the seven-thousand years allocated for the living to learn that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17; Ezekiel 16:60-62).

John 7:37-39 On the **Last day**, that **Great Day** of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

How clear! God's Holy Spirit issues forth from Jesus Christ! Each Feast of the LORD has a unique prophetic meaning depicting an important step in the Plan of God. The Feast of the Last Great Day pictures the great harvest of lives, and the great judgment of all who have ever lived. But, what of those people who have not been called by God, and who have not had an opportunity for salvation? At the end of the Millennium, there will be a resurrection back to **physical life** for **all** who have ever lived. Their opportunity for salvation will come when God's Spirit is poured out on them.

Joel 2:28 It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon **all** flesh.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the same way that the Church of God brethren look forward to the Millennial rule of Christ, the Spirit led citizens of the Millennium will look forward to the **Last Great Day**. It will be a wonderful day when they are able to meet all their ancestors, all the way back to Adam and Eve—raised back to life. They will introduce their progenitors, from previous ages, to the glorious accomplishments of a Godly culture and society. The extraordinary peace and prosperity of a world without crime and war will be awe-inspiring to the newly resurrected people. Those raised to physical life will receive God's Holy Spirit – and for the first time be able to give God the glory (Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 37:14). God says, not only will it be better than before, it will be like coming home:

Ezekiel 36:10-11 I will greatly increase the population of all the **House of Israel** in its entirety, **even all of it**: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the ruined cities shall be rebuilt... I will settle you after your **old estates**, and will do better unto you than at your **beginnings**: and you shall know that I am the LORD.

The resurrection to physical life will take place in an orderly manner – with food, clothing and housing for all. For those raised back to their former physical lives, the Last Great Day will *not* constitute a “second chance” for salvation. For the first time they will have the opportunity to be called, chosen and faithful to God's perfect way (John 6:44, 65; Revelation 17:14).

All those not called by God at this present time will be resurrected during the Last Great Day epoch at the end of the Millennium to have their **first opportunity for salvation**. There is only one category of people who lived, died, and have yet had no opportunity for salvation. They are those who will be raised to physical life at the Last Great Day, and included in the Great White Throne Judgment (Ezekiel 37; Revelation 20:5). Those Saints who are caught up to be with Christ without ever dying will not see their loved ones again for a thousand years – at the resurrection of the Last Great Day.

Revelation 20:5 The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

### **All Shall Come Forth from Their Graves**

A major phase in God's Plan is that of the great resurrection to physical life for the judgment of the Great White Throne.

Revelation 20:11-12 I saw a Great White Throne... and the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

There shall be a **resurrection of the dead**, both of the just and unjust (Acts 24:15). The Saints of God are resurrected first – in order to be able to serve as co-Saviors with Jesus throughout the Millennium. But what of those who were never converted? When is their resurrection? Will the vast multitudes of mankind who never knew Jesus or the Plan of God be called by the Father to participate in eternal life? Jesus tells us that all of mankind that has ever lived will be in a resurrection:

John 5:25 Truly, truly, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

All who have ever lived, except for the resurrected Saints, will stand in the Great White Throne Judgment. They will hear their verdict, for good or for bad—and be assigned to their ultimate reward, whether to Eternal Life or to the Second Death. Jesus said:

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John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all** that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall **come forth**; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

There will be multiple billions and billions of men and women from ages past brought back to physical life. They will see the earth in all its glory as a result of the ruling Kingdom of God. The great majority will then repent and have faith in Christ. God will perform this quickening to physical life in a decent and ordered way. Many will not realize at first that they have been dead for centuries—or longer. There will not be an unmanageable screaming mass of humanity wandering about aimlessly. There will be **homes, food and clothes** for everyone. More importantly, there will be teachers—messengers of the Gospel—to teach them how to live Godly lives, for the first time. And they will. Long, and full lives, and for the first time—understanding the Plan of God, and being able to live it because of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit—just like the first out-pouring on the Day of Pentecost three thousand years before. **All** will have sufficient time to grow in grace and knowledge to spiritual maturity. Only those with adamant hearts of stone will reject God perfect way and remain sinners:

Isaiah 65:20-21 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall **build houses**, and inhabit them; and they shall **plant vineyards**, and eat the fruit of them.

In the Millennium, God will guide man to attain to his maximum potential – physically first, and then spiritually. In the Millennium every child will have ample opportunity to develop his talents and attain to his maximum aptitude and capability (3 John 1:2). Ignorance will be eradicated. After six-thousand years of sin and corruption man's intellect has become degraded. Genius and intellectual brilliance will be the norm – as it was when God created Adam and Eve.

Nearly all humanity will be alive at the same time, those from the pre-flood world, those from Old and New testament times, and those of the Millennium—all vibrantly alive and converted—enjoying the fruit of the Kingdom of God on earth. These are they to whom Jesus referred when He said:

John 11:25-26 Jesus said, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me **shall never die**.

Only a few of the resurrected Saints will have enjoyed the privilege of instantaneously being transformed and changed into spiritual beings:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 Behold, I show you a mystery; We **shall not all sleep**, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

With God's enabling Spirit, Adam could have conquered Satan for himself, his wife, his children and all mankind – but he did not do it. Adam chose poorly, but Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). He obeyed the demonic spirit in Eden becoming ensnared – not only for himself – but for all humanity that would be born of him. In rejecting God, Adam became the servant of sin and death. Paul said it well:

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Adam had not received God's Holy Spirit – though he could have taken of the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:16). Had Adam overcome Satan, the Millennium would have **begun then and there** in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve would have lived-out the entire one-thousand years without dying – but, instead, they died without salvation. Sin had plunged them into death (Genesis 2:17)!

At the end of the Millennium, the Last Great Day, and Great White Throne Judgment, the immense multitude of converted humanity will not have to die. They will be like the Saints of the first resurrection—there will be no need to die anymore—death is swallowed up—they will be raised to incorruptible eternal life. Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

A primary task throughout the one-thousand years will be to restore the entire earth to its original Garden of Eden state in preparation for the great resurrection of all who have ever lived. God calls that resurrection, The Great White Throne Judgment. At the end of the millennium, there will be a much larger **harvest**—the resurrection of those from the Great White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:11).

## **Valley of Dry Bones**

Ezekiel tells the story of the resurrection at the **Last Great Day** of all who have ever lived (Ezekiel 37). It is written for encouragement to all the House of Israel, but it pertains to all nations (Isaiah 49:6; Psalm 22:27).

Everyone will be raised for the purpose of knowing the LORD and being led by His Spirit. At the end of the millennium, there will be an all-encompassing **harvest** of humanity.

Ezekiel 37:1-6 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, **can these bones live** [again]? And I answered, O Lord GOD, you know the answer. Again He said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and **ye shall live**: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put **breath in you**, and ye shall live; and you shall know that **I am the LORD**.

This is the purpose of the resurrection – that mankind will finally believe: “**You shall know that I am the LORD**.” The world, for all its sentiments, has never truly believed in the LORD before. Ezekiel continues:

Ezekiel 37:7-10 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said He unto me, prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they **may live**. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great host. [all mankind that has ever lived]

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The lesson of mankind's six-thousand years without God's direction is one of **hopelessness**. This is the terrible lesson that all dead men will have learned, "Life is hopeless." There is **no hope** of happiness, fulfillment or a bright future. And that is because all have died of war, accident, cancer and painful old age – it's hopeless.

Ezekiel 37:11-13 Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole House of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and **our hope is lost**: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you **into the land of Israel**. And **you shall know** that **I am the LORD**, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves!

Only those with God's Holy Spirit are accountable to God and judged. The people of this world are not being eternally judged now – their time of Judgment will come on the Last Great Day at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment. During the Church Age, only God's called, and chosen people are given His Holy Spirit. In the Last Great Day – the **Great White Throne Judgment** period – everyone resurrected will have already lived once before – without God's Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 37:14 When I have opened your graves, and shall **put My Spirit in you**, and you **shall live**, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, says the LORD. (Joel 2:28-29)

Psalms 104:30, 24 O LORD, You send forth **your Spirit**, they are created: and you renew the face of the earth. How **manifold are thy works!** In wisdom you have made them all: The earth is **full of your riches**.

The very first thing resurrected humanity will see is the wondrous perfection the Millennium has produced in all the earth. The one-thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth will unequivocally demonstrate the blessings of God's Kingdom and rule to all mankind that has ever lived since the creation.

## **Great White Throne Judgment**

Acts 17:31 God has appointed a day, in the which He will **judge the world** in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained [Jesus Christ]; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He [God the Father] has raised Him from the dead.

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who both will **bring to light** the hidden things of **darkness**, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The Book of Revelation depicts this event following the Last Great Day resurrection as the **Great White Throne Judgment**, picturing a time when all people who have ever lived will be judged by God. Those who have not had an opportunity for salvation will finally be given the occasion to learn God's way of life for the first time. They will receive the same calling that the Church brethren have received (John 6:44, 65). Then, and only then will they be judged according to God's law and their conduct after receiving God's Holy Spirit. Only those who were called by God previous to this time will have been Judged. The Church of God Saints will have been judged at their resurrection – held responsible at that time for their faith and the conduct of their lives.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that **judgment** must begin at the **house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?

Those of the Millennium and those of the Last Great Day resurrection will be judged by Jesus Christ in the Great White Throne Judgment.

Revelation 20:11-12 I saw a **Great White Throne** and He who was sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, ... [raised back to life] ...small and great, standing before God; and the **books were opened** [The books of the Bible, and each person's record], and another book was opened, which is the **Book of Life**: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

God keeps a record on every one of us, and we will give an account of ourselves (Romans 14:10-12).

Hebrews 9:27 As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Revelation 20:13-15 The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were **judged every man according to their works**. And **death** and the grave were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is **death**.

The Great White Throne Judgment is described by Jesus:

Matthew 25:31-34, 41 When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the **throne of His glory**: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Then shall Son of man say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Paul spoke of the change that will come to the physical body that rots in a grave:

1 Corinthians 15:53-54 This corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body] must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death** is swallowed up in victory.

The lake of fire is especially established for the final ousting of Satan and his demons. Satan will be removed forever, as well as all those unrepentant individuals who are incorrigibly evil.

Revelation 20:10 The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet were cast, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Satan and his demons are to be burned up in the Lake of Fire prepared for them, as Jesus states in Matthew 25:41. According to God's law, death is what they have earned for their sins. There will be no devil or demons when the New Heaven and New Earth are established. Satan and his fellow demon spirits will be totally annihilated.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Matthew 25:41 Then shall [Jesus the King] say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

From the very beginning, God has known just how many individual human beings He would create. He has not gone into His Plan haphazardly. Each and every person created by God has his own personal identity – and that person is important to God – important enough for God to shed His love on that person. We have shown that the identity of each individual is called by God, “the spirit in man,” and it **defines** who each person is. It is the non-tangible part of the mind which defines each individual’s personal identity. Everyone has a unique identity that distinguishes him from all the rest of mankind because when each human baby is conceived a unique identity is formed with that new life. An individual comes into existence.

In seven-thousand years, God will have created a lot of people. He has brought billions and billions of individuals into existence. Where the word of God proclaims that “**all** will come forth,” and, **all** will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and **every knee** shall bow to the Lord, and **every tongue** shall confess to God, and **all** shall give account of himself to God—that is the **all** of which God speaks (John 5:29; Romans 14:10-12). That is why it is called the **Great White Throne Judgment**.

John 7:37 On the **last** and **great day** of the **Feast**, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. [Jesus said that He was the source of God's Holy Spirit for us.]

In Jesus’ public ministry, the events that took place on each Holy Day depict the meaning of the Feast Day in God’s Plan. The next morning, **still on the Last Great Day**, Jesus was teaching... and the accusers of a woman, being convicted by their own conscience, left her and went out one by one, first the oldest, to the youngest. Jesus said to her, "I do not condemn you: go, and sin no more.

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the **light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in **darkness**, but shall have the **light of life**.

John explained that Jesus still had a half-year of His public ministry remaining:

John 8:20 These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was **not yet come**.

Like so many people, His accusers believed Jesus existed and was a mighty force to contend with - but they **did not believe** what Jesus taught - so He told them frankly, "you shall seek me, and **you shall die** in your sins."

John 8:25-26 Then said they unto Him, Who are you? And Jesus said unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He [God the Father] that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.

John 8:30-32 As He spoke these words, many **believed on Him**. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free**.

Yes, some of those Jews, **believed on Him**, but, like the world today they did not possess **true faith** in Jesus and His words (John 8:37-44).

## **Blindness Healed – Vision Restored**

The Last Great Day pictures the **blindness** of the world being eradicated. The apostle John covers the Last Great Day in detail beginning in John 7:37 all the way to John 10:21 when He finished with the incident of the **healing of the man born blind**.

John 9:14 It was the [Last Great Day] Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay, and **opened his eyes**.

John 12:45-44 [Jesus said] He that sees me sees Him [God the Father] that sent me. I am come a **light** into the world, that whosoever believes on me should not abide in **darkness**.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the **blind shall be opened**, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

In the Millennium, the **veil** will be removed for all mankind (Revelation 12:9-10). Jesus came some 2,000 years ago to announce the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God, and to prepare a people to reign and rule with Him throughout the Millennium (Mark 1:14). Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, God has shut the eyes of all mankind, that they cannot see; and closed their hearts, that they cannot know or understand (Isaiah 44:18). Isaiah speaks of the **veil of blindness** that **covers** all the earth being removed:

Isaiah 25:6-7 On this mountain [the Kingdom of God], the LORD of the heavenly hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of well-aged wines— rich food full of marrow, and refined wines of the finest vintage. And He will consume in this mountain the face of **the covering** cast over all people, and **the veil** that is spread over all nations.

God especially presented the situation of a man born blind - and Jesus removed his blindness that he might see.

John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the **works of God** should be made manifest in him.

## **The Meaning of the Last Great Day**

John 9:39 And Jesus said, For **judgment** I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

John 10:10-11 Jesus said, ...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Speaking of **all mankind** - all who have ever lived, Jesus said:

John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. [These things taught Jesus on the Last Great Day.]

## **Two Judgments**

There are two judgments spoken of in the Scriptures: One to the **glory of eternal Life** in the Family of God, and the other to the condemnation of shame and everlasting contempt of **eternal death**.

Men are not judged for good or bad without having received God's Holy Spirit. Peter tells us that judgment is now on the house of God, meaning those Church brethren who are led by God's Holy Spirit. The true Church brethren are not necessarily the same as members of corporate organization Churches of God (1 Peter 4:17).

Jude tells us that angels and men will stand in the final judgment of the Last Great Day's **Great White Throne** Judgment (Revelation 20:11). The judgment of Jesus Christ will include the condemnation of Satan, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the whoremongers, the sorcerers, the idolaters, all liars, death and the grave (Revelation 20:14; 21:8).

Jude 1:6 The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the **judgment** of the **Great Day**.

Amazingly, the saints and apostles will also sit in judgment of angels and mankind with Jesus:

Matthew 19:28 Jesus said unto the [apostles], Truly I say unto you, That you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the [Great White] Throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging** the **twelve tribes of Israel**.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 Do you not know that the Saints shall **judge the world**? ...Do you not know that we shall **judge angels**?

It is clear that Jesus will delegate areas of judgment to His Saints. He makes the Saints co-rulers with Him on His very throne so that they may judge the world. The resurrected Saints will have experienced and overcome every situation and sector of society and culture throughout the ages—qualifying them (Hebrews 4:15) to judge with Christ.

Revelation 3:21 To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my **throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Daniel 12:1-3 At that time shall [the archangel] Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble [the Tribulation], such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [Lamb's book of life]. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to **shame** and **everlasting contempt**. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Those people who will awake to shame and everlasting contempt will have rejected God and His way during their time of **judgment**. They will have rejected God's word – the Bible. Jesus said:

John 12:48 He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the **word that I have spoken**, the same shall condemn him in the last day.

Psalms 112:10 The wicked shall see it, and be appalled; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

Jesus will have the last word:

Luke 13:27-28 He shall say ...depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Their last glimmer of consciousness for the workers of iniquity will be the terrible realization of what they have eternally missed out on—God's Kingdom in all its glorious ramifications.

## **Book of Life**

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened [that's at least three books], which is the **Book of Life**: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

These are the categories of those books mentioned here: The Books of the Bible (Galatians 3:10); The Book of Life of the Lamb; and our own Personal Journal which is the book containing the record of our works or deeds. There is a book in heaven for each and every one of us, with our name on the cover, and it contains everything about us. Our own book contains our extensive life's record as to what each of us has done/not done on earth, in our lifetime.

Romans 2:6-7 God will render to every man according to **his deeds**: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

After 1,000 years of the Millennium this earth and everything in it will be a thing of sublime beauty. Jesus Christ the Great Judge will begin wrapping up this final stage for all mankind.

## **Your Redemption Draws Nigh**

Luke 21:27-28 [Jesus said] Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for **your redemption draws near**.

Why does man need Redemption? Where is man that he cannot come near to God? The answer is that man's sin has separated him from His Creator. How did that happen? Mankind needs to be **redeemed** from the power of sin and the curse of death.

Genesis 2:16-17 The LORD God commanded the man, saying... Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shalt not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof **you shalt surely die**.

This present evil world did not become the realm of Satan until the sin of Adam and Eve. Their disbelief in God, and rejection of His rule in their lives ushered in Satan's rule. With God's Plan subverted, the **foundation of this world**, in which we live, was established. From that very moment it became necessary for mankind to be **redeemed** from the clutches of Satan (Revelation 13:8).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Adam and Eve brought the bondage of death upon themselves and all their children. Christ's work of redemption pays the price by purchasing back mankind from the wages of sin—death. A Christian is free from the bondage of death because Christ's death has removed the charges of sin against him—He paid that redemptive price. Redemption means the freeing of mankind from bondage of death. The New Covenant Passover demonstrates to us that God has already redeemed us through Christ, and that He has a yet future, complete redemption in store for us and mankind. Jesus is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

God determined to redeem man from the time of creation—that is His Plan. The long planned redemption of man, and the initiation of the New Covenant, commenced when Jesus paid the purchase price of **redemption/salvation** with His life. Buying back mankind from sin and ultimate death became necessary when Adam and Eve sinned and took upon themselves and their children, human nature.

