**FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD**

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*Unless otherwise stated, the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible has been used for reference, but common modern words such as you for ‘thou’, ‘thee’ and ‘ye’ have been used, so that readers not familiar with the KJV Bible may find it easier to read. Mostly the New King James Version (NKJV) translation has been used as an alternate]*

This Book describes the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church of God as restored by Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA), through whom God founded the modern era of His Church. HWA was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet to restore all things to His true Church (Matthew 17:11, “Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things”).

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INTRODUCTION

In my eBooks *“Which Religion is True?”* and *“Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam: Are These God’s Religions?”*, available free to read or download on my religion website www.ChurchOfGodMessage.com, I have analyzed five major religions of the world with the largest followers based on a belief in the existence of God. These are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism. In my eBook *“Does God Exist?”* I proved that God exists. If God exists, then we do not need to follow religions that are not based on the existence of God, which include Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism or any such religions.

I also proved that Mainstream Christianity (which includes Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and many other denominations), Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism are false religions. Judaism as practiced today is also not the true religion because it does not even recognize the Creator as God. Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, who created everything. Judaism does not recognize Him as that God. Hence, it does not know the true God and does not worship Him in its worship practices.

In my free eBook *“Which Holy Book is the Word of God?”* I proved that the complete Holy Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, is the word of God. Holy books of no other religion are the word of God and are at best the writings of men, and at worst the diabolical cunningly crafted lies inspired by Satan the devil to divide and lead humanity astray from the true God.

After discussing various religions, I proved in my eBook *“Which Religion is True?”* that Christianity as taught by the Church of God is the one and only true religion. The question then naturally arises: What are the fundamental beliefs (or doctrines”) of the true Church of God so that those who wish to follow the true religion may understand what the Church believes in. These fundamental beliefs are discussed in this eBook.

I did not want this to be a 300-page book with in-depth discussion of all the beliefs of God’s true Church. But I want it to provide the reader a basic understanding of the teachings of God’s Church based on the Bible. Each of the beliefs is first stated in a summary paragraph, followed by further explanation of each belief with Bible scriptures on which the belief is based.

This is not a comprehensive coverage of all beliefs and doctrines of God’s Church. For an in-depth study of all the Church’s doctrines, beliefs and practices, I suggest the United Church of God website www.ucg.org as a good source. You can also read their booklet “Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God.” If you are not of German descent, I would not advise joining that Church because it has been taken over completely by German masqueraders (people of German ancestry living in white countries) who have made a commitment to that side by murdering a white American child and or adult of non-German ancestry in the Church. You do not want to fellowship with murderers. My fear is that at some time in the future, they may start corrupting their literature to lead people astray. In that case I suggest reading my eBooks only. I will continue to add other eBooks that I feel are essential to understanding the true religion and the work of God’s Church in preaching the gospel (good news) of the soon coming Kingdom of God and the warning message concerning the catastrophic and cataclysmic events that will precede it.

The role of Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) , through whom God founded the modern era of His Church in restoring the true doctrines must be clearly understood. God’s true Church was prophesied in Revelation 2 and 3 to go through seven distinct eras: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These cities in that order were part of the mail route in the ancient Roman Empire during the days of Jesus Christ and the original apostles.

The Ephesus era of the original apostles had all the true doctrines or fundamental beliefs as taught by Jesus Christ. But successive eras started losing knowledge of many of the doctrines. However, the true Church has always kept the seventh-day Sabbath (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) and the Passover as observed by Jesus Christ with unleavened bread and wine and has always had the correct name, Church of God, though religious and political authorities outside the Church have labeled it with different names through the centuries.

Genuine members of God’s Church believe that Herbert W. Armstrong was sent by God in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet to restore true doctrines or fundamental truths to God’s Church in fulfillment of certain prophecies, knowledge of which it had lost over 1,900 years since its founding in 31 A.D. This was prophesied in these scriptures:

1) Malachi 4:5-6, “5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [or utter destruction].” Day of the Lord is coming in the very near future.