Redemption comes to the Church of God brethren first. The Scriptures show us that redemption is something that started with Christ's sacrifice. For the Church brethren, redemption begins when we accept Christ's sacrifice (Romans 3:23-25; Ephesians 1:7, 14; Colossians 1:14; Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Corinthians 1:30). "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until He comes**" (1 Corinthians 11:26). It is when Jesus Christ comes again that He will complete the redemption of His saints. Church brethren are still awaiting the total fulfillment of something that the Exodus Passover unambiguously teaches—redemption. Our final **redemption** occurs when we have totally taken on the incorruptible **divine nature** of our Creator. At that point, the Passover will be completely fulfilled for the Church. Redemption of the Church brethren began to take place after the death of Jesus. Only the life of Jesus Christ could possibly pay the great redemptive price necessitated by sin. Speaking of Jesus:

Titus 2:14 Who gave Himself for us, that He might **redeem us from all iniquity**, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

God's Plan of Salvation is to redeem mankind not just from the death penalty, but from a **sinful nature**. God must redeem us from this flesh—this body of death, as Paul calls it in Romans 7:24—so we can fully manifest the image and likeness of our Creator and inherit His Kingdom. Redemption in its fullest sense is applied to, and first takes place for the Saints of the better resurrection when their **human nature** is changed to **divine nature** (2 Peter 1:4) at the first resurrection.

Redemption of **all mankind** will have been accomplished when all who have their names written in the Book of Life, small and great stand before God and are **acquitted of their death sentence** (Hebrews 8:10-12; 9:12; 10:16-18; Revelation 20:11-15). They too, will be given eternal life – no more retaining their acquired human nature. Then Passover will be completely fulfilled when all redeemed people enter the Kingdom of God at the exoneration of the Great White Throne judgment.

Jesus will observe Passover every year for a thousand years with His resurrected Saints—looking forward to the Last Great Day when Passover will be **completely fulfilled** in a Kingdom of those redeemed from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

## **Technological and Agricultural Revolution**

One of the major things taking place throughout the Millennium will be the preparation of the earth for the **Last Great Day** and the Great White Throne judgment (John 7:37). In the same way that God directed Joseph to store up grain for the coming famine (Genesis 41:49), Jesus Christ will manage centuries of high-production to feed and house the **great resurrection** of all who have ever lived – including the untold billions of pre-flood inhabitants of the world.

Genesis 41:49 Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

God prophesied: “I will make your children as the **dust of the earth**: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered; and, I will multiply your seed as the **stars of heaven**” (Genesis 13:16; Exodus 32:13). All the dust! All the stars! That is an astronomical number of people to feed and accommodate in the great resurrection!

Unlike today, when the soil is under continuous cultivation and the Biblical **land rests** of one year out of seven are not followed, it would be impossible to gather enough grain (Genesis 47:14) to feed all who have ever walked the earth. However, during the upcoming captivity of modern-day Israel, incessant crop growing will come to an end and the land shall enjoy her Sabbaths, and the soil shall have her land rests (Leviticus 25:1-22).

Leviticus 26:33-34 I will scatter you among the heathen... and your land shall be desolate... Then shall the **land enjoy her Sabbaths**, as long as it lies desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the **land rest**, and enjoy her Sabbaths.

During all that time of gearing up for the end of the Millennium, the soil will enjoy her Sabbaths and produce **abundantly more** in the six years of normal production than it did in seven years of continuous cultivation without rest. God has shown us that His blessing of the sixth year alone – in normal times – will supply enough food for **three years** (Leviticus 25:21). How much produce will the land provide during the Millennium for the Last Great Day?

At the tower of Babel, God confound man's language so that they could not understand one another's speech – thus halting much commerce and innovation. But with that impediment removed, during the Millennium nothing will be restrained from them which they imagine to do (Genesis 11:6-7). Under Christ's guidance and leadership, man will have the tools to achieve not only extraordinary technological exploits, but he will develop spiritually to the point of being in God's image and character (Genesis 1:26-27) which was God's Plan from the beginning.

Those with a high IQ, who today would be considered the intelligentsia, will become common place when man finally realizes his full potential. Their accumulated experience and empirical knowledge will last the duration of the Millennium – and be passed on to every new generation – producing phenomenal growth. They will be educated, accomplished and engaged in many fields of spiritual, mental, and complex conceptual labors that help to guide, lead and shape the direction of a Godly culture and society.

Not only will Jesus Christ maintain complete authority overall, He, with the resurrected Saints, will be thoroughly involved in the lives of everyone – directing each of their lives toward the fulfillment of His Plan. As a result of God's way being lived, profound changes to human civilization will be realized. The cutting corners of competition will give way to a better posture of lagniappe, liberality and generosity. Jesus said:

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and **running over**, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Beginning in the early years of the Millennium, technology's exponential growth rate will yield in one year that which took centuries in the past to achieve. There will be no dehumanizing industrialization for the purpose of maximizing profits – but rather a singular goal for the betterment of all mankind. When those of the great resurrection see the splendid results of a world under Christ's rule they will be astonished at a complex world that is so peaceful and tranquil.

Near instantaneous transportation, universal face to face communication, and dramatic family cohesiveness will be the norm. The Sabbath will truly be a time of rest and harmony.

### **The Land's Curse Removed**

Sin brought a devastating curse upon the land.

Genesis 3:17-19 Unto Adam God said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground** for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shall you eat bread, until you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

In the Millennium, that **curse** will be removed – followed by abundant blessings.

Ezekiel 34:26-30 I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the **field shall yield her fruit**, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land... Thus **they shall know** that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the **House of Israel**, are my people, says the Lord GOD.

When Christ reigns, the quality of food will be as it was in the Garden of Eden – before man sinned. The deteriorating soil structure will be reversed and the soil will be healed – becoming exceedingly fertile by today's standards (Numbers 13:23).

The Tribulation will be so horrendous that it will be an existential risk for the human race. With a near total destruction of life on this planet, what will become of the food supply? What will the remnant do for seed to plant their crops? The National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation, and other seed vaults around the world, contain treasure troves of useful genes. They contain the world's collections of viable seeds, a great diversity of genetic materials, microbes and endangered plants – in case of catastrophe. God's people will not have to rely on manmade back-up plans. God has preserved living vegetation before, and we are assured that He will do so again (Genesis 2:4-5).

The **soil will be alive** once again in the Millennium (Isaiah 32:12-15; 35:1-2; Psalm 104:30). The reconstituted land of Israel will undergo a tremendous restoration. Farmlands will not be used up, overworked, eroded, poisoned or depleted. Today's agricultural practices have rendered the soil to be little more than the structure for holding a plant in place. Chemical fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, defoliants, pesticides and GM, genetic modification, have taken the life, taste and nutrients out of our food supply. Genetic modification violates Godly standards when unclean food is introduced into its DNA by way of genetic engineering as opposed to Biblically approved cross breeding.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Jeremiah 31:12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of **Zion**, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for **wheat**, and for **wine**, and for **oil**, and for the young of the **flock** and of the **herd**: and their soul shall be as a watered **garden**; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

Artificial substances have harmful effects on natural soil organisms, which is similar to the human overuse of antibiotics – or worse. Plants depend on a great variety of soil microorganisms and biological agents to transform air and soil into the nutrients which plants require. Pesticides and insecticides are toxic, and known to be harmful to more than just the soil, animals and insects that affect crops – they can cause a number of serious conditions in humans from respiratory problems, to birth defects, to cancer. In the world tomorrow wholesome food will provide the nutrients we need for a strong healthy body and mind.

For the first time since the Garden of Eden at creation, Millennial agriculture and technology will come together in marvelous ways. When God looked at His creation and He said, “It is **very good!**” (Genesis 1:31) ‘Very good,’ means that absolutely everything was working perfectly. Sin changed God’s perfect balance. ‘Soil’ is not just one thing, but a multitude of life forms and elements in equilibrium – turning it into **soil** – a living, breathing, synthesis of organic and inorganic compounds – a wondrous composition. ‘Soil’ is much more than inert clay-like lifeless pulverized inorganic rock. Even today’s experts in the field of agronomy recognize, “The fertility of the soil is in direct proportion to the number and activity of soil microorganisms,” and yet, they refuse to enact God’s land management practices.

Just consider some of the **makeup of soil** needed by plants for the maximum fertility of the land: Enzymes, the right pH, nutrients, and earthworms. Worms are one of the best indicators of well-balanced soil. In a small area of only a few square yards, they can consume half of a watermelon or a ten-pound bag of cornmeal in one night. Their excretory castings, rich in plant nutrients, are an optimum fertilizer as they are 7 times richer in phosphates, 5 times richer in nitrogen, and 11 times richer in potash than average soil! Also indispensable are microorganisms (very small microbe organisms which help plants absorb essential nutrients).

Other composition of the soil includes trace minerals, beneficial nematodes (they feed on bacteria or fungi to enhance nutrient mineralization through decomposition of organic matter to humus and release excess nitrogen in the form of ammonium), nitrogen and mineral cycles, phosphorus, sodium, potassium, and to a lesser extent, calcium, iron, magnesium, sulfur, zinc, copper, boron, molybdenum, nickel, and high organic matter which is the food supply for the minuscule soil organisms. All of these in a right balance, with God’s blessings, influence abundant crop growth. Not to mention sunlight, rain, air, temperature, climate and viable seed with good genes able to germinate (Genesis 1:11-12, 29).

There are God created cycles in nature. Animals migrate, seasons change, and trees grow a new ring each year. Consider the many mysterious and wonderful spring rituals of insects, birds, fish and mammals. Flowering plants and insects instinctively perform as programmed by the Master Programmer to form intriguing symbiotic relationships that without which, the world as we know it would cease to exist. All around the earth, birds and moths are pollinators of wildflowers. There are thousands of bird species that feed on seeds and nectar. Bees, butterflies, insects, and spiders aid plants in reproduction. Plants produce seed, fruit, honey, and vegetables for man at the top of the food chain. Without violations of God’s order, there will be a harmony in nature yet to be realized. This is not stated so that everyone will change to organic gardening, but to understand a little of God’s magnificent and beneficial creation – to God be the glory (Galatians 1:5).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Living organic soil is vitally important to a thriving population. Sterile soil is a big mistake. When man breaks God's health laws – sickness and premature death are the result. Pagans believe that they can circumvent proper diet with impunity – but the result is always the same: inflammatory diseases, arthritis, asthma, ulcers, dementia, tuberculosis, and hepatitis, and many others. God addressed the plagues of famine, drought, and disease as the children of Israel were being delivered from Egyptian bondage. In the Millennium, God will heal all disease – first of all by having man return to healthful living practices:

Exodus 15:26 If thou will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is **right in His sight**, and will give ear to His Commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these **diseases** upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for **I am the LORD that heals you**.

Deuteronomy 7:15 The LORD will **take away all sickness** from you, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you.

These intricate workings within the soil are just a few of the things we partially understand today. We are also aware that each microorganism and earthworm require a substantial network of support organisms and minerals to function properly. The things we do not know are the millions of dynamics that govern life in the microscopic world – all existing with checks and balances that accrue to the good health of mankind. King David understood how incredibly complex the human body was:

Psalms 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and **wonderfully made**: marvelous are thy works.

For example, modern scientists and doctors are just beginning to understand a little about the intricately interacting human endocrine and immune systems that protect the body from infection. They know that the body communicates well when the nervous system, blood chemistry and regulating hormones of an individual are healthy. All things being equal, the human brain will develop into brilliance unmeasured.

In the Millennium, there will exist a uniform studies program that will combine all the disciplines we have today – and more. Surprising associations will form between fields of study. Agriculture and metallurgy will produce all the gold needed for electronics and power applications. It may seem farfetched but God has already given us small hints of the wonderful things He has in store for the next one-thousand years.

Specialized farms will grow gold through the process of biomineralization in which living organisms produce the precious metal by a bacterium that converts water-soluble gold into solid gold. In God's creation there exists a considerable range of microorganisms that are able to perform every conceivable task, like digesting rust, and breaking down toxins. There might believably be an organism to interact with many of the elements of our periodic table.

## **Tomorrow's Spiritual Revolution**

The entire earth will celebrate the Feast of the Lord every year in the glorious days of the Millennium ahead. It will not be only New Israel, but with Jesus ruling His Father's Kingdom, everyone on earth will be taught the way of the Lord (Hosea 14:9).

Zechariah 14:16-19 It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles** (Ezekiel 36:38). And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**.

Psalms 107:1-3 O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and **gathered** them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

1 Chronicles 16:35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and **gather** us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.

### **I Will Be Their God, They Shall Be My People**

God desires to dwell with His people. It is a common refrain found throughout the Scriptures. He dwells with and in His people (John 14:23). Idolatry will cease when both Judah and the children of Israel are re-joined as one nation in the Millennium.

Ezekiel 37:21-24 Say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, where they have gone, and **will gather them** from every side and bring them into their **own land**: And I will make them **one nation** in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their **idols**, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall **they be my people**, and **I will be their God**. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd [Christ the Messiah]: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

Ezekiel 43:9 Let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and **I will dwell** in the midst of them forever.

Exodus 29:45 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

Leviticus 26:12 I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 37:25 They shall **dwell in the land** that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever. [David is called "prince" because Christ will reign as King.]

## **Mission Accomplished**

The Great White Throne judgment is finished – the Supreme Court of heaven is adjourned. Jesus has brought the Plan of God to fruition. It is complete and ready to be delivered to God the Father. It was a 7,000-year Plan on earth – and now it is complete. Jesus Christ will have taken this earth and its people from the **depths of darkness** – into **His glorious light** wherein dwells the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 21:1). It was a long process, but finally it is accomplished:

Genesis 1:4 God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Jesus said:

John 12:46 I am come a **light into the world**, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

We are living at the marvelous time that God in His infinite wisdom has called His Church brethren to salvation – before all the world will have their opportunity for salvation. When the Tribulation ends and the Millennium begins, God will have brought the Church age to completion. Just as they will be judged worthy of the first resurrection and the marriage supper, the righteous of the Great White Throne will also be judged worthy of the New Heavens and the New Earth. Isaiah looks ahead to the “World to Come:”

Isaiah 65:17 Behold, I create **New Heavens** and a **New Earth**: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Isaiah 66:22 As the **New Heavens** and the **New Earth**, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **New Heavens** and a **New Earth**, wherein dwells righteousness.

Revelation 21:1-2 I saw a **New Heaven** and a **New Earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

After the Last Great Day and the Great White Throne Judgment there will be a glorious future for the Children of God. In Chapter Eight we will explore mankind’s ultimate anticipation—the **New Heaven** and **New Earth**. It will be greater than the human mind can fathom.

## Chapter 8

# New Heaven and New Earth

### The Last Great Day

The 7,000-year **Plan of God** for man on earth is coming to fruition as Revelation Chapter 20 comes to a close and Chapter 21 begins. The resurrections of the **Last Great Day** will have resolved every issue concerning mankind. Christ's work of Salvation and Redemption for everyone whose name is found written in the Book of Life will be complete (Revelation 20:15). The world and the angels will have been judged. There is one most important final step that will be fulfilled. At that point we will await the utterance, "**It is done**" (Revelation 21:6).

When God gave mankind His Holy Days, He gave a framework of how His Plan for man would be worked out over the course of history. Each of God's Holy Days in Leviticus 23 has an actual **fulfillment** at a specific time. The **Last Great Day**, which is the seventh and final annual Holy Day, is observed immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles. The fulfillment of the Last Great Day will pave the way for the New Heavens and New Earth (John 7:37). In Leviticus the Last Great Day is referred to as the "eighth day," and is specifically mentioned in the list of the Feasts of the LORD:

Leviticus 23:36, 39 ...On the **eighth day** shall be an Holy Convocation unto you... On the eighth day shall be a Sabbath. (Numbers 29:35)

Why did Jesus observe the eighth day—just as He celebrated all of the annual Feasts of the LORD? Please do not be fooled by silly arguments like, "*He had to keep the Jewish holy days because He was a Jew.*"

Jesus kept the Feasts **of the LORD** (Leviticus 23:2) because God's Feasts are extremely important to know and understand because they precisely reveal how God's Plan for mankind is being worked out. The apostle John wrote that Jesus was faithful to comply with the requirements of this Holy Convocation of the Lord—the **Last Great Day**:

John 7:37 In the **Last day**, that **Great Day** of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me.

The Last Great Day – the **fulfillment** of the final Feast of the Lord – will usher in the grand transition between the old physical world and the spiritual New Heavens and New Earth. When the work of Salvation and Redemption is accomplished at the close of the Millennium, and the resurrection of just men is concluded, there will be no more need of the **old heavens and earth**—which will be totally **forgotten** forever more.

Isaiah 65:17 For, behold, I create **New Heavens and a New Earth**: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Isaiah uses a noteworthy reverse literary construction as viewed looking back in time order from after the **completion** of God's Plan. In Isaiah 65, Isaiah begins with the **New Heavens and a New Earth** (verse 17) and works his way **backward in time** past the Great White Throne Judgment period (verse 20) to the **beginning** of the Millennium when the nature of the animals is pacified (verse 25) where we find the wolf and the lamb motif.

Isaiah 66:22 As the **New Heavens and the New Earth**, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your children and your name remain before me.

In the same way that the Book of Isaiah **ends** with the theme of the New Heavens and the New Earth, the Bible **ends** with the same subject – the **New Heavens and the New Earth** in Revelation 21 and 22.

Everything that God created for this physical realm is only temporary—and it will have served its purpose. John speaks of this moment when Jesus Christ and the Saints will have gotten absolute victory over the entire old world (1 John 5:5; John 16:33). The embryonic phase of the **Plan of God** for mankind will be complete when man's creation into the very character and image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) comes to the full with parturition and glorious birth into the very Family of God (John 3:6-7). We are presented with a window to see beyond the allotted 7,000-years into the future eternity that lies ahead—the **New Heaven and New Earth**. John relates for us what he saw:

Revelation 21:1-2 I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were **passed away**; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.

The New Heaven and the New Earth will see New Jerusalem descending from heaven. God the Father and Jesus Christ will be the Temple therein (Revelation 21:22). Old Jerusalem with its throne will be no more. The river of Living Water will flow out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22:1). The throne of God will reside in the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 22:3).

As a point of clarification for our friends who have been taught that their loved ones—who have been “good”—have gone to heaven. Do not be concerned when you hear that the old heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (2 Peter 3:12). The Bible makes no case for *your soul going to heaven for all eternity when you die*. Jesus refutes the misconception – though most will not believe His word. He says:

John 3:12-13 ...You do not believe; how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? **No man** has ascended up to **heaven**, Except He [Jesus] that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Paul, speaking of the unsearchable riches of Christ brings to light the process whereby Jesus was the hands-on Creator at Genesis, while, truly it is **God the Father** who is Creator of the everlasting New Heavens and New Earth (Ephesians 3:8-9; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3). The Book of Revelation originates and proceeds from God the Father (Revelation 1:1):

Revelation 21:5 He who sat upon the throne said, Behold, **I make all things new**. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

In vision, John was shown the spiritual New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 21:1). At that point in time, the earth, the oceans and the stars as we know them shall no longer exist! Peter describes how they will perish:

2 Peter 3:12 As you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein The heavens being on fire shall be **dissolved**, and the elements shall **melt** with fervent heat?

This earth upon which we live today will be totally gone, erased and forgotten! God will usher in the **spiritual** New Heavens and New Earth superseding the prior physical heavens and earth.

### **Christ Shall Deliver Up the Kingdom to God the Father**

God the Father reigns and rules the earth through His Son Jesus for the entirety of the 7,000-year **Plan of God**—but He remains at **arm's length** until all godless authority and power have been vanquished. The universe, the realm of spirit beings, the earth and the fullness thereof are all under the auspices of Jesus Christ until He returns the entirety of it unto His Father:

John 3:35 The Father loves the Son, and has given **all things** into His hand. (Matthew 11:27; 28:18)

Messiah means Anointed One. Jesus, the Messiah, received His appointment and anointing from God the Father:

Psalms 45:6-7 [Unto the Son God says,] Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of thy Kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore, God, thy God, has **anointed you with the oil** of gladness above thy fellows. (Hebrews 1:8-9)

God the Father has ordained, appointed and **anointed** Jesus as Messiah. All throughout the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment period Jesus will continue to reign over the Kingdom of God on earth in His Father's stead (Revelation 20:11-14). Then comes the end when transgression and sin will no longer exist (Daniel 9:24). When the Judgment of the Great White Throne is completed—then the heaven and earth will **flee away** forever and ever (Revelation 20:11).

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 Then comes **the end**, when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even **the Father**; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For [Jesus Christ] must reign, until He has put **all enemies** under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is **death**.

Those who are saved will become spiritual Saints, because, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **death** is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:50, 54).

God the Father will then **dwell** with His begotten Children—dwelling together for all eternity. We, the servants of God, are privileged to know exactly how and when this will transpire. Every enemy will be abolished. It will be a glorious **new beginning**. This revelation of Jesus Christ, which God the Father gave unto Him, is detailed for us by the apostle John:

Revelation 21:1 I saw a **New Heaven and a New Earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The familiar constellations of stars to mark the seasons will be no more. The continents and hemispheres that we recognize today will be gone forever. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans will be dry land. New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to a New Earth—but as we will see, this **Holy City** is not constructed of stone and mortar. A city is its inhabitants! Cities are known for the **people** who reside therein. It is not the bricks and steel that make a city. It is the culture, beliefs, morals, traditions, customs, and ethics of the people who form a society – not the streets and sky-line. When Abraham sought the City of God—he was looking for the **people of God** (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14).

## **I Will Dwell**

It has always been God's desire to dwell with His people – and especially His resurrected Children in the New Heavens and New Earth. God told Moses:

Exodus 25:8 Let them make me a **Sanctuary**; that I may **dwell** among them.

Jesus will literally dwell with the resurrected Church Saints during the Millennium, but after that, He and God the Father will dwell eternally with the entirety of resurrected mankind whose names are in the Book of Life!

Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the **Holy City**, New Jerusalem, **descending** out of heaven, prepared of God as a Bride adorned for her husband. I heard a great voice out of 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 shall be with them, and be their God.

As much as the world looks forward to going *to heaven when they die*, God makes it abundantly clear that our dwelling place with God **comes down** to the New Earth. God the Father and Jesus Christ will begin to make their **residence** in converted, resurrected and cleansed Christians:

John 6:56 He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, **dwells** in me, and I in him.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my **Father** will love him, and **We** will come unto him, and make our **residence within him** (Romans 8:9-11).

God's desire is to dwell and reside with His people. Abide, abode and other translations of the Greek *meno* [to dwell] and *mone* [residence] are mentioned eighteen times in John Chapters 14 and 15 alone.

The **Plan of God** will have come to fruition at the conclusion of the Great White Throne Judgment when all righteous believers will have become resurrected Saints. But, there is much more! The Saints will begin to **dwell** with God in the fullest sense. From the beginning, God has Planned for the eternity beyond when He would **live together** with His offspring—the reproduced *Elohim* Family. The tabernacle in the wilderness was God's **dwelling place** on earth, but only a preliminary type of the greater fulfillment of God living perpetually with His spiritual people. The Lord said:

Exodus 29:45 I will **dwell** among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

Joel 3:17 So shall you know that I am the LORD your God **dwelling in Zion**, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

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As the concept of “Zion” is developed throughout the Bible we will find that it is ultimately the **resurrected Saints** of the City of God. (We use the lower case saints for the Church brethren, and Saints for those who are resurrected.) When we read “Zion,” we are to think, the people of God, the saints of God’s Church, and finally the resurrected spiritual Saints.

Zechariah 2:10-11 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of **Zion**: for, lo, I come, and I will  **dwell** in the midst of you, says the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be  **my people**: and I will  **dwell** in the midst of you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me unto you.

Whether it be the Sanctuary, the Holy Place, the Tabernacle, or the Temple, it is God’s  **dwelling place**. It represents God’s presence, and it is where man goes to formally communicate with Him. With the coming of God’s Holy Spirit to those who would then constitute the New Testament Church of God, the concept of the Sanctuary, the Holy Place, the Tabernacle and the Temple – which were only  **representative** figures of the true dwelling place – was realized in a much more personal way (Hebrews 9:24). Paul explained:

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that  **you are the Temple** of God, and that the Spirit of God  **dwells in you**?

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...You are the  **Temple** of the living God; as God has said,  **I will dwell in them**, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

We will see how this concept of dwelling with God is even further expanded in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Not only will God the Father  **dwell** in New Jerusalem—He will rule from the Holy City, New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:3).

1 John 4:12 No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another,  **God dwells in us**, and His love is perfected in us.

Finally, the unapproachable light for mankind will have become  **accessible light** for the everlasting Saints as they  **dwell** with God forever (1 Timothy 6:16). Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (Revelation 21:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). We find Jesus dwelling with His Saints in the Millennium – a partial fulfillment of God’s desire to reside forever and ever with His Family in the Holy City of the New Earth:

Revelation 7:15 The [resurrected Saints] are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple: and He that sits on the throne  **shall dwell among them**.

## **I Make All Things New**

This present earth will have served its temporary purpose. At times the earth can appear to us to be magnificently beautiful, but God reveals that its purpose is only transitory.

Revelation 21:4-7 God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be  **no more death** (Revelation 20:14), neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are  **passed away**. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold,  **I make all things new**. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me,  **It is done**. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

## **All in All — In Jesus Christ**

We read in Ephesians 1:23 that the Church brethren who make up Christ's Body are the fullness of Him that fills **all in all**. Jesus Himself will bring the Church brethren to spiritual completion – ready for their next step – the resurrection and a most intimate fellowship with God the Father. Jesus' glory never takes away from His Father because He is a reflection of the Father's glory which He had before the world existed (John 17:5).

**All** of God's Plan must come together in Christ. All of God's law must be lived and conformed to. All men must be redeemed by Christ's death—by His blood so that each person does not have to pay his own death penalty for sin (Ephesians 1:7; Acts 20:28). All of God's desires for mankind must be met. All things in heaven and earth must be appeased.

All that is written in the word of God must be fulfilled. Paul presents the perspective of the final phases of God's eternal Plan and Purpose as He brings **all things** to completion through Christ in preparation for the ultimate goal of all that is comprised and embodied in **New Jerusalem**. Therefore, Jesus is, **all in all** to the Church brethren as we see in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:10, 22-23 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one **all things** in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him... God has put **all things** under [Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be the head over **all things** to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that fills **all in all**.

In Christ we find more than this entire universe has to offer. We find the meaning of **all in all** to be that each Christian grows up into Him in **all things**. We do so when we put on every aspect of who and what Jesus Christ is (Ephesians 4:15).

Colossians 2:9-10 For in [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And **you are complete** in Him.

Colossians 3:11 There is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but **Christ is all, and in all**.

For now, the Father has committed all things into Christ's hands (John 3:35; 13:3). Jesus and the Saints are heirs to all things (Romans 8:17; Titus 3:7; James 2:5; Galatians 4:5-7). Until such time as **all things** are perfected by Jesus Christ, they must continue in His sphere of jurisdiction and dominion.

The changeover to God the Father's realm will take place after the Great White Throne Judgment is completed and the old world is dissolved (2 Peter 3:12). But until then, the Father has appointed Jesus to be the possessor of **all things** (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus Christ's role as Savior necessitates that He bring everyone to their completed and perfected state before He hands them over to His Father (1 John 4:12; Hebrews 10:14).

Christ must reign over mankind until He has vanquished all things that are contrary to God's perfect way (1 Corinthians 15:25). In the end, when Jesus has completed His work on earth, including the span of the Millennium, He will yield up the Kingdom of God on earth to God the Father's sovereignty (1 Corinthians 15:24).

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This Scriptural phrase, **all in all** sounds to our ear like all things will be completed and finished in Christ. However, we will see that Jesus' administration of the earth and all that is therein is a necessary requisite for the door to be opened for God the Father to become the ultimate **all in all**. There lies an eternity beyond in which God the Father shall reign over His Children in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever (Micah 4:7; Isaiah 9:7). But before we examine the meaning of **All in All — in God the Father** — it is necessary to understand how **His incomparable Holiness** had to remain unassailable and untouchable while Jesus suffered the shame of the cross:

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising its **shame**.

God the Father had to turn His back on **sin**, represented by Jesus, and allow Him to die alone. Jesus **became sin** in our stead. Hanging on the stake at Passover, Jesus said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) The answer is, because of His supreme **Holiness**, no sin could come into the presence of God the Father (Isaiah 59:2). God the Father turned away from Jesus to let Him stand alone and die alone.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have estranged you from your God, and your sins have caused Him to conceal His face from you so that He will not pay heed to you.

### **Holiness**

Jesus taught that God the Father is fully set apart from all creation as the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus instructed His disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, **Hallowed** be thy name" (Luke 11:2).

Hallow is simply an old English word for holy or sacred. Holy means to "set apart" from everything else. As it is used here, "Hallowed be thy name" would best be rendered, "Father, your name is the **Holiest**;" or "Your name is set apart in a class all its own – it is held in the highest respect;" or "No other name compares to your Holy name." Jesus intended that only His Father have the title, **Holy** Father. He specifically excluded any earthly religious leader being called Holy Father. In Matthew 23:9 He demanded that only His Heavenly Father be referred to in that way.

God's Name, i.e., His reputation, His authority, His power, His morality, His spiritual perfection, and His majesty – are in a category exceedingly far above every other being (Exodus 15:11). God tells us that His ways and thoughts greatly exceed, surpass and completely eclipse those of the most brilliant intellectuals.

Isaiah 55:8-9 My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways **higher** than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God's ways are higher than man is capable of fully understanding, but He has shown us that He provides the knowledge that we can rely on to illuminate our path toward His Kingdom. Jesus Christ gave us this insight to help us grasp the **supreme sovereignty** of the Father. If we were to pray, "Me and you Lord," we might start thinking that we are on a similar level with God. Instead, we pray "Our Father... Hallowed be thy name," so that we understand that God exists in eternal brilliant glory in a spiritual realm far higher than our mundane existence. God's Plan and desire is to bring us into His divine nature! He tells us to be holy:

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1 Peter 1:16 Be ye holy; for I am **holy**.

There is a universal Biblical principle that states that anything coming into God's Holy proximity must be holy (Exodus 3:2-5). Man must be justified and reconciled before coming near unto God. Iniquity and sin have defiled mankind and caused a severance from God's Glory (Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 3:4). The wickedness of man cannot ever be permitted to impugn God's Holy character. Sin has built a barrier of separation between God and man.

Our incredible potential is that we shall be **holy like Him** (1 John 3:2). In praying, "Hallowed be thy name," we acknowledge and accept that God is set apart; set entirely above every other being—including His Son, Jesus Christ, who being subordinate and submissive, always defers to His Father who is in the superior role in their divine relationship.

John 14:28 [Jesus said] ...I go unto the Father: for my Father is **greater** than I am.

The Bible is conclusive: Jesus Christ – the Word – was the God of the Old Testament who carried out the **will of His Father** - the Most High God (Genesis 14:22). The Father is also the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13).

John 10:29 My Father, who gave [the disciples to] me, is **greater than all**; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

How amazing it is then to have the privilege of receiving the attention of, and being heard by our great Holy God! He is not going to condescend to our fleshly existence—instead, we shall be changed to His incorruption and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53).

1 John 3:1-2 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Children of God... Beloved, now are we the Children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be **like Him**; for we shall see Him as He is.

Jesus has declared that God the Father's Plan and Purpose will be fully accomplished in the converted Saints. In almost every Old Testament passage, the LORD *YHVH*—The Eternal—is Jesus Christ. Clearly, Jesus is the God of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 10:4). During the Millennium, Jesus as Messiah—as Lord of lords and King of kings—will be exercising God **the Father's Will** and authority over all the earth (Revelation 19:16). Jesus Christ is coming – not to establish His own dominion – but that of His Father who must **remain above all** until all enemies are done away with.

That chasm between The Father and things mortal must remain until this earth and everything in it is dissolved – otherwise His perfect righteousness and **holiness** would become tainted and compromised by touching the profane thing (Haggai 2:12-14).

Until those who live in the Millennium have been tried and tested, God the Father will reign through His Son, Jesus Christ. At the end of the thousand years there will be a time of thorough testing of all who have not had to deal with Satan. There is a warning here. In spite of Jesus' glorious rule, a great many people will succumb to Satan's deception:

Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the **number of whom** is as the sand of the sea.

That final battle will take place at the very conclusion of the Millennium when the faithful of God will receive divine protection. At that point in time, Jesus will deal with all **enemies** of the Kingdom of God:

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Revelation 20:9-10 [Gog and Magog] went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and **fire came down** from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the **lake of fire** and **brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet were cast [a thousand years before], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Indeed, after the completion of the Great White Throne Judgment, the entire earth will dissolve and melt with fervent heat into one huge **Lake of Fire** and **brimstone** (2 Peter 3:12). God's rule of peace and prosperity will prevail during the Great White Throne Judgment period. In Isaiah 65:20 we find that this judgment period will provide ample opportunity for all to come to conversion, and for Godly character to be acquired – or refused. It will be one way or the other. Those who will not have repented of their rebellion against God, and who will have rejected God and His way, will be cast into the Lake of Fire and die the second eternal death. Jesus said:

Revelation 21:8 The fearful [hypocrites with double-standards], and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the **lake** which burns with **fire** and brimstone: which is the **second death**.

If we can infer anything at all from Ezekiel 9:4-5, it is that God will not be sparing the rebellious, godless enemies of His way of life and truth.

Matthew 25:41 Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels.

This earth and everything in it will be totally consumed with everlasting fire—it will not be restored. The Saints will go over into the New Heaven and New Earth where **righteousness** prevails. Righteousness is God's high standard to which men will be judged. God the Father is the ultimate Judge who has chosen the day when He will judge all things through Jesus Christ:

Acts 17:31 He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in **righteousness** by that Man whom He has ordained. (John 5:22)

That day will be the time when all judgment and salvation will be set in stone – there will be no more opportunity for repentance:

Revelation 22:10-11 He said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is **unjust**, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is **righteous**, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be **holy** still.

All those who will have accepted God's way of life will become glorified Saints and members of the God Family, and will live forever. After this Judgment period, only that which is purified and holy will remain. Everlasting **righteousness** will prevail upon the earth (Daniel 9:24). Only God is good, while nothing of this world can be compared to God's goodness. Jesus Christ, in sinful carnal flesh, excluded Himself from the Father's sole category of **goodness** (Romans 8:3):

Mark 10:18 Jesus said unto him, Why do you call me good? There is no one good **but one**, that is, God.

That separation between God's **Holiness** and everything else must remain until the entirety of **everything** is purified. God the Father is spiritually pure, incorruptible, holy, and undefiled—He is the

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Holiest! After Satan, sin and death have been abolished—then, the Father will reign over the New Heavens and New Earth forever:

2 Peter 3:13 We, according to His promise, look for New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein **dwells righteousness!** [true goodness]

Man must be raised to the holiness of God—in His image and character—for God will not condescend to the level of sinful man:

Hebrews 12:14 Strive for peace with all men, and for **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord.

Jesus told His disciples, “If you have seen me – you have seen the Father.” It is Jesus who begins to establish His Father’s reign on earth at the beginning of the Millennium. After the Millennium when all is purified by fire, God in His Holiness will, Himself, dwell in the New Heaven and New Earth.

Psalms 48:1-2 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the **City of our God**, in the mountain of **His Holiness**. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the City of the Great King.

Revelation 21:27 There shall in no wise enter into [the Holy City] **anything that defiles**, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Jesus must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet, and Satan is the primary enemy who will be dealt with for the final time at the end of the 1,000-year Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10). At the start of the Millennium Jesus will establish His Father’s Kingdom and rule from Jerusalem for a thousand years:

Revelation 19:6 I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the **Lord God** omnipotent **reigns**.

Revelation 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy**, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Because of His **Holy Dignity**, God the Father must remain at a distance from **all corruption** of mankind. The Father remained upon His throne in Heaven while Jesus walked the earth when Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:8). During Jesus’ public ministry, the Father was inaccessible—you have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape (John 5:37). Even when Jesus rules during the Millennium until all evil and godless authority has been vanquished, nothing sinful will ever come into God’s holy presence and spoil or soil **His flawless perfection**. Because of man’s acquired sinful nature, God the Father will continue to rule through Jesus Christ until the time of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Until there is a fundamental transformation from **human nature** to **divine nature**, mankind’s very presence would defile God’s Holy Kingdom (2 Peter 1:4).

1 Corinthians 15:24 Then comes the **end**, when [Jesus] shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, **even the Father**; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

## **All in All — In God the Father**

Jesus taught His disciples, “**All things** are delivered unto me of my **Father**: and no man knows the Son, except the Father; neither knows any man the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matthew 11:27; 28:18). And, that is the good news; Jesus has not only revealed the Father to us, He has reconciled us to the Father so that we may know Him - face to face.

Paul wanted to make it absolutely clear that Jesus Christ always remains in subjection to His Father. He does the will of His father, remaining subordinate to Him continuously. When Jesus became sinful flesh and died, He demonstrated His perfect willingness to continually yield to His Father:

Philippians 2:6 Christ Jesus, having essentially in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

Jesus knew that He had come from the Father who had given all authority over into His hands for the duration of the world, and that He will return that authority to His Father when the Plan of God is realized (John 13:3; 16:28).