2) Malachi also wrote in 3:1-2: “1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me…” John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Jesus Christ. HWA prepared the way for the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

3) Jesus prophesied in Matthew 17:11, “Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things.” John the Baptist did not restore any truths to the Jews of his day. Only HWA restored doctrines and all truths to God’s Church.

All the fundamental beliefs of God’s Church discussed in this book were restored by HWA in his 57-year ministry starting from September-October 1928 when he gave his first sermon in the true Church till his passing away on January 16, 1986.

One of the beliefs of the true Church of God is that the entire canonized Bible, both the Old and New testaments, is the word of God. It is inspired by God or as some translations say it is “God breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16 [ISV]: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”). It will be discussed as one of the fundamental beliefs of God’s Church. Therefore, we believe every word in the Bible to be true and don’t try to explain away scriptures by saying they are allegorical, or don’t literally mean what they say to maintain traditional beliefs. That’s what mainstream Christianity does.

We form our beliefs by studying every scripture on a subject and believe what they say. Therefore, I will first state our fundamental belief and then provide scriptural support for it and expand on the belief.

CHAPTER 1

BELIEF 1: GOD THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

God’s Church believes in one Supreme God, the Father, who is without beginning or ending, who has eternally existed, is a spirit, the primal Source of all life, the Almighty to whom all power and authority belong, possesses supreme intelligence and all knowledge. His basic character is love. He is a God of truth and justice. He created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them though Jesus Christ.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, who was the Word before He came to earth as Jesus Christ the Messiah (Savior) and eternally existed with God the Father for a time we can only characterize as past eternity. The word emptied Himself of His divinity, came to earth as the Messiah, the divine Son and only begotten of God the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born in the human flesh of the virgin Mary. God the Father created all things by Jesus Christ, and nothing was made without Him.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God and not a separate equal third Being/Person in a Trinity. God is Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very essence, the mind, life and power of God. It is not a Being. The Spirit is inherent in the Father and the Son and emanates from Them throughout the entire universe (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24). It was through the Spirit that God created all things (Genesis 1:1–2; Revelation 4:11). It is the power by which Christ maintains the universe (Hebrews 1:2–3). It is given to all who repent of their sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38–39) and is the power (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:6–7) by which all believers may be “overcomers” (Romans 8:37, KJV; Revelation 2:26–27) and will be led to eternal life.

SCRITURES

I have discussed at length how God reveals Himself in the Bible in my free eBook “Jews Behold Your God”, Chapter 12 (<http://www.churchofgodmessage.com/chapter12jbg.html>).

The Father is the Supreme Being, Sovereign over the universe and is a spirit (John 4:24) and has existed eternally (Deuteronomy 33:27, Isaiah 57:15), is Almighty (Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:17) all knowing (Psalm 147:5, 1 John 3:20), omnipresent (2 Chronicles 2:6, Jeremiah 23:23-24). Jesus Christ acknowledged that His Father was greater than He (John 10:29; 14:28) and that He was sent to reveal the Father (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18; 17:24–26).

The Son, Jesus Christ, is the “Word” (Greek logos), through whom the Father created all things (John 1:1–3). He is the “only begotten Son” of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) and Savior of all mankind (1 John 4:14). He died for our sins and was resurrected that we might be saved from eternal death (Acts 4:10–12). He now sits at the Father’s right hand and acts as our Advocate and High Priest and as the Living Head of God’s true Church (Ephesians 1:22–23; Hebrews 4:14–16).

There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4 and 1 Corinthians 8:4). But John 1 tells us that the Father is God and Jesus Christ is also God, both existed at the beginning of creation, and that Jesus Christ is the “Word” (Greek “logos”) through whom the Father created all things, He is the “only begotten Son” of the Father (John 1:14, 18) and is the Savior of all mankind (1 John 4:14).

So, if God is one, then how can both God the Father and Jesus Christ be God?

***Two God Beings Revealed in the Old Testament***

Let’s look at other scriptures in the Old Testament that shed light on who God is.