It is none other than the resurrected Saints, the Body of Christ, who are the **fulfillment** of the **Plan of God**. It was for this purpose—God **reproducing Himself** in His Children—that the heavens and earth were created. And, for this purpose—the expansion of the Family of God—that all will come under the purview of God the Father in the New Heavens and the New Earth where everything will be eternally **all in all**. This will be the greater fulfillment of **all in all**—in God the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:27-28 [God the Father] has put **all things** under [Jesus'] feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that [the Father] is excepted, who did put all things under Him. And when **all things** shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son Himself also be subject unto Him that put **all things** under Him, that God may be **all in all**.

This is not saying that Jesus is not now subject to the Father – it is saying that after the Last Great Day and the Great White Throne Judgment is finished – then everything will be purified of sin, iniquity and death – and then God the Father will be all in all.

**All in all**, is an interesting term in the Bible. As we will note, it is a superbly all-inclusive phrase. There will be no more “us and them,” but a perfect Godly Family unity of total fulfillment and belonging, of happiness and peace, of harmony and togetherness, and of acceptance and love. It will be the culmination of the kingdoms of the old age having become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. Not only will there be the Father and Jesus Christ alone on their eternal throne, but also all those resurrected Saints who overcame will also be granted to sit with Christ in His throne (Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 11:15; 3:21).

**All in all**, refers to the time when all things righteous will have come together within God’s sinless divine realm. During the course of sinful flesh, it was necessary that God the Father in His Holiest state be separate, and remain apart, from this sinful world and all that is in it (Romans 8:3). Within Scripture, the term “God” is inclusive of the Father and the Son in most cases. Being of the same Family, purpose, Spirit, mind, and the same exact divine character, there is never any conflict between the two divine Beings (Hebrews 1:3). God the Father and Jesus Christ are two distinct Beings, both of whom are rightly called “God.” Their work of creation is being done in perfect cooperation as a unified collaboration—the Father creating through the Son (Ephesians 3:9).

## **Heaven and Earth Shall Pass Away**

In our physically oriented world, it seems to us that God has gone to great lengths to create this magnificent earth and the starry heavens. God reveals that they are but a stepping-stone in His Great Plan.

Isaiah 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for **the heavens shall vanish away** like smoke, and the **earth** shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall **die** in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

All those who will not have become righteous resurrected Saints by the time of the Great White Throne **final Judgment**, will be cast into the Lake of Fire where the elements of the earth will be vaporized (2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 20:15). Jesus spoke of the **Day of God** when those who never repented of their ways shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous Saints into life eternal. (Matthew 25:46):

Matthew 24:35 **Heaven and earth shall pass away**, but my words shall not pass away.

The apostle Paul quoted Psalm 45:6-7 and then spoke of the heavens and earth **perishing**:

Hebrews 1:8-12 Unto the Son [God the Father] says, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy Kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore, God, even thy God, has **anointed** you [ordained you Messiah] **with the oil** of gladness above thy fellows. And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the **earth**; and the **heavens** are the works of thine hands: **They shall perish**; but you remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; And as a vesture you shall fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou are the same, and your years shall not fail.

God prophesied in the Psalms that the heavens and earth shall **pass away**:

Psalm 102:25-28 Of old you have laid the foundation of the earth: and the **heavens** are the work of thy hands. **They shall perish**, but you shall **endure**: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed: But you are the same, and your years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before you.

The example of an insignificant caterpillar's change into a stunning butterfly is a fit analogy of man and his resurrection. As incredible as the lustrous silk fiber of a butterfly's cocoon is, it does not play a lasting role. The larva spends its time eating and growing, not knowing that it will emerge from the silk cocoon that was utilized as a temporary home during its metamorphosis, to becoming the most glorious of insects – adorned with exquisite wings and able to span oceans and continents. But the silk residence is **cast aside** having served its purpose. In the same way that the silk dwelling is discarded, this beautiful planet—the Earth—will be needless when God's purpose for it is complete.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

If the beautiful butterfly is an apt analogy, how will the resurrected Saints appear during the Millennium? We are not told how the Saints will appear while they are reigning and ruling with Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, we are not told exactly how Jesus, Himself, will appear as He rules from His throne in Jerusalem. He cannot function with mortal men in His dazzling spiritual **glory**—for they would be burnt to a crisp and die (Exodus 33:20). How will Jesus manifest Himself as He rules from David's throne at Jerusalem? He will probably appear as He did to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He will be composed of spirit but appear as He did in Genesis (Genesis 1:28; 2:16; 3:8-19). It seems fair to assume that Jesus and the Saints will appear during the Millennium just as Jesus, the God of the Old Testament, did when He wrestled with Jacob/Israel. He appeared as a normal man in his prime—perhaps about 30 years old (Genesis 32:24-28). The Saints too, in order to have the needed respect, authority and acceptance when teaching and counseling those people in the Millennium, cannot appear to be too young, or too old while instructing them in, “this is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

But, in the New Heavens and the New Earth, when the splendiferous glory of the Saints is finally made manifest, their splendid brilliance will shine forth as the **brightness of the stars** forever and ever.

Daniel 12:2-3 Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (John 5:29). And they that be wise shall **shine** as the **brightness** of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

### **Rest Forever More**

We have seen that God intended that there be a **rest** for His people. He gave us the weekly Sabbath rest which is also a type of the Millennial rest (Hebrews 4:9).

Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the **heavens** and the **earth** were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He **rested** on the **seventh day** from all His work which He had made. [The seventh day Sabbath is a prophecy of the Millennial rest.] And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it [God set it apart]: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

Speaking of the Sabbath Day God says:

Exodus 31:17 The Sabbath is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made **heaven** and **earth**, and on the seventh day He **rested**, and was refreshed.

After the completion of the 1,000-year physical rest, the **Day of God** will inaugurate the **everlasting spiritual rest** of the Saints. God will dwell in both Zion and in the Saints of God – because they are one and the same!

Psalms 132:13-14 The LORD has chosen; He has desired it for His habitation. This is **my rest forever**: here will I **dwell**; for I have desired it.

God was not exhausted and tired after six days of work. Yes, He **rested** on the **seventh day**, and ceased His work, but that was in order to shine light on the Sabbath Day – making it Holy, and pointing in a prophetic way to the Millennium to come—foretelling of a **greater rest** in His Plan for mankind.

Exodus 20:11 For in **six days** the LORD made **heaven** and **earth**, the sea, and all that in them is, and **rested** the **seventh day**: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and made it Holy.

Paul explained to the New Testament Church of God that the weekly Sabbath observance is yet mandatory—because we are still looking forward to the Millennial **rest** as well. The Greek language has no word for “a keeping of the Sabbath,” so Paul coined the new word *Sabbatismos*. When read in context, much of Chapters Three and Four of the Book of Hebrews speaks of the **rest** in the Promised Land, and by extension, the Millennial rest of God. Paul gives us his specific purpose statement for writing about the **ultimate rest** God has in store for those who are true believers:

Hebrews 4:1 Let us be in all due trepidation, lest, while The Promise being left us of entering into **His rest remains**, any of you should **come short** of entering it.

Here, Paul is warning Christians not to miss out on the resurrection and the 1,000-year Millennium. He doubles-down on the necessity of Sabbath observance—as that **rest**, more than anything else, points to the ultimate culmination of the Plan of God—the everlasting spiritual rest of the Saints:

Hebrews 4:4, 9 For He spoke in a certain place of the **seventh day** on this wise, And **God did rest** the seventh day from all His works (Exodus 20:11)... There **remains** therefore a **rest**—a keeping of the Sabbath (*Sabbatismos*) for the people of God.

Though the earth is extremely old, Jesus Christ came to this earth as Emmanuel [God with us] about four-thousand years after Adam. And now it has been two-thousand years since the public ministry of Jesus Christ. In the same way that there are seven days in creation, there are seven-thousand years in the Plan of God for men. God, Himself, **rested** on that seventh day of creation – picturing the 1,000-year Millennial rest soon to begin. After the Millennium, the earth will be no more, but God will continue **forever more to dwell** in His Saints—and the Saints will dwell in God. The saints are an habitation of God (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Daniel 7:18 The Saints of the Most High God will receive the Kingdom and possess it forever, yes, forever and ever.

## **The Stars Will Be Rolled Together as a Scroll**

The stars in the night sky have remained essentially where they are now for centuries, if not millennia. How is it possible that they will be rearranged so suddenly? Isaiah gives us the first hint of all the heavens being reordered.

Isaiah 34:4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be **rolled together as a scroll**:

Surprisingly, the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll **prior** to the Millennium—it could happen at any moment! Christ’s second coming will be accompanied by cataclysmic events and astronomical alterations. The surprising thing is that this astronomical wonder is going to happen in the near future. This heavenly event will include the entire universe—which will be rolled up like a scroll—all the galaxies screaming toward one another.

Revelation 6:14 The heaven **departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together.

When the subject of the **Tribulation** comes up, the Church of God most often thinks of the inexpressible horrors mankind will suffer at the hands of the Beast and False Prophet. Indeed, Jacob’s Trouble will be unimaginably horrendous (Matthew 24:21; Jeremiah 30:7).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Most people do not realize just how violent the disastrous upheaval in the heavens and the earth will be immediately before Christ's return:

Isaiah 34:8 It is the **Day of the LORD's** vengeance, and the **year** of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

Jesus will bring about heavenly signs for all the world to see in the **last year** of the 3½ year Tribulation. Isaiah describes an intolerable environment during the Tribulation:

Isaiah 34:9-10 The streams thereof shall be turned into tar, and the dust thereof into **burning sulfur**, and the land thereof shall become **blazing pitch**. The **fire** shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste.

The Heavenly signs will follow Satan's wrath - but precede Christ's second coming. Everyone on earth shall see Christ coming in the clouds. Jesus said:

Mark 13:24-26 In those days, after that Tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the **stars** of heaven **shall fall**, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

God's word speaks of incredible devastation and upheaval in the heavens, seas, and earth. After the Tribulation the nightly sky and the appearance of the landscape will little resemble what we know today. The heavenly constellations we recognize today will be seen no more, and the face of the earth will lie in ruin.

Isaiah 13:9-10 Behold, the **Day of the LORD** comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the **stars of heaven** and the **constellations** thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

The sixth seal, Heavenly Signs, is opened between Satan's wrath in the Tribulation and the Trumpet plagues that accompany Christ's return. Jesus said:

Matthew 24:29-30 Immediately after the Tribulation of those days [Satan's wrath of two and one half years] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the **stars shall fall from heaven**, and the **powers of the heavens shall be shaken**: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the **tribes of the earth mourn**, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Luke 21:26)

All these heavenly wonders with the stars falling to the earth occur just before the beginning of the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Even the tectonic plates riding on the earth's mantle will be dislocated. The Heavenly Signs will mark the beginning of the astonishing wrath of the Lamb of God.

Revelation 6:12-17 I beheld when he had opened the **sixth seal**, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the **stars of heaven fell** unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. The heaven was torn apart / removed **as a scroll** when it is **rolled together**; and every mountain and **island were moved** out of their places (Isaiah 34:4).

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And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great **Day of His wrath** is come; and who shall be able to stand?

When the people of the nation's refuse to repent, God's vengeance comes upon them. But they will live again at the Last Great Day – and they will remember that the LORD was serious about them living righteously – and then the great majority of mankind will repent and enter the Kingdom of God.

Why would Jesus need to **rearrange the stars** in the sky before He renews the face of the earth and establishes His Father's Kingdom? Could the make-over be so thorough that even the starry sky will be renewed to its **former state**—like resetting a clock (Acts 3:19)? Will the earth be returned to a 360-day year as at creation? Will the length of a month be exactly 30 days? Will the constellations revert back to where they were at the creation of Adam and Eve and the re-creation of the earth? Does “New Heavens” mean that the universe will become capable of sustaining human life – unlike the lifeless universe we see today? The Church of God has long recognized that God's Kingdom would reach to the stars (Isaiah 9:7). Indeed, the Saints and the entire universe have been waiting—groaning in travail together until the return of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:22). We will see shortly that Paul makes such a case.

Hebrews 1:10-12 Thou, Lord, **in the beginning** have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: **They shall perish**; but you remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a vesture shall you **fold them up**, and **they shall be changed**: but you are the same, and your years shall not fail. (Psalm 102:25-26)

What if the observable universe – that “appears” to be 14 billion light years across, is not expanding at all, but has been retracting all these years and is about to come together - **rolled up like a scroll**? The earnest expectation of all creation is only **waiting** for the manifestation of the Children of God (Romans 8:19-23). God the Father knows the day and the hour, as it is only a simple physics equation for Him to solve. He has a name and place for every star:

Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number [as a shepherd who knows his flock (John 10:3)]: He calls them all **by names** by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails.

As of this writing, it is thought that light reaching us from the earliest known galaxies has been traveling toward us for approximately 14 billion years. But, that means that our observable data is profoundly “out of date” by that much – even if it is being interpreted correctly. Because it takes so long for their light to reach the earth, many of the stars we observe no longer exist. Factoring in the supposed **rate of expansion** of the universe, of near light-speed, into the computer algorithms yields a truly astronomically staggering universe! Nonetheless, astronomers, building their resumes on exaggerated numbers, accept the accelerating rate of expansion – yielding a universe of nearly 50 billion light years radius – from our observatories to the outer edge of space. And, by assuming that the earth is somewhere near the center, their calculations yield a universe of 100 billion light years in diameter – many, many times larger than the observable Universe.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

There was a point when light, time, matter, gravity, space and all else there might be **came into existence** (Genesis 1:1). All arguments aside, that was an act of our Creator God, because absolute nothing can come from absolutely nothing. With astronomer's knowledge of the universe increasing rapidly, what scientists cannot understand is the strange phenomenon of how and why the universe is accelerating, and why it is accelerating at an increasing rate. Scientists have had to surmise that there are some things "dark" in space that do not emit or reflect light – but their gravitational interactions are very strong and getting stronger.

How can that be? These contrasting forces have been dubbed **dark matter**, with an earth-like gravitational field, and **dark energy** (phantom energy), an anti-gravitational repulsive force. In a nutshell, because the observed "new data" does not comply with their "proven" laws of physics, scientists have had to hypothesize an undetectable massive phenomenon of invisible matter that outweighs the known universe!

Recognizing the validity of the old adage, "garbage in – garbage out," means that poor quality input always produces dismal results. Even the norms of general and special relativity theories for space and time are being taxed by recent theories. Recent findings are so skewed from "proven" Einstein's math that dark matter and dark energy have had to be "invented" for the equations to balance. So much so, that it is now believed that dark matter and dark energy make up a shocking 96 percent of the universe! Where Newtonian mechanics easily predicted the position and velocity of an object, not even **quantum mechanics** is able to explain what astronomers have recently "discovered" at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is the new science. The term "dark energy" was not even coined until 1998 by Michael Turner.

How do we reconcile what is "seen" in the heavens with God's statement saying that the stars will be **rolled up like a scroll** at Christ's return? That is a question we need to seriously consider.

Taken literally, the Bible evidence is that at some point in time, the observable universe must have begun to diminish. Imagine all the vast universe, unbeknownst to astronomers who are only able to observe the far distant past, **screaming back together** at the speed of light (Hebrews 1:10-12). Paul explains how creation has gotten entirely off-kilter, and will be reset to its former parameters:

Romans 8:19-23 The earnest expectation of the creation [of the entire universe and all that is in it] waits for the manifestation of the Children of God. For the creation was made subject to transientness, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also **shall be delivered** from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Children of God. For we know that **the entire creation groans** and travails in pain [as in childbirth] together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the sonship [of the Father, *huiiothesia* - verse 15], to wit, the redemption of our body.

The **New Heavens** and the **New Earth** are God's answer to how the universe shall be **delivered** from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Children of God (Romans 8:21).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

As brilliant as our scientists, astronomers and physicists are, they are totally baffled by the latest scientific developments. Unsolved questions, uncertain observations and misconstrued discoveries hope to find their answers about **deep space** with the powerful James Webb Space Telescope, and the Subaru Telescope at Hawaii with the largest monolithic primary mirror in the world. These tools will challenge the veracity of the accepted phenomena of the redshift of galaxies, the theory of a four-dimensional space-time continuum expanding the fabric of space, the infrared temperatures of space and galaxies, and the question of what fills “empty” space – plasma, light, etc. Scientists and evolutionists also hope to find an answer to a God-less creation by delving into **sub-atomic space** as explored by the Large Hadron Collider. Every new discovery unlocks bigger and bigger questions. **God’s creation** is proving to be truly unfathomable.

Psalms 19:1-6 The **heavens** declare God's glory, and the **sky** proclaims the work of His hands. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows **knowledge**. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Surprisingly, most of God’s universe is **invisible**. We cannot see gravity, electricity, heat, air and all its gasses, magnetism, sound, the vast spectrum of electromagnetic waves – including ultraviolet, infrared and radio waves. The list of invisible things is almost endless: Life, conscience, hunger, pain, sound, pleasure, sickness, thought, reasoning, emotions, atoms – let alone their electrons, neutrons and protons and sub-atomic parts, bacteria, viruses – because they are microscopically small – the spirit world, the future and the past. We cannot see hair growing - but we know that it does. Millions and millions of invisible cellphone signals are searching everywhere, and seeking just the right smart phone. Outer space is invisible, and so is the vast amount of dark matter within space—if dark matter, indeed exists. Scientists recently came up with “dark matter” to try to explain the inexplicable. Dark matter cannot fully explain how stars on the outer rim of galaxies travel so fast while distant galaxies are moving away from the center of the visible universe at an ever increasing acceleration, if indeed they are.

Humans are made of baryonic matter. Baryonic matter includes protons, neutrons and all the objects composed of them (i.e. atomic nuclei), but exclude things such as electrons and neutrinos which are actually leptons. It is now believed in astronomy and cosmology, that only a small proportion of the dark matter in the universe is likely to be baryonic. The invisible things of God make up an endless and incredibly complex universe—so impossibly complex that man has yet to figure it out, let alone replicate even a tiny part of His creation. All of these invisible things should help us see the **invisible attributes of God**:

Ninety-nine point nine percent – the greater part of matter in the universe, is plasma – ionized gas consisting of positive ions and free electrons. Scientists now estimate that between 95% and 96% of the physical matter in the universe is **invisible**—with only 4% to 5% being visible. (Atlas of Space, 2018 National Geographic p.95). Speaking of God’s **spiritual** realm:

Romans 1:20 The **invisible** things of God are **clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are created, even His eternal power and Divinity.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of **things not seen**.

God's vast **spiritual realm** is totally invisible to human eyes—but that does not negate the reality of its genuine existence (2 Kings 6:16-17).

Scientists cannot understand the gravitational attraction of **dark matter**, or the mysterious **dark energy** which repels like some sort of a negative energy. There is just not enough observable matter in a spiral galaxy to cause it to perform as it does. However, with our powerful telescopes we are able to "see" areas in galaxies where the space-time continuum is warped – bending the light passing through their areas. In the same way that **there is no life** without God, could it be that there is a **spiritual component** at the foundation of the universe? An unseen spiritual element explains everything:

Hebrews 1:3 ...Jesus Christ **upholds** the universe by the word of His power.

Colossians 1:17 He is before all things, and by Him all things **hold together**.

## **I Will Shake the Heavens and Earth**

Accompanying the Heavenly Signs announcing the intervention of Jesus Christ, **God will shake this earth** to its very core to persuade its nations to **repent**. Thus begins the Day of the Lord. There will be many devastating earthquakes, but one will be so powerful in magnitude that it will go right off the Richter scale—total catastrophe!

Revelation 6:12 I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a **great earthquake**.

We have seen massive earthquakes but this **shaking** will exceed anything the earth has ever witnessed since before the time of Adam and Eve!

Revelation 16:18 ...There [will be] a **great earthquake**, such as was **not since men** were upon the earth, so **mighty** an earthquake, and so great!

Jesus will shake Babylon the great; He shall put down all the proud and lofty; He shall crush the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man; and He shall put down all rule, all authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Isaiah 2:12, 17-19 The day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low ...and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to **shake terribly the earth**. (Luke 23:30; Hosea 10:8; Revelation 6:15-17)

This will take place as Christ begins to bring His wrath on the world one-thousand years **before** God creates the New Heavens and New Earth. As the Millennium begins, the earth will have been knocked off its axis – altering its orbit:

Isaiah 13:9-13 Behold, the Day of the LORD comes... For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine... Therefore, I will **shake the heavens**, and **the earth** shall be **removed out of her place**, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The very footing of what makes this evil world go 'round will be eviscerated. The world, as we know it, of class distinctions, syndicates, guilds, prisons, elitists, dignitaries, dominions, caste systems, and brutal supremacies will soon be **shaken** to its very core (Matthew 20:25).

Isaiah 24:19-23 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the **earth is moved exceedingly**. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in That Day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the **high ones** that are on high, and the **kings of the earth** upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign **in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem**, and before His ancients gloriously.

The Prophet Zechariah revealed that a **great earthquake** would split the Mount of Olives **in two** at Christ's coming in the **Day of the Lord**:

Zechariah 14:1-4 Behold, the **Day of the LORD** comes, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And **His feet shall stand** in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall **cleave in the midst** thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

There will be a sudden violent upheaval announcing Jesus' return:

Mark 13:24-26 [Jesus said] In those days, after that Tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in **heaven** shall be **shaken**. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

The sixth seal of Revelation gives us the heavenly signs and tremendous **earthquakes** (Revelation 6:12-13). This will occur just prior to the second and personal coming of Jesus Christ in great power. Massive tsunamis will sweep the oceans as a result of the earthquakes in the deep. Jesus said that the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be **shaken**:

Luke 21:25-26 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the **sea** and the **waves roaring**; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be **shaken**.

In the Old Testament it was prophesied that a **great earthquake** would proclaim the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord:

Joel 2:10-11 The **earth shall quake** before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executes His word: for the **Day of the LORD** is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Paul explains that God is going to **shake** everything so hard that only those with the most ardent faith will survive. The **shaking** of the heavens and earth is God's way of **speaking from heaven**:

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Hebrews 12:22-25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they escaped not who refused [Moses] who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that **speaks from heaven**: Whose voice then **shook** the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more **I shake** not the **earth** only, but also **heaven**. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are **shaken**, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be **shaken** may remain. Wherefore we receiving an un-**shakable** Kingdom, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly respect: For our God is **a consuming fire**.

Just before Jesus returns in power and great glory He will shake the earth:

Psalms 18:7 Then the **earth shook** and trembled; the foundations also of the hills/heaven moved and were **shaken**, because He was angry (2 Samuel 22:8).

In the third year of the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will destroy the whole land.

Isaiah 13:4-6 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts musters the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of His indignation, to **destroy the whole land**. Howl ye; for the **Day of the LORD** is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

The LORD's wrath against Nineveh foreshadowed His wrath at His second coming.

Nahum 1:3-6 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languish. The **mountains quake** at Him, and the **hills melt**, and the **earth is burned** at His presence, yes, **the world**, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like **fire**, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

When Jesus begins to shake the foundations of this earth there will be a whole lot of shaking going on. The literal earth shaking events begin with the sixth seal – the Heavenly Signs. Satan's goal is to cause man to reject God and thwart the Plan of God, which is—mankind becoming the very immortal Children of God. That is what Satan's Tribulation is about. Jesus speaks of **shaking** the **heavens** and **earth** in the **last year** of the three and one half year Tribulation – The Day of the Lord:

Matthew 24:29-30 Immediately after the Tribulation of those days [Satan's wrath of two and one half years] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the **powers of the heavens shall be shaken**: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the **tribes of the earth mourn**, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Great distress will come upon the nations with the shaking of the heavens and earth, but God's true servants will be spared the ordeal:

Joel 3:15-16 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the **heavens** and the **earth shall shake**: but the LORD will be the **hope of His people**, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Isaiah 13:13 Therefore I will cause the heavens to **tremble**, and the earth will be **shaken** out of its place, at the **wrath of the Lord** of hosts in the day of His fierce anger.

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The **sixth seal** describes violent pandemonium in the heavens and major earthquakes spread over the entire face of the earth. The sixth seal introduces the seventh seal—the one-year long wrath of the Lord (Isaiah 34:8). The **sixth seal** divides Satan's part of the **Tribulation** from the Day of the **Lord's wrath**, the last year of the Tribulation – the **seventh seal** (Acts 2:19-20). The seventh seal consists of the **seven trumpets**, each signaling a massive, earth-shattering cataclysm (Revelation 8:1-2).

God is going to **shake** the earth powerfully and more furiously than since He created man—and there have been some huge earthquakes. The intense New Madrid, Missouri earthquake of 1811–12 had a fault system 150-miles long extending into five states. It stretched from Cairo, Illinois southward into Arkansas with a violent magnitude of 7.5–7.9. Newspapers of the day reported that the series of earthquakes affected an area ten times larger than the magnitude 7.8 San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The New Madrid quake caused the ground to rise and fall like waves going out which rang church bells in Charleston, South Carolina on the East Coast, and knocked down brick chimneys in Cincinnati, Ohio. The earth beneath the Mississippi River heaved, causing it run backward for several hours with huge waves. The most powerful earthquake on record is a magnitude 9.5 quake in Chile in 1960. The Chilean earthquake generated a powerful tsunami that crossed the Pacific Ocean, killing people in Hawaii, Japan, and the Philippines. The Psalmist records a similar commotion accompanying the Exodus of Israel and involving the sea, hills and Jordan River:

Psalm 114:3-7 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan River was driven backward. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fled? Thou Jordan, that thou was driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? **Tremble, thou earth**, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.

The magnitude of these historic earthquakes will **pale into insignificance** when the Lord **shakes** the earth soon:

Haggai 2:6-7 Thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will **shake the heavens**, and the **earth**, and the **sea**, and the dry land; and I will **shake all nations**, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.

God has written so very much about the heavens falling, the oceans roaring, and the earth being removed. His ample warnings indicate how great an event it will be. The writer of Psalm 46 places the **shaking of the earth** in context with the establishment of the Millennial temple at Jerusalem:

Psalm 46:1-8 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the **earth be removed**, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though **the waters** thereof be tumultuous and boil, though the mountains **shake** with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she **shall not be moved**: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered his voice, the **earth melted**. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what **desolations** He has made in the earth.

## **Wrath of the Lamb**

The great day of the wrath of the Lamb is come and no one will be able to stand against Him. Jesus is coming soon, and it will not be what most people are expecting or hoping for. The wrath of God is coming against all evil lawless men. Jesus will eradicate all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth of God. Jesus is coming to prepare this earth for His Millennial rule. He is coming in retribution against this earth for its treatment of His saints. Jesus will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible (Isaiah 13:11).

Revelation 6:15-17 The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And they said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the **wrath of the Lamb**: For the great day of His **wrath** is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Why would a loving God be angry? It is because He has a beautiful Plan for mankind that is disrupted by evil lawless men and their governments. When sinful man has had every opportunity to appreciate his Creator God and does not do so, Jesus will return in great power to prepare the earth for those who will avail themselves of His blessings in the Millennium. When the **wrath of the Lamb** is finished, there will be only a small percentage of this earth's population left alive. The apostle Paul speaks often of the wrath of God. We are given many particulars of what is entailed:

Romans 1:18 The **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things comes the **wrath of God** upon the children of disobedience.

Colossians 3:6 For which things' sake the **wrath of God** comes on the children of disobedience.

During the Tribulation, those who worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark on their forehead, or on their hand shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God:

Revelation 14:10, 19 The same shall drink of the wine of the **wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and He shall be tormented with **fire** and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb... The angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the **wrath of God**.

We find God's wrath being poured out in the Day of the Lord:

Revelation 15:1, 7 I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the **wrath of God**... One of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the **wrath of God**, who lives for ever and ever.

The seven golden vials contain the final plagues of the wrath of God:

Revelation 16:1 I heard a great voice out of the Temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the **wrath of God** upon the earth.

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The **Lord's wrath** will come upon all ungodly men. Here are a few of the Scriptures from the Old Testament:

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For the **Day of the LORD** is at hand, and as a **destruction** from the Almighty shall it come (Isaiah 13:6).

The saints of the Church of God will be protected in God's Place of Safety during the three and a half years of wrath – the last year being the **Lord's wrath**:

Zephaniah 2:3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have worked His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be you shall be **hidden** in the day of the **LORD's anger**.

We come to the resurrection of the Saints in Revelation 14 as the **wrath of God** continues (verses 19-20). In Revelation 15 we see the seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the **wrath of God** – but they are not poured out just yet (Revelation 16:17). We see the resurrected Saints standing before the Throne of God the Father. John reports:

Those resurrected Saints who stand on the **sea of glass** are spared the **wrath of God**. The dead in Christ will rise first, and those who are alive and converted will follow. They will meet Jesus in the air and proceed to the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7)

On the Feast of Trumpets, the Saints will return to earth as Christ's vast heavenly army of spirit beings to defeat the Beast and False Prophet in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Revelation 19:14; Joel 3:1-2; Zechariah 14:1-5) and help establish God's Kingdom over all the earth.

Revelation 15:2-3 I saw as it were a **sea of glass** mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the **victory** over the Beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, you King of Saints (Exodus 24:9-11). This brings us to the time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:1, 7-9).

Chapter 16 of Revelation shows the seven vials of the **wrath of God** being poured out one by one. The Saints are on the sea of glass being called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. The last vial brings the deeds of great **Babylon** into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the **fierceness of God's wrath** (Revelation 16:7–19:2). This brings us to the two suppers—one good, the other to be avoided at all cost: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and the dreadful supper of the great God, of which Zephaniah speaks:

Zephaniah 1:7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the **Day of the LORD** is at hand: for the LORD has prepared a **sacrifice**, He has bid His guests [To the supper of the Great God – Revelation 19:17-21].

This verse will be fulfilled When Jesus, accompanied by His Saints on white horses, sacrifices the guests themselves who are bidden to the **supper of the Great God** (Revelation 19:14, 17-18).

Revelation 19:17, 21 I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the **supper of the Great God** ...And the remnant were slain with the sword of [Jesus Christ] that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

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The **wrath of God** will not be complete until after the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when Jesus Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords has deposed of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image, including kings, captains, might men and nations. God's wrath will be comprehensive in nature:

Jeremiah 25:31 A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD has a **controversy with the nations**, He will plead with **all flesh**.

Isaiah 34:1-2 Come near, **ye nations**, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the **indignation** of the LORD is **upon all nations**, and His fury upon all their armies: He has utterly destroyed them, He has delivered them to the slaughter.

The Prophet Daniel spoke of Jesus – as a **stone cut without hands**. He gives us the picture of Jesus Christ coming in **great power** against all the kingdoms of this earth. God revealed through Daniel what shall be in the latter days (Daniel 2:28). Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that **all the kingdoms** of the earth would be pulverized at Christ's return:

Daniel 2:34-35 You saw till that a stone [Christ] was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. [Until] they became **like the chaff** of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carries them away, that no place was found for them: and the **stone** [Christ] that **smote the image** became a great mountain [Kingdom of God], and filled the whole earth.

Jesus Christ will establish the Kingdom of His Father over all the earth in the Day of the Lord as the Millennium begins:

Daniel 2:44-45 In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven **set up a Kingdom**, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the Great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The apostle John describes Daniel's prophecy of this same earth shattering event in this way:

Revelation 19:15 Out of [Jesus'] mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should **smite the nations**: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the **fierceness and wrath of Almighty God**.

The Book of Zephaniah shows that in the last year of the Tribulation, while a part of the Church is hidden in the Place of Safety (Zephaniah 2:3), in the **Day of the Lord** – just prior to Jesus establishing His Father's Kingdom over the whole earth for the Millennial Rest (Zephaniah 3:17) – the haughty and proud shall be **purged by fire** and taken away (Zephaniah 3:11). Zephaniah's message was for ancient Judah first but it is archetypical of the Day of the **Lord's wrath**. Everything that is a part of this entire evil world will be consumed by the **fire of God**:

Zephaniah 3:8-9 Therefore wait ye upon me, says the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to **gather the nations**, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for **all the earth** shall be **devoured** with the **fire** of my **jealousy**. For then will I turn to the people a **pure language**, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent.

## **Peter's Clarification and Distinction**

Peter speaks of **two great fires** which will consume this earth. There are **two** clearly defined occurrences described in the Bible which reveal that the entire earth will be enmeshed in **fiery conflagrations**. The two are easily confused with one another, but Peter distinguishes between the two. The world takes no notice of the differentiation between the Kingdom of God—ruled by Jesus Christ during the Millennium—and the Kingdom of God in the New Heavens and New Earth. That confusion arises first of all, because the world cares little about the Plan of God, and secondly, because sometimes prophetic writings are dual in nature – applying equally to both the coming of Jesus Christ and the time of the New Heavens and New Earth – one-thousand years later.

The **first** inferno will take place at the beginning of the **Day of the Lord** at Jesus second coming. The second fire will sweep the earth 1,000 years later at the conclusion of the Great White Throne Judgment.

2 Peter 3:10 The **Day of the Lord** will come ...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the **elements shall melt** with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Peter shows that a **second** blazing firestorm will engulf the earth for the arrival of the **Day of God**—ushering in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

2 Peter 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the **elements shall melt** with fervent heat?

Peter does not repeat, “**the elements shall melt with fervent heat,**” for emphasis. Those two phrases are clearly set apart by *when* they will occur – the first, at the **Day of the Lord**, and the second, one-thousand years later at the **Day of God** and the New Heavens and New Earth. This revelation to Peter is so stark and dire that Peter is compelled to declare that these all-consuming devastations **will not eradicate** God's Covenant promise—despite the earth being melted by fervent heat. What was God's **promise**? It was the promise Jesus Christ made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and all the prophets. It is the promise of **countless** children to Abraham, as the stars of the heaven, and as sand which is upon the sea shore (Genesis 13:16; Genesis 15:5). Eternal life is a part of that **promise!** Knowing that the Plan of God will definitely go on, Peter seems to wonder how God will work it all out, and he says in faith:

2 Peter 3:13 **Nevertheless** we, according to **His promise**, look for New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

The earth in its present configuration will last only long enough for righteous men and women of the of the Great White Throne Judgment to become resurrected Saints—then comes the end when the earth **will no longer exist**—and God the Father will create the New Heavens and a New Earth (Isaiah 65:17):

Revelation 20:11 I saw a Great White Throne, and Him [Jesus Christ] that sat on it, from whose face the **earth and the heaven fled away**; and there was found **no place** for them.

Think of our beautiful planet in orbit – the blue earth against the background of space! It seems like such a loss to us that the earth will have fled away as a great lake of fire – to exist no more. What is next in the Plan of God?

## The Eighth Day

There will be an incredible moment when this present **physical** earth and sky will cease to exist—and, an even more astonishing moment when the **spiritual** New Heaven and New Earth will supersede the old. Indeed, Jesus called it the Last Great Day of the Feast (John 7:37). It should be celebrated as the greatest of the Feast Days, in that God's work in bringing many sons and daughters to Glory will finally culminate in Eternal Life. The entirety of mankind should revel in anticipation of this earth-shattering event. Everything will be **entirely new** Revelation 21:5)! This extraordinary instant in time should be looked forward to by the world with eager expectation. Why does the world little note, nor know what God has revealed here? Why does the world not take note of such a momentous occurrence? It is like Abraham Lincoln's memorable words in the Gettysburg Address, *"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work..."* But, in Abraham Lincoln's case, the world did note, and long remembered.

We strain to imagine the spiritual things which are with God in heaven. We know that this physical world in which we reside is only a temporary shadow's counterpart of the reality which exists in heaven. We know of the grand things like the Father's throne with all its accoutrements, down to the smallest herb of the field. They exist **spiritually** in heaven (Genesis 2:5; Romans 1:20). The heavenly Tree of Life will be transplanted into the soil of the New Earth—and it will yield its fruit—Eternal Life. On this **Eighth Day**, God is moving lock, stock and barrel from heaven above, to the New Heavens and the New Earth—and He will bring everyone with Him—the entire **City**, all the Saints (Revelation 21:2-3).

Revelation 21:1 I saw a **New Heaven and a New Earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

It is much more than a coincidence that right here in this narrative, Peter inserts the principle that **one day** is with the Lord as a **thousand years**! Peter is making the point – for those who have the eyes to see – that there will be **one-thousand years** between 2 Peter 3:10 and 2 Peter 3:12.

2 Peter 3:7-9 The **heavens** and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire** against the **Day of Judgment** and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that **one day** is with the Lord as **a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord does not delay concerning His **promise**, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should **come to repentance**.

Heavens is plural in this verse – meaning both where the birds fly and the stars shine. In addition to those two physical heavens, there is God's throne in heaven (Revelation 4:2). The thing that is "New" in this concept is that **everything** physical, of which man is aware, will be replaced with God's timeless and dimensionless spiritual realm of which the last two chapters of the Bible speak.

The physical creation that ended on the sixth day was **very good** (Genesis 1:31). The completion of the work of Jesus Christ will bring righteousness to God's spiritual creation. At the end of the seventh day God will see everything that He has made, and, behold, it will be **very, very good**.

The **Day of the Lord** will arrive at the Second Coming of Christ. The earth will be purged of all evil works (1 John 3:8), but it will not cease to exist then – but will be renewed like the Garden of Eden (Isaiah 51:3). Peter interjects the concept of **one-thousand years** into his discourse. He does so because there are one-thousand years of Christ’s rule on earth between the **Day of the Lord**, and the **Day of God** when all who have ever lived will have had the occasion to come to repentance. At the conclusion of the 1,000-year Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, the New Heavens and a New Earth will come. Once the dead are judged, every man according to their works, there is no more need of the old earth.

All men will have become either a resurrected Saint, or cast into the lake of fire and burnt up (Revelation 20:13-15). We must distinguish the very subtle differences [in the meanings of] between 2 Peter 3:10 and 2 Peter 3:12. The two verses are very similar, but describe two separate events! Verse 10 will occur unexpectedly for most of the world with the coming of the **Day of the Lord** in the last year of the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

2 Peter 3:10 The **Day of the Lord** will come **as a thief in the night**; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall **melt with fervent heat**, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be **burned up**.

Peter knew the prophecies of the Old Testament well (2 Peter 3:2). He knew that in the **Day of the LORD** at the return of Jesus Christ the **whole land** shall be **devoured** by **fire**.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 The Great **Day of the LORD** is near, it is near, and hastes greatly [looking earnestly], even the voice of the Day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is **a day of wrath**, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste-ness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the **trumpet** and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the **Day of the LORD's wrath**; but the **whole land** shall be **devoured** by the **fire** of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

The apostle Peter understood that there would be **two occasions** of all-encompassing fire and unprecedented world upheaval—separated by 1,000 years. The first occasion of devastating fire would be associated with the **Day of the Lord**. Jesus will send ravaging fire and extraordinary natural disaster on the nations as an inducement to **repentance**. The second and last instance of conflagration will be the all-inclusive inferno after the Great White Throne Judgment, and prior to the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Most of us are familiar with some of the prophetic principles that God incorporates, such as a **day for a year** substitution to make His point (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). We have long understood how God uses an expansion of that principle, a **day for one-thousand years**, so that His seven-day creation week represents the entirety of His seven-thousand-year Plan of God.

Psalms 90:4 For **a thousand years** in thy sight are but as **a day** that has just gone by...

Peter is presenting a “stir to action” to the Church. He is saying, “Time is running out for you.” “For the sake of our conversion we need to make hay while the sun shines.” “The Lord is longsuffering toward us – but we had better not press our luck” (2 Peter 3:9). Considering that the earth will not long endure, what kind of people should we be in **all holy conduct** and Godliness (2 Peter 3:11)?” In fact, Peter is paraphrasing much of Psalm 90 in this discourse:

Psalm 90:12 Teach us to **number our days**, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Man is being tested for 7,000-years – certainly to prove to God that he will always put God first, but he is also being tested to learn that man's ways of ruling on earth always come short—will not be successful, and will ultimately fail.

Jeremiah 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

## **The First Fire to Envelop the Earth**

Jesus Christ is going to return by **fire**. During the Millennium, the **ashes beneath their feet** will be a stark reminder of how God deals with the wicked. This will be the result of the **1<sup>st</sup> fire** at Jesus' return.

Malachi 4:1, 3 Behold, the day comes, that shall **burn** as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the Day that comes **shall burn them up**, says the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch... And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be **ashes under** the soles of your **feet** in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of hosts.

For six-thousand years, mankind has been in continuous disobedience to God, justifying wickedness, and in rebellion against his Creator. When God begins to intervene, it will be decisive. God's judgment always comes upon all who sin if they will not repent (Jeremiah 18:8, 10). Why will Jesus send this **great fire** on all nations? The answer is because it is one of His great principles to recompense evil, be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness (Isaiah 5:16):

Isaiah 5:20, 24-25 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put **darkness** for **light**, and **light** for **darkness**... Therefore, as the **fire** devours the stubble, and the **flame** consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the **law of the LORD** of hosts, and **despised the word** of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore, is the anger of the LORD **kindled** against His people, and He has stretched forth His hand against them, and has smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is **not turned away**, but His hand is stretched out still. [God's wrath will not abate until all is **consumed**.]

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 It is a righteous thing with God to **recompense Tribulation** to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in **flaming fire** taking **vengeance** on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

It is a righteous thing with God to **recompense Tribulation** to them that trouble His people. Jesus said of wars:

Matthew 24:6 You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the **end is not yet**.

A vivid anecdotal example of **God's wrath** against cruelty and brutality can be seen in God's judgment on Germany and Japan—who sought to deny God's **promised blessings** to Abraham—in WWII. Using one nation against another is not unprecedented in the Scriptures. God raised up Assyria to deport the northern kingdom of Israel, and Babylon to vanquish the southern kingdom of Judah. The modern Israelitish nations of the United States and Great Britain were the tools in God's hands to exact His retribution on those war-like nations. Germany was bombed into complete submission—with many of its major cities reduced mostly to charred rubble by incendiary bombs.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The city of Dresden, and the iconic image of its famous burned-out landmark, the Church of Our Lady in ruins, is known worldwide as a symbol of the **fiery destruction** of World War II. Of the death camps belonging to the Axis powers, such as Auschwitz, Treblinka and multiple others, this writer has visited the holocaust ovens and crematoriums of Dachau, Germany, which attest to man's recent inhumanity to man and the mercilessness of Nazi persecution, extermination and murder of six million Jews, twenty-four million Russians and six million Poles, roughly one fifth of the pre-war population of Poland. Across the world the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the target of the fiercest nuclear weapons ever unleashed on a people in the hopes of bringing the war to a quick conclusion. World War II was a diminutive taste of the **fire of God's wrath** that will be unleashed on this earth (2 Thessalonians 1:8). God says:

Jeremiah 6:18-19 Hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, **I will bring evil upon this people**, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, **nor to my law**, but rejected it.

The **fiery wrath of God** against the whole earth – in the last year of the Tribulation – just prior to the Millennium is noticeably represented in the pages of the Book of Revelation as Christ's intervention:

Revelation 8:5 The angel took the censer, and filled it with **fire** of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Revelation 8:7-8 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and **fire** mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was **burnt up**, and all green grass was **burnt up**. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain **burning with fire** was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.

Revelation 8:10 The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, **burning** as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.

Revelation 9:17-18 ...Out of their mouths issued **fire** and **smoke** and **brimstone**. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the **fire**, and by the **smoke**, and by the **brimstone**, which issued out of their mouths.

Revelation 16:8-9 The fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to **scorch men with fire**. And men were scorched with **great heat**, and blasphemed the name of God, who has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory.

Babylon the great is punished with **fire**:

Revelation 18:8, 18 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly **burned with fire**: for strong is the Lord God who judges her... [They stood afar off], and cried when they saw the **smoke** of her **burning**, saying, "What city is like unto this great city!"

Jesus Christ's return will be accompanied by **fire**:

Isaiah 66:15-16 Behold, the LORD **will come with fire**, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with **flames of fire**. For by **fire** and by **His sword** will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

Jesus told Peter and the disciples that **fire and brimstone** would accompany His return:

Luke 17:26, 29-30 As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man... But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it **rained fire and brimstone** from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man [Jesus Christ] is revealed.

Jude 1:7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire**.

2 Peter 2:6 Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah **into ashes** condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

The earth will be **cleansed** prior to the Millennial rule of Christ, and **replaced** in the **Day of God** by a New Earth.

## **The Second Fire to Envelop the Earth**

We have been looking at the Day of the Lord that begins in the Tribulation. On the other hand, the **Day of God** will take place **a thousand years later**, not surprisingly, after the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, and just prior to the New Heavens and the New Earth. We saw:

2 Peter 3:10 The **Day of the Lord** will come ...in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the **elements shall melt** with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Peter distinguishes between the **Day of the Lord** in 2 Peter 3:10, and the **Day of God** in 2 Peter 3:12 with the phrase, "**being on fire shall be dissolved.**" Peter had to differentiate between the **two fires**. Peter here describes the **2<sup>nd</sup> fire**:

2 Peter 3:12 Looking [anticipating] for and hasting [looking earnestly] unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens **being on fire** shall be **dissolved** [destroyed, loosed and broken], and the elements shall melt [liquefy] with fervent heat.

The **second inferno** will take place at the beginning of the **Day of God** at the very end of the Millennium—ushering in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Peter speaks of a second **fiery** destruction – the **2<sup>nd</sup> fire**, but this time it will be much greater—the **total annihilation** of everything physical and mortal—so great that the old heavens and earth will disappear entirely and no longer exist. Peter gives us one of the few views that we have of the **transitional time** between the Great White Throne Judgment and the New Heavens and a New Earth. Peter tells us that the heavens and the elements will **burn up**, dissolve and melt away. The majestic mountain ranges, the immense plains, and the cities of every nation will depart. Peter names this final obliteration of the universe, the "**Day of God**" to distinguish it from the preceding "**Day of the Lord.**"

Paul speaks of the **2<sup>nd</sup> fire** that occurs at the final Judgment of the Great White Throne when the spiritually **dead** will be judged with **everlasting destruction** in the **lake of fire** (Revelation 20:12-15):

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 ...When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in **flaming fire** taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; When He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

It will be the **Day of God** which paves the way for the New Heavens and a New Earth. We will note that the **fire** and **fervent heat** that follow after the 1,000-year-long Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment are much hotter and more extensive than the **fire** that accompanies the **Day of the Lord**. Peter gives Christians the **action step for salvation** by appealing to their sense of a glorious eternity—beyond the day when the earth will have melted away:

2 Peter 3:11-13 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in all holy conduct and Godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens being on **fire** shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His **promise**, look for **New Heavens and a New Earth**, wherein dwells righteousness.

Then comes **the end**. The time will have come when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even **the Father** (1 Corinthians 15:24). There must needs be a conveyance of **all things** back to God the Father.

On earth, the Plan for mankind began in a veritable paradise, and it will end in God's **paradise** in the New Heavens and the New Earth (2 Corinthians 12:4). The Father created all things by and through Jesus Christ **until** such time that all who are sanctified will be perfected (Hebrews 10:14). Jesus will be subject to His Father's will, and the resurrected Saints will serve God, and He that sits on the throne shall  **dwell among them** (Revelation 7:15).

John the Baptist had explained that there would be only two courses of action that men might take: A person can either become a **Spirit** being, or be plunged into the **eternal fire** that consumes everything at the **Day of God**. Speaking of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist said of Jesus:

Matthew 3:11-12 ... He shall baptize you with [either] Holy **Spirit**, or with **fire**. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat [Saints] into the garner; but He will **burn up** the chaff with **unquenchable fire**. (Luke 3:17).

God's **eternal judgment** is a key doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2).

Revelation 20:14-15 Death and hell were cast into the **lake of fire**. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The Scriptures do not tell us a great deal about the **transition** from a **physical** earth to the **spiritual** New Heaven and New Earth in the eternal Kingdom of God. We need to answer the question of what takes place between the conclusion of the Great White Throne Judgment and the establishment of the New Heaven and New Earth. Satan will have deceived the nations:

Jude 1:6 The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the **judgment** of the **great day**.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan and the demons' fate is to be cast into the **lake of fire** and brimstone (Revelation 20:10). This is when all the earth is **burned** up. From before the face of Jesus Christ the earth and the heaven have fled away; and there was found no place for them (Revelation 20:11).

Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the **number** of whom is as the **sand of the sea**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

This will be the most massive cleansing ever:

Revelation 20:9-10 [Gog and Magog] went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and **fire came down** from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the **devil** that deceived them was cast into the **lake of fire** and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet were cast, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Isaiah 4:4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the **spirit of judgment**, and by the **spirit of burning**.

The creation of this earth that we call home was never meant to last all throughout eternity. As we saw before, Paul explains that even the physical universe that we see about us was also not to last forever:

Romans 8:20-21 For the creation [the entire universe] was made subject to transiency, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope [of the resurrection to eternal life], because the creation itself also shall be **delivered** from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Children of God.

Creation will finally be **delivered** from the bondage of corruption at the **Day of God**, the time when the New Heavens and New Earth are established. Prior to that time, everything must be totally **purged and purified** in preparation for the transfer from the authority and rule of Jesus Christ to God the Father. The handover from Jesus to God the Father cannot take place until after the **memory** of all sin and corruption is extinguished forever:

Isaiah 65:17 Behold, I create New Heavens and a New Earth: and the former **shall not be remembered**, nor come into mind.

Not only sin, but even the memory of our sins will be eradicated. Nothing irreverent, whether it be caused by wrongdoing, sin or iniquity, can ever come into **God's perfect Holy Presence**. God set forth His high standard by placing an impenetrable barrier between Himself and the profane (Leviticus 10:10). Speaking of the Holy City, New Jerusalem:

God knows the end from before the beginning. God Planned the end before the beginning. Actually the "end" of all this creation we see about us will be **the beginning** of an endless eternity. Peter spoke of the coming day when the earth as we know it would burn up—dissolve:

2 Peter 3:7 The **heavens** and the **earth**, which are now, by the same word are kept **in store**, reserved unto **fire** against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Peter rhetorically asks the question, "What is **in store** for this earth?" He talks about an overview of the earth's existence beginning with God dividing the seas from the dry land and the heavens (Genesis 1:6-10). Peter points out that as permanent and secure as that scenario must have seemed – God caused it to **perish** in Noah's flood. Peter was laying the groundwork to say that earth's **destruction** is going to happen **repeatedly**. First, the earth was destroyed in Satan's rebellion, and was then restored for Adam and Eve. Secondly, Peter shows that the earth was destroyed at the time of Noah's flood.

2 Peter 3:5-6 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the **heavens** were of old, and the **earth** standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, **perished**:

Peter goes on to refer to the aftermath of the flood and how through the sons of Noah – Shem, Ham and Japheth, humanity thrived in a revived environment that persists to this day—even the same **heavens** and **earth** that we see today.

## **Shared Name and Titles**

There are many names and titles of God that apply equally to God the Father and His pre-incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, because they constantly work in concert and harmony with one another – though at times, they distinguish between their respective roles (John 14:6). “Almighty God” can signify God the Father or Jesus Christ or both, depending on the context. They share one **Spirit**, one Eternal Life, and one and the same Family name, *Elohim* (Ephesians 4:4). It should come as no surprise that these two divine Beings most often share the same names and titles of one another such as Almighty, Eternal, Lord, Most High, God and Lord of Hosts.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the **Great God** and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “If you have seen me **you have seen the Father**” (John 14:9). Bold words? Not at all, because Jesus perfectly represents the Father because in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). They work together in everything – even to Christ’s death on the cross, and His resurrection by the Father (Ephesians 1:17-20). Jesus did not raise Himself – He was resurrected by His Father in the exceeding greatness of His power (Ephesians 1:19).

Many times Jesus affirmed that the words that He spoke were not His own – but those the Father gave unto Him (John 7:16; 8:28 14:10). Can we accept that when Jesus spoke, He spoke the Father’s words, and when Jesus was spoken of with names relegated unto the Father – it was not improper because Jesus was **in the Father’s stead** – speaking everything that the Father commanded Him to speak:

John 3:34 He whom God has sent **speaks the words** of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him.

The Psalmist reflected that when God the Father was provoked; Jesus Christ was equally provoked! **Elyon** is the Father – and He is the Most High God, *El Elyon*, of *Elohim* which **includes** Jesus Christ. Psalm 78:56 includes **both** God Beings:

Psalm 78:56 They tempted and provoked the **Most High [Elyon] God [Elohim plural noun]**, and kept not His testimonies.

Jesus Christ and the Father are *YHVH*. Psalm 102:22, 25 shows clearly that it was *YHVH* who laid the foundation of the earth, and we know that to be Jesus (Hebrews 1:2-3).

Psalm 110:4-6 The LORD (*YHVH*) has sworn, and will not repent, You [Jesus Christ] are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-28). The Lord (*Adonai* – a plural of majesty) at your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His [Jesus Christ] wrath. He shall judge among the heathen...

Jesus is the Son of **God Most High** (Luke 1:32; 8:28; Mark 5:7). Jesus was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil and take away our sins (1 John 3:5, 8). We see Jesus’ capabilities, His position and His character.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

God the Father, the **Most High God**, has always been over everything (Ephesians 4:6). Everything that was done in the Old Testament through the One Who became Jesus Christ was done according to the will of the Most High God. Jesus said He did nothing that was not the will of God.

The pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, God of the Old Testament, revealed His Covenant name to Moses as "LORD" [Hebrew *Yahweh*] (Exodus 6:2). It is a personal name, *YHVH*, signifying that He is the ETERNAL ONE who does not change (Malachi 3:6). Jesus had previously appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of "God Almighty" [Hebrew *El Shaddai*] (Exodus 6:3). We cannot but scratch the Biblical surface of the many, many names and titles that demonstrate that until the **Day of God**, Jesus is the being who continuously and perfectly represented His Father's will on earth (1 Corinthians 10:4). The title "Christ the Lord" would probably have been said as "**Messiah Adonai**" in the Aramaic that these shepherds of Bethlehem spoke. This shows that this baby Jesus was not only the promised Messiah, but also the One known as "the LORD" in the Old Testament (Luke 2:11).

Isaiah utilizes names for Jesus that might as easily be applied to the Father:

Isaiah 9:6 Unto us a **child is born**, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and **His name** shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The **Mighty God**, The **Everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace.

Psalms 68:5 **Father** of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation.

Jesus and the Father are **One Spirit**. That means that they are closer than words can describe. They share **spiritual Life** eternal with each other (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Jesus and the Father share every virtue and spiritual principle that eternally reflect God's mind and character. So, it is given that the term "God" is **inclusive** of the Father and the Son in most cases because, being of the same mind, purpose, Spirit and same exact divine character, there is never any conflict between the two divine Beings (Hebrews 1:3). Though they work in concert and harmony, there are times when God the Father has to become involved in what would normally be in the purview of Jesus – from creation until the New Heavens and the New Earth: Only God the Father was able to raise Jesus from death, and restore the glorious power of the Creator God to Him (Ephesians 1:20; John 17:5). Only God the Father was able bring about the insemination of Mary by and through the power of His Spirit – becoming the Father of Jesus (Luke 1:35).

Zechariah 14:9 The LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and **His name one**.

It is right and proper for Jesus Christ to be referred to as **Lord God Almighty**:

Revelation 15:3 They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the **Lamb**, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, **Lord God Almighty**; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.

When Jesus will have assumed the Throne of David at Jerusalem and established His Father's Kingdom on earth—He will **reign** in His Father's stead. Jesus is referred to as **Lord God Almighty**:

Revelation 11:15, 17 ...The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our **Lord**, and of His **Messiah**; and He shall **reign** forever and ever... We give thee thanks, O **Lord God Almighty**, the one who is, and was; because you have taken thy great power, and have **reigned**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In Revelation 11:18, we see that it is Jesus who metes out the **wrath** of the **Lamb** and **judges** the dead (Revelation 6:16-17; John 5:22). Speaking of Jesus:

Revelation 19:15 Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and **wrath** of **Almighty God** (Revelation 16:7, 14).

When Jesus takes the throne at Jerusalem, He will establish His Father's rule over all the earth! It can be truly said that the kingdoms of this world have become the **Kingdom of our Father** in heaven because Jesus will perform the Father's will fully and perfectly. The Father will remain on His throne in heaven **until** all rule and all authority and all powers have been abolished or brought into subjection (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). Jesus must reign from Jerusalem, until He has put all **enemies** under His feet. Jesus taught us to pray to His Father for deliverance from Satan and his demons (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4).

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the **saints in light**: Who has delivered us from the **power of darkness**, and has translated us into the **Kingdom of His dear Son**.

Jesus came preaching the Gospel. The Good News that Jesus brought was that he would establish the Kingdom of His Father on earth (Mark 1:14). The resurrected Saints will inherit the Kingdom with **Jesus Christ** and **will** live, **reign** and rule with Him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4)

Isaiah 52:7 [The LORD says,] How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that **brings the Gospel**, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Thy **God reigns!**

Jesus taught His followers to pray for our heavenly **Father's will** to be done in His Kingdom on earth!

Matthew 6:10 [Father]... **Thy will** be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

In the same way, it is right and proper for God the Father to be called **Lord**:

Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, **O Lord**, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the **Lord God Almighty** and the **Lamb** are the Temple of it.

In the New Testament we often find "God" [*Theos*] referring equally to God the Father, Jesus Christ or both (John 1:1). "Almighty," [*Pantokrator*] can apply equally to God the Father, Jesus Christ, or both.

The Church brethren belong to their Father; therefore, they are the Church **of** God (possessive). Once begotten by a physical father, they have now been **spiritually** begotten by God the Father at their baptism. The Father is the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:18 And will be a **Father** unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the **Lord Almighty**. (Jesus is a **brother** to the Saints, Hebrews 2:11)

The Lord Almighty is the Father. But the Lord Almighty is also Jesus Christ. We see this even more clearly when we recognize that Jesus is also Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

References to the throne help make the distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ as in Revelation 1:6 where “God” is Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:6 [Jesus Christ] has made us kings and priests unto **God** and His Father.

Revelation 1:8 [Jesus Christ says,] I am **Alpha** and **Omega**, the beginning and the ending, says the **Lord**, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the **Almighty**.

Revelation 1:11, 13 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: ...And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the **Son of man**.

The **Great God** can signify both the Father and Jesus Christ:

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the **Great God** [the Father] and our Savior Jesus Christ;

Revelation 19:17 ...gather yourselves together unto the supper of the **Great God** [Jesus Christ].

## **The Day of the LORD**

Speaking of Jesus Christ, “The Day of the LORD comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate.” Jesus will clean up the earth in preparation for the Millennium. We have seen that the Bible speaks of the **Day of the LORD** in many, many places. They are references mostly to the **last year** of the three-and-a-half-year Tribulation. Jesus’ work on the **earth** will come to an end at the Great White Throne Judgment and the Last Great Day when death is abolished—because death was never meant to be. Christ’s Millennial work begins with the **Day of the Lord**, and extends until **death** is cast in the **Lake of Fire** and the entire earth is dissolved (2 Peter 3:12). Christ’s Millennial work lasts a thousand years.

The seven Trumpet plagues begin on a Feast of Trumpets – a year before the end of the Tribulation and last until the triumphant return of Jesus to this earth to rule the Millennium from the throne of David (Isaiah 16:5). After the Saints are gathered with the Two Witnesses on the sea of glass the last seven vials will be poured out (Revelation 15:2). The Saints accompany Jesus as He smites the entire earth (Revelation 19:14). The world will be caught unawares by the **Day of the Lord**. It is the year of the seventh seal introducing the seven trumpets (Revelation 8:1-2). The earth and the works done by men in it will be stripped bare before God.

2 Peter 3:10 But the **Day of the Lord** will come as a **thief in the night**; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be brought to judgement.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the **Day of the Lord** so cometh as a **thief in the night**.

Jeremiah 46:10 This is the **Day of the Lord** GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Him of His adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

Isaiah 24:21, 23 And it shall come to pass in **That Day**, that the **LORD** shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth... Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

The seventh seal reveals the seven wraths of God. (Revelation 8:1; Revelation 15:7)

Revelation 8:5 The angel took the censer and filled it with **fire** of the altar, and **cast it into the earth**: and there were voices, and thundering, and lightning, and an earthquake.

Evil and wickedness must be **purged** from the earth before Godliness can prevail in peace. We find examples of this Godly principle being exercised in both the **Day of the LORD**, and then **once again** one-thousand years later at the **Day of God**. Perhaps Isaiah says it best and most succinctly:

Isaiah 13:9-13 Behold, the **Day of the LORD** comes, cruel both with **wrath** and fierce anger, to lay the land **desolate**: and He shall **destroy the sinners** thereof out of it. For the **stars of heaven** and the **constellations** thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will **punish the world** for their **evil**, and the **wicked for their iniquity**; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible... I will make a man more precious than fine gold... Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the **wrath of the Lord** of hosts in the **day of His fierce anger**.

Joel 2:30-31 I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible **Day of the LORD** comes.

The Church of God has placed its focus mostly on the coming Millennium on **this earth**. The question of how the ultimate Kingdom of God in the **Day of God** will come about – has been mostly neglected. It will not be on this present earth, but the ultimate Kingdom of God will be in the New Heaven and **New Earth**. Christ's work of reconciling the world will be complete—thus granting access to the Father (2 Corinthians 5:19).

## **The Day of God**

The **Day of God** is decidedly different from the **Day of the Lord** in which Jesus will have purged the earth and established His Father's Kingdom on **earth** for a thousand years. The Day of God is the **Day of God the Father**. The Day of God is the fulfillment of the Feast of the **Last Great Day** when the Millennium will have come to an end and Jesus will have delivered up the Kingdom to His Father. Satan and his agents will have been vanquished forever. Even that great enemy Death that entered the world because of sin will have been destroyed. When Jesus' work of redemption and salvation has been completed, **holiness will abound**. Jesus will then relinquish all of His authority and rule to His Sovereign Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). We find the very nature of Jesus Christ revealed: Though equal with God, Jesus makes Himself not only the lowest of the low, but subject to the Highest (John 5:18; 2 Samuel 25:41; John 13:14; Ephesians 5:21). Peter wrote of the **Day of God**:

2 Peter 3:12 **Looking for** and hasting unto the coming of the **Day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

The Church brethren will be immortal Saints – and have no need of this physical realm. There will be no need for air, gravity, sunlight or food for nourishment:

2 Corinthians 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are **seen** are **temporary**; but the things which are not seen are **eternal**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

We can see the stars! The New Heaven and the New Earth describe the eternal Kingdom of God. It is difficult to put into words what this final and permanent existence in God's Plan will be like. It will be an age without end—extending into eternity itself. Only those things which are **spiritual** will be received into the New Heavens and a New Earth. Nothing mortal or physical will be sustained after the final judgment – not a temple, an organization, a building, a corporation, a basilica nor government of man. Only God's spirit and character, which have been cultivated, developed and fixed within believing and practicing Christians, will endure forever and ever.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a Great White Throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence **earth and sky fled away**, and no place was found for them (Job 9:6).

Jesus spoke of the hour and day when everyone who has ever lived will be called and given their opportunity for eternal salvation through the words of Christ. Jesus said:

John 5:25, 28-29 Truly, truly, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

In the Great White Throne Judgment period, God will raise up to physical life **all** who have ever lived and who were never called by God (John 6:44, 65). After having had ample opportunity to follow the lead of God's Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14; Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 65:20), Jesus Christ will judge them (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

In Isaiah, God speaks of the day when every grave will have been opened and death and the grave have delivered up their dead (Revelation 20:13).

Isaiah 28:18, 21-22 Your **covenant with death shall be disannulled**, and your agreement with the grave shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it... He shall be angry as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a complete **destruction**, even determined **upon the whole earth**.

Jesus made it absolutely clear that no man has heard the Father's voice at any time, nor seen His shape (John 5:37; 1 John 4:12). No one has ever been remotely able to come anywhere near the immortal Father (1 Timothy 6:16). God the Father remains undefiled—always. Until the **Day of God**, God the Father remains **unapproachable**, pending the time when all things will have been purified by fire and the New Heavens and the New Earth have been established. Then, when all sin, iniquity, death, and the grave have been totally purged, and all godless authority and power have been vanquished, the Father's residence will be **opened**:

Revelation 21:3 I heard a great voice out of 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 shall be with them, and **be their God**.

This is the last phase of the **Plan of God** as it is revealed to us—and yet we are not to speak of God's Plan having a conclusion, as it **has no end**. Finally, the perfect atonement of mankind will have been accomplished – there will be perfect reconciliation – and there will be no obstructions between the Saints and God the Father. Having put on **eternal life**, the Saints will be glorious in every way.

Revelation 22:1-4 He showed me a pure river of **water of life**, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God [the Father] and of the Lamb... and His servants shall serve Him: And **they shall see His face**; and His name shall be in their foreheads.

All **mortal life** on earth will have **ceased** when the heavens being on fire were dissolved, and the elements melted with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:12; Isaiah 51:6). At the completion of the final Judgment of the Great White Throne, billions upon billions of righteous believers will have qualified to enter the God Family! The estimated number of stars increases constantly, but is thought to be in the range of a billion trillion (Galatians 3:29). They will become resurrected **Saints**, and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire.

## **Mount Zion**

First of all, let us understand what, or better yet, who, **Zion** is. It is written as "Sion" in the New Testament. The first mention of Zion is the occasion when David captured the temple-mount defense stronghold from the Jebusites. Zion became the City of David (2 Samuel 5:7). The meaning of the word "Zion" goes through a series of Scriptural expansions and elaborations in its conceptual development from representing ancient **Israel** as the people of God (Isaiah 51:16), to include the all-encompassing concept of the resurrected **Saints**, and **God's everlasting reign**, and all that entails (Micah 4:7).

Isaiah 51:16 I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto **Zion, You are my people**.

The temple-mount has always been of great significance to God who desires to dwell there. God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to have David build an altar to the LORD at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings there, and called upon the LORD (1 Chronicles 21:15-28).

Isaiah 8:18 ... the LORD of hosts, who **dwells in Mount Zion**. (Psalm 132:13)

Paul equates Mount Zion to the City of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). Zion continues to grow in significance through the pages of the Bible until Zion comes to connote the very Saints of God in the Eternal Family of God (Revelation 14:1).

Joel 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the **Day of the LORD** comes, for it is near at hand;

Revelation 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the **Mount Zion**, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having **His Father's name** written in their foreheads.

Psalm 102:16 When the LORD shall build up **Zion**, He shall appear in His glory.

Psalm 48:1-2 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the **City of our God**, in the mountain of His Holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is **Mount Zion**, on the sides of the north, the City of the Great King.

Isaiah equates Zion with the **Holy City**, Jerusalem. Zion and Jerusalem being symbolic of the **true Church** and the resurrected **Saints**.

*Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Isaiah 52:1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City.

The resurrected Saints have the name of the City of God, which is New Jerusalem – because they are also **one and the same!**

Revelation 3:12 I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is New Jerusalem.

When we put these few verses together, we see that Zion is comprised of the saints of the **Church of God**. What we find shows that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are consistent in confirming that Jesus Christ will marry the Bride – the Church – Spiritual Israel – Mount Zion – The Firstborn – New Jerusalem – the City of the Lord. Zion is the eternal City Abraham sought for:

Hebrews 11:10, 16 Abraham looked for a **City** which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God... Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a **City**.

Who can imagine a City of Saints in which everyone was led by God's Holy Spirit? Who can imagine a City wherein there was **perfect** Godly love, law, peace, unity, justice and righteousness? Notice how Paul ties some of these descriptive terms together when speaking of the resurrected Saints – the Bride of Christ:

Hebrews 12:22-24 You have come unto **Mount Zion**, and unto the City of the Living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made **perfect**, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant.

“The spirits of righteous men made perfect,” is an ideal picture of the **prepared** Bride of Christ. This is how Isaiah describes the glory and riches of New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ:

Isaiah 59:20-21 The Redeemer shall come to **Zion**... My covenant [is] with them, says the Lord; My Spirit is upon you... and they shall call you, the **City** of the Lord, the **Zion** of the **Holy One** of **Israel** [Jesus]. (Isaiah 49:7)

Isaiah 60:14, 19-20 ...they shall call you, The **City** of the LORD, The **Zion** of the Holy One of Israel... The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the **LORD** shall be unto thee an **everlasting light**, and thy God thy **glory**. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting **light**, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

When we read of the future fulfillment of God's Plan, never assume that it is possible for us to grasp with our carnal minds, the awesome, majestic, and incomprehensible meaning of what God has promised (1 Corinthians 2:9). The New Earth is indescribable – “more dear than the spoken word can tell” – inexpressible things, which man may not utter (2 Corinthians 12:4). Jesus Christ is not selling us a bill of goods. Let us always recognize that the fulfillment of the promises that God speaks of will **far surpass** our greatest expectations.

The critics' proof that the marriage supper of the Lamb is only allegorical is said to be in Revelation 21. They snidely ask the question, “Is Jesus going to marry a **city**? Chuckle, chuckle!” What does the Scripture mean when it speaks of a **New Heaven and a New Earth**? “I John saw the **Holy City**, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a **Bride** adorned for her Husband.” (Revelation 21:2)

No one gets tripped up when they hear figurative language used something like, “The entire **city** turned out to hear the Mayor.” Everyone understands that to mean the total populace came to the event. John is saying the same thing. Every one of the **Saints** in the entire Holy City will literally be there. John is using the exact same literary methodology when he says, “I John saw the Holy **City**, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a Bride** adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). The Bride takes the Family name. Jesus says, “I will write upon you the **name of my God**, and the **name of the City** of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon you my new name (Revelation 3:12).”

Something magnificent is being revealed here – the **Holy City**, prepared as a **Bride** – what does this mean? Those who used worldly wisdom deduce that it is a foregone conclusion that Christ could not possibly marry New Jerusalem – because no one can **marry a city**. They cannot understand “New Jerusalem” to be a reference to the **spiritual Saints of God**. They fail to include the next few verses in their study, and they neglect to ask themselves the question, “**Who** is New Jerusalem?” Again, please understand – Bible language points to the spiritual **reality** to come. Let us gather a little here and a little there, and see if we can figure out who Jesus Christ is speaking of when He uses the term, “New Jerusalem.”

**New Jerusalem** is called the **Bride** because it encompasses all who will wed Jesus Christ. Jesus shares His intimate feelings for His Bride with us – because it is His intent that the Saints be His Bride. Jesus says to Zion – the Church – His Bride:

Isaiah 62:1, 4 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the **righteousness** thereof go forth as **brightness**, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns... You shalt be called ‘Hephzibah’- [My Delight is in Her] ...for the Lord **delights** in you.

At the end of the Millennium, the Bride will have been wed to the Messiah for one-thousand years. The Bride, will have become the Lamb's **wife** (Revelation 21:9). There is a prophetic picture in Ezekiel 16, where Jesus washed, dressed, and blessed the nation of Israel so that she would be prepared to be His **wife**. Jesus says that she will have **prospered into a Kingdom** (Ezekiel 16:13). And indeed she has – and yet, John describes The Saints as being, “prepared as a **bride** adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2, 12). As we untangle the mixed metaphors of thousands of years of prophecy, we find that Jesus has indeed prepared His fiancée, ancient Israel, the Church, the Saints and New Israel, for the Kingdom of the New Heavens and the New Earth. They will collectively be called the **Holy City, New Jerusalem**. Israel will have become eternally the **Israel of God** (Galatians 6:16). Jesus will have cleansed her, groomed and dressed her in royal garments (Ezekiel 16:8-14). The Holy City, New Jerusalem is God's Family **coming home** (Revelation 21:2, 10)! It is very interesting to see the angels multitasking:

Revelation 21:9 There came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the **seven last plagues**, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew you the **Bride**, the **Lamb's wife**.

When the angel showed John the **Bride**, the **Lamb's wife**, he was shown that **Great City**, the **Holy Jerusalem!** There is no mistaking the symbolism.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed me** that **Great City**, the **Holy Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God. (Revelation 7:15)

## **God is the Temple of the Holy City**

In the New Heavens and New Earth, there will be no physical Temple as in the days of Solomon. God the Father and Jesus Christ will be the Temple there. Those who comprise New Jerusalem are the Tabernacle of God (Revelation 21:2-3).

Revelation 21:22 I saw **no temple** therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the **Temple** of it.

The world cannot accept that the resurrected Saints – as Children of God – will be an integral part of God's **Temple**. The Saints will be **worshipped** – and **only God** is to be worshipped (Revelation 3:9). The Saints will be **like God** (1 John 3:2).

In the Millennium, the resurrected Saints will be worthy of **worship**:

Psalms 22:27-28 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindred of the nations shall **worship before you**. For the Kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations. Writing to the saints, Paul said it this way:

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...You are the **Temple** of the living God; as God has said, **I will dwell in them**, and walk in them; and **I will be their God**, and they shall be my people.

Individually, we are each a **Temple of God** (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Peter shows that collectively we are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood – and yet, Jesus is not going to marry a temple, a city, stones, or a house (1 Peter 2:5). It is plain that once we are placed in the Body of Christ, we become, "Fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ...in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a **Holy Temple** in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a **dwelling place** of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22).

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul wrote of individual Christians being the Temple of God's Spirit. Peter explains that in the same way that Jesus is the **living** foundation stone, chosen of God and precious, spiritually, the Saints will be **living** stones of the **Temple** as well (1 Peter 2:4).

1 Peter 2:5-6 You are **living stones** that God is building into His spiritual **Temple**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture (Isaiah 28:16), Behold, I lay in **Zion** a chief corner stone, elect, precious.

God's forgiveness of our sins will be so complete that He will completely forget the atrocities that once occurred on the face of the earth—He has that incredible ability (Isaiah 43:25). When God **creates** the New Heavens and New Earth, He is going to start from scratch, from nothingness – like He did in Genesis 1:1 (same Hebrew word, *bara*). This old earth will not be made over – but entirely replaced, and Jerusalem will also be "brand new" (from the German meaning, "fresh from the fire"). God says through Isaiah:

Isaiah 65:17-18 Behold, I **create** New Heavens and a New Earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I **create** Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

We have seen that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, dwell **within** the converted people of God (John 14:23). Now, we find the ultimate fulfillment of God's Plan to **dwell with His Saints**. The Saints are each a part of the spiritual structure of the **Temple** of God (Revelation 3:12). Every resurrected Saint will be a part of the spiritual house in which God the Father and Jesus Christ abide.

This Holy **Temple** in the Lord is a dwelling place of God. It is also called the Church, Spiritual Israel, Mount Zion, The Firstborn, New Jerusalem, and the **City** of the Lord. So, who is this New Jerusalem prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband—Jesus Christ? It is the resurrected **spiritual Saints** of God – the **house** of God, the Church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15).

Hebrews 3:6 But Christ as a Son over His own family dwelling; **We** are **His house** [His Family, His residence], if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

## **Abraham's City**

There will be a City where God will dwell with His Saints forever (Revelation 21:3). Abraham's roots were in the pagan based philosophy of Ur of the Chaldees. When God brought him out, Abraham sought a place of culture, beliefs, morals, traditions, customs and society based on God's own laws and principles:

Hebrews 11:8, 10 By faith Abraham... looked for a **City** which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Why will God dissolve the earth completely? Because there is **no city** on earth that has not become totally corrupted. There must needs be a Holy **City** – New Jerusalem consisting of the resurrected Saints. New Jerusalem will be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Revelation 21:14 The wall of the city had **twelve foundations**, and in them the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb.

Jesus chose His disciples very carefully – praying to His Father all night long for discernment – that they might be, not only witnesses to every word He spoke, but to become **foundational elements** in His Eternal Kingdom. The apostles' names will be inscribed on the gates of God's **eternal city**—New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14). Who will make up the City of God?

Revelation 3:12 Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the Sanctuary of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the **City of my God**, which is **New Jerusalem** of God, **descending** out of heaven: and I will write upon him my new name.

Again, the City of God will not be constructed of bricks and steel, stone and mortar, but it will be entirely **spiritual** in nature:

Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the **Holy City**, New Jerusalem of God, **descending** out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a great voice out of 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 shall be with them, and be their God.

Holy Jerusalem is the Bride. Holy Jerusalem is the Great City. Holy Jerusalem is the **Lamb's wife**.

Revelation 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show you the **Bride**, the **Lamb's wife**.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the resurrection of the Saints, Abraham will assume his place of honor. Jerusalem is going to be the most fantastic place on earth! Abraham will have come unto Mount Zion, and unto the **City of the Living God**, the **Heavenly Jerusalem** (Hebrews 12:22).

Isaiah 4:5 The LORD will create upon every dwelling place of **Mount Zion**, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for God's **glory** shall cover and protect her.

Isaiah reflects the theme of this book, "Darkness to Light" showing Zion's righteousness as **brightness**, and Zion's salvation as a **lamp** that shines:

Isaiah 62:1 For **Zion's** sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as **brightness**, and the salvation thereof as a **lamp** that shines.

Isaiah 62:11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of **Zion**, Behold, your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.

### **Tree of Life – Living Water – God's Holy Spirit**

In the New Jerusalem, John saw the stream of **living waters** springing forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb at the Tree of Life—picturing God's Holy Spirit and Eternal Life:

Revelation 22:1 He shewed me a pure **river** of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The Living Water is representative of God's Holy Spirit. God's Spirit brings eternal life (John 4:14). The pure **river** of living water emanates from the very throne of God in the Most Holy Place (John 7:39; Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; Ezekiel 47:1-12):

Revelation 21:6 ...I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the **water of life** freely. (Revelation 22:17)

Psalms 46:4 There is a **river**, the streams whereof shall make glad the **City of God**, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

Zechariah 14:8-9 It shall be in that day, that **living waters** shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.

In the beginning when God said that His creation was very good, it meant that everything worked together for the good (Genesis 1:31). God has created natural elements found in "leaves" to effect cures for every disease Revelation 22:2). This gift of natural healing was lost when the ground was **cursed** because of sin (Genesis 3:17; Revelation 22:3). In the Millennium human minds will once again be brilliant. And then finally, there will be no aches, pains or death any more (Revelation 7:17; 20:14; 21:4).

Revelation 2:7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the **Tree of Life**, which is in the midst of the **paradise** of God. (Psalm 1:2-3; Jeremiah 17:7-8).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

In the eternal Temple spiritual minds will be brilliant. Each Saint will serve in perfect harmony, enjoying to the fullest his uniquely special gifts. There will be no aches, pains or death any more (Revelation 20:14).

Revelation 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the **Tree of Life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the **leaves** of the tree were for the **healing** of the nations.

As a matter of clarification for those who misinterpret, "...on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life – there are not two Trees of Life – only **one**. Its limbs extend far, easily reaching across the river of Living Waters to both sides. There is a beautiful evergreen tree native to the southeastern United States called the Southern Live Oak. Draped in Spanish Moss, it normally tops out at only about 60 feet, but its limbs can extend out to span 150 feet in diameter. Picture the spiritual Tree of Life like that – with the river of Living Water flowing **beneath its branches** – like a tree planted by the **rivers of water**, that brings forth its fruit in its season (Psalm 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8).

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do His Commandments, that they may have right to the **Tree of Life**, and may enter in through the gates into the City.

Revelation 22:3, 5 There shall be **no more curse** (Genesis 3:17-19): but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: ...And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun (Revelation 21:23); for the **Lord God gives them light**: and they shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the **living waters** freely.

God's **pattern** in heaven is the type which prefigures God's annual Holy Days (Exodus 25:40). God established His Plan long before He began to implement it for mankind. In addition to His 7,000-year schedule, God has a blueprint upon which He has portrayed His entire Plan of Salvation for mankind. This blueprint was presented to ancient Israel in a form based around annual harvest festivals that they were obligated to observe. Each of those Holy Days in Leviticus 23 has a specific time when it will satisfy its prophetic meaning. Jesus, Himself observed those Feasts of the Lord, demonstrating their deep significance in pointing to the spiritual harvest of men (Matthew 23:34). God the Father and Jesus Christ began their Plan with the idea of reproducing more *Elohim* in their own **image** and **character** (Genesis 1:26-27).

The **Feast of Passover** shows that from that moment Jesus died for our sins, we had forgiveness available. The Lamb was committed to be slain for mankind's salvation (Revelation 13:8). **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** calls for our remaining sinless through obedience to God's Law. To die for sinful man necessitated that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, be sinless, **unleavened**, sincere and true (1 Corinthians 5:8). The **Feast of Pentecost** pictures God's Spirit coming upon His Church brethren **enabling** them to become Children of God, walk according to God's Law, become immortal and incorruptible spirit beings, and firstfruit brothers and sisters with the Lamb (1 Corinthians 15:20). The **Feast of Trumpets** announces the day in the **Plan of God** in which Jesus will return to pour out His **wrath** on this lawless evil world in preparation for the Millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 11:15). The **Day of Atonement** will see all mankind cleansed of iniquity, and their ultimate reconciliation to the Father. The Kingdom of God will be established for a thousand years on earth producing a great spiritual harvest when the **Feast of Tabernacles** comes to the full.

And then comes the **Feast of the Last Great Day** when the entire Plan of God for mankind will be realized in the New Heavens and the New Earth!

God is **reproducing** Himself, so in making mankind, He gave man the power to reproduce also—in accordance with His life giving **pattern**. He gave man this power in order for many sons and daughters to become His eternal spiritual Children in the Family of God. Speaking of God the Father we read:

Ephesians 3:15 Of whom the whole **Family in heaven** and earth is named.

The Church of God brethren, the Body of Christ, constitute God's Family on earth. God the Father is the supreme authority in heaven and on earth. Physical fathers are in turn the ultimate authority in their families. The Plan of God is yet a work in progress. It will culminate in man being thrust forth as brilliant spirit beings into the immortal Family of God. All the features of man, his marvelous mind and stature – directed by God's Spirit and Law – was designed to ultimately constitute God's glorious Temple in which He resides (Ephesians 2:21, 1 Corinthians 3:16). **God's Plan** for His spiritual house is coming to fruition, being constructed of living stones – the saints of His Church (1 Peter 2:5). God says of His people: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of **darkness** and into His **marvelous light**." (1 Peter 2:9)

## **A Golden Reed**

If the physical were able to describe the spiritual, which it cannot, we might be able to find a description of the Holy City, New Jerusalem. We are given a spiritual portrayal in that **a golden reed** is an angelic measurement:

Revelation 21:15, 17 He that talked with me had **a golden reed** to measure the **City**, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof... as an angel measures.

Keep in mind that the angel is showing John the **Bride**—who is the Holy City, New Jerusalem. The angel said, "I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The angel has a **spiritual** measuring instrument with which to measure the **spiritual** City—which is the resurrected Church. We cannot compare the spiritual with the physical. It is clear that John describes every supremely perfect characteristic of the **risen Saints** – their excellence, grandeur and impressiveness.

Revelation 21:16 The City lies foursquare, and the **length** is as great as the **width**: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The **length** and the **breadth** and the **height** of it are equal.

God knows that these carnal minds of ours are only able to conceive of **dimensional** aspects. These spiritual and figurative portrayals of Godly expressions signify the immeasurable **wisdom and love** of God. Paul also depended on physical dimensions to bolster our grasp of the spiritual, as we find in:

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole **Family in heaven** and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the **riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, and **length**, and **depth**, and **height**; and to know the **love of Christ**, which **surpasses knowledge**, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Keep in mind that a City whose **builder and maker** is God will contain otherworldly elements of stunning beauty—spiritual jewels—if you will, telling us of the **excellency** and importance of God's Saints to God, Himself. Describing the **characteristics** of the Saints themselves, the materials of the walls and foundation of the Holy City are described as the most awesome jewels, elements and crystals: jasper, gold as transparent glass, diamond, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, ruby, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysolite, jacinth, and amethyst, with gates of pearls (Revelation 21:18-21).

Revelation 21:23-24 And the City had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the **glory of God** did **brighten** it, and the **Lamb fills the City with light**: And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the **light** of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

Revelation 22:5 ...The Lord God gives them **light**.

### **Free for the Asking**

This book, "Plan of God – Darkness to Light," is free for the asking. The Book of Proverbs directs us to procure the Truth while not making merchandise of it (23:23). For study, reference, and research, this book has been made available to all on the internet. Warren Zehrung has dedicated this work to the public domain by waiving all of his rights to it under universal copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights, to the extent allowed by law. You may copy and distribute this work as long as there are no edits or change in context to it, without asking permission. It is electronically and digitally on line, at [www.sabbathcog.org](http://www.sabbathcog.org) and [www.childrenofgod.net](http://www.childrenofgod.net) to remain there until the work of God (John 6:29) is **finished**. Time is short—act now. God says that His word will not always be readily available:

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the LORD **while He may be found**, call ye upon Him while He is near.

Romans 9:28 He **will finish the work**, and cut it short in righteousness: because a **short work** will the Lord make upon the earth.

Revelation 22:6 [One of the seven angels said unto John], These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must **shortly be done**.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies these things says, Surely **I come quickly**. Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus**. (Revelation 22:7)

It is better to have a hard copy of this manuscript because God prophesied that His words will not always be available on the internet or from the pulpit.

Zephaniah 8:11 Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of **hearing the words** of the LORD:

John 9:4 I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when **no man can work**.

Daniel 12:7 ...When He shall have accomplished to **scatter** the power of the Holy People, all these things **shall be finished**.

John 12:35 Jesus said: Yet a little while the **light is with you**. Walk while you have the **light**, lest **darkness** come upon you: for he that walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

## **Truth Seekers**

Please feel free to use this book to preach the Gospel to the world. Also, feel free to correct this book where you find errors and oversights, because it only represents our best effort to portray the **present truth** of God as we understand it (2 Peter 1:12). Question points of difference and deliberate them. Please make your corrections using Scriptural substantiation. Use the best Biblical text, **never** utilizing the pseudepigrapha or Apocrypha – writings not to be included with the Old Testament Scriptures canonized by God's Prophet Ezra. Those uninspired and fabricated narratives will lead you into the confusion of heresy. Through His Holy Spirit, God imparted unambiguous discernment to Ezra to be able to distinguish those inspired texts that should be included in **His Word**. The apostles canonized the New Testament. Paul penned more than a fourth of the New Testament! Inspired by God and taught by Jesus Christ, he helped immensely by articulating Christ's teachings and building upon the substance presented in the Gospel accounts. Paul was uniquely qualified because he was taught the Gospel directly by Jesus Christ Himself (Galatians 1:16-18). His understanding was substantial in that from a small child, Paul had been continuously instructed in perfect manner of the law by Gamaliel – the foremost expert of the day on the Old Testament (Acts 22:3). The apostle Peter referred to the writings of Paul **as Scripture** (2 Peter 3:16). Peter, James and John, last of all, rounded out the team that preserved and canonized the New Testament Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 You continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Up to and during Christ's public ministry, the Old Testament was the entirety of Scripture. God had preserved Old Testament Scripture to be joined with the New Testament Gospels and epistles. Shortly before his death, Paul related to the Ephesian Church elders at Miletus:

Acts 20:27 I did not shrink back from declaring to you the entire counsel of God. [That is the **Plan of God**]

About three decades later God would reveal the concluding balance of His word to the beloved apostle John—making the sacred **word of God** complete. God the Father set His final seal of authorization on the completed Bible – not to be added to by anyone (Revelation 22:18-19, Deuteronomy 4:2). God the Father disclosed to Jesus Christ those things which must shortly come to pass. Then Jesus Christ, through His angel, unveiled it unto His servant John who bare record of the **word of God**, and of all things that he saw (Revelation 1:1-2).

## **A Little Here a Little There**

There is so much more to be revealed in the Bible than we can possibly imagine. The Scriptures are a gold mine of God's revelations to us—but we must dig for those spiritual riches (Psalm 111:10). We are told in the Scriptures how to arrive at right doctrine. One must put together all the references that God gives us that pertain to every single topic. No one is allowed to “proof-text” or base doctrine on a single verse – lifted out of context. For **Truth Seekers**, the volume of internal Biblical evidence is uniquely compelling when we accept the word of God with all readiness of mind to prove whether those things are indeed factual (Acts 17:11).

## *Plan of God - Darkness to Light*

Every precept is supported by every other. Man will never extract all the wisdom that lies therein—because the Bible is the Living Word of God. If we do not prove all things in this way, we will forever be fed only a baby's pabulum, and never be nourished with the spiritual meat of God's word:

Isaiah 28:9-10 Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to **understand doctrine**? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.

When Godly Truth is found, it will not only be supported by a single verse, it will be bolstered by other Scriptures – which in turn are also a part of the greater picture God is supplying us. And what is more, if we will not put the entire word together, it will seem to be a too much of a series of disconnected sound-bites—and in the end we will end up on the trash heap of false religion—trapped and broken:

Isaiah 28:11-13 For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet **they would not hear**. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and **be broken**, and snared, and taken.

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

### **There Shall Be No End**

God reveals Himself and His Plan for mankind in the Bible. God's Plan for mankind **begins** with abject darkness:

Genesis 1:2 ...**Darkness** was upon the face of the deep.

And, God's Plan for mankind **ends** with the picture of **eternal light**.

2 Corinthians 4:6 God, who commanded the **light to shine** out of **darkness**, has shined in our hearts, to give the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in **darkness**, but will live his life in the **light**.

In the New Heavens and the New Earth, both God the Father and Jesus Christ will shine forth in the highest level of **intense brilliant spiritual light** that defines their eternal glory. Jesus spoke of it in His last prayer to His Father the night before He died on earth:

John 17:5 O Father, **glorify** thou me with thine own self with the **glory** which I had with thee before the world existed.

This glory is the highest level of intense brilliant **spiritual light** – which no physical person could ever come near:

1 Timothy 6:16 Who only has immortality, dwelling in the **light which no man can approach unto**; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting.

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1 John 1:5, 7 ...**God is light**, and in Him is **no darkness** at all. If we walk in the **light** as He is in the **light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (John 1:9; 9:5; Revelation 21:23)

Darkness will be eradicated forever because the Lord God gives them **Light**:

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there [for the glory of God illuminates the City, and the Lamb is the light thereof]; and they shall reign for ever and ever: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the **Lord God gives them Light**.

What will be next – after the New Heavens and the New Earth? God will reveal to His Saints a **much greater New Plan of God** – because the love of God will never cease to increase and spread in unimaginable ways. Under God's direction the Saints will eternally create, beautify and spread God's Kingdom and rule over an entire new universe! Perhaps we are given a small clue to next phase of what God has in store for His Family:

Isaiah 9:7 Of the **increase** of His Kingdom Empire and peace **there shall be no end**, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. **The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.**

END: Plan of God – Darkness to Light

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## About this Book

The Biblical theme of God's magnificent Plan of bringing mankind out of abject Darkness into His brilliant Light is systematically explained in this new book. When did the Plan of God originate, how has it progressed, and what will be its ultimate culmination? The apostle John tells us we will be like God, fashioned into His glorious likeness.

An architect would not design and create a project without an adequate idea of its function. Will it be a home, a cathedral, a museum or some other structure? He must have a plan before he begins construction. God is the **Master Architect** of the earth, the universe and all that is within them. Certainly, God has a purpose for His creation! What is God's ultimate Plan? The Bible tells us that mankind will be fashioned into God's glorious image and likeness. God is replicating Himself, and He graciously gives mankind a part in His divine regenerative aspiration. The beloved apostle John says it this way, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." God's marvelous Plan is too obscure for the great majority of people to grasp because of the many erroneous notions, traditions and customs that are prevalent in society. However, God has a people to whom He is making known His mystery that has long been hidden. The Bible is God's self-revelation. Without a thorough reliance on the word of God – all is merely supposition and speculation. This book, Plan of God – Darkness to Light brings the process to light of how God is creating man for the supreme purpose and goal of reproducing Himself. This is the Biblical account of how God's Plan is unfolding before our eyes.

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