The book of Genesis records how God created everything. Before creating man God states in Genesis 1:26, “26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”

Why did God use the plural expressions ‘Us’ and ‘Our” in this verse? And the word translated God throughout Genesis 1 is the plural noun Elohim which denotes more than one God (referring to the true God) or god (referring to other gods than the true God, such as idols). The translators also felt that the appropriate translation here should be the plural expressions ‘Us’ and ‘Our.’

This points to the likelihood of two or more Beings as true Gods.

***How the Word “Elohim” is Used***

The singular form of Elohim is Eloah which means “Mighty One”. So, Elohim means “Mighty Ones.” Elohim was used in Genesis 1:26. The same word is used in Genesis 3:22 when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil". Here again the word ‘Us’ is used indicating two God Beings.

At another critical time in man’s history, the time of Noah’s Flood, both God Beings were involved in making the decision jointly.

Genesis 6:5-8 states, “5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.”

The word used for Lord and God is YHWH here meaning the Word who later became Jesus Christ. Thus, this is the God Being YHWH making these observations. But then the word Elohim is used in verses 11-13 which are translated God.

Genesis 6:11-13, “11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

The Lord (YHWH) had made the observations that the earth had become corrupt, but that Noah walked with God. But now both God Beings [Elohim] are involved in the decision to destroy the world in a global Flood and save Noah. Here God the Father confirms the decision YHWH had made.

Later there was another critical time in man’s history when both God Beings were involved in making a decision jointly. This occurred when mankind built a tower in rebellion against God. This is stated in Genesis 11:5-7 (NKJV),” 5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Here the statements are being made by the Word [YHWH], translated Lord, but then in verse 7 the word “Us” is used again indicating that the Father was also involved in making the decision to confuse the language of mankind. These examples illustrate the perfect unity that exists between the two divine Beings in making decisions.

***Meaning of the Hebrew Word “echad”***

The Hebrew word translated “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4 to mean “God is one” is *echad*. In Strong’s Hebrew dictionary, *echad* (no. 259) and its root word *achad* (no. 258) can besides the number one, also mean united as one, first (in importance), alike, alone, together or unify. With these possible meanings the translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 in addition to “The Lord our God is one Lord” can also be “the Lord our God is first in importance”; “The Lord our God is God alone” [meaning all others are idols and not God]; “The Lord our God is united as one”; “The Lord our God is one in unity”.

The correct meaning should be determined by the context in which the word is used. For the context, read verses 4-5, “4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” When we consider verse 5, the context would indicate that the word *echad* implies that God is to be “first in importance” or be “top priority” in our lives. The translation “The Lord our God is God alone” also fits the context.

Moses revealed the existence of two God Beings in the very first book Genesis. He was also implying how the two God Beings are one. So, the translation “The Lord our God is united (or unified) as one” could fit the context as well, meaning that the two God Beings are perfectly united in purpose and are of the same mind. That’s why Jesus said in John 10:30, “I and My Father are one.”

Thus, all these different translations of Deuteronomy 6:4 would mean that two God Beings are mentioned because none of the translations limit God to just one Being.

Other Old Testament prophets also indicated there are two God Beings.

King David was a prophet (Acts 2:30) who was inspired by God’s holy spirit. He declared in 2 Samuel 23:2, “2 The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue.” David revealed the existence of two God Beings in the psalms.

He writes in Psalm 110:1, “1 The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

Here David is declaring the existence of two Lords. This was a prophetic vision David saw which showed the Lord, that is God the Father saying to David’s Lord [the future Jesus Christ] to sit at His [Father’s] right hand until He makes His [Jesus’] enemies His footstool.

This prophecy was fulfilled after Jesus’ sacrifice, Who now sits at the Father’s right hand. Peter the apostle identified the two Lords in Acts 2:32-36, “32 This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted…34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make your foes your footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Thus Acts 2 and Psalm 110 together make it clear that there are two Lords, God the Father and Jesus Christ as His son.

David also describes two God beings prophetically in Psalm 2, as a Father and a Son while talking about God's kingdom. Psalm 2:7-12 (NKJV): "I will declare the decree; The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession...Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they who put their trust in Him."

People can be blessed only if they put their trust in God. Therefore, the Son being talked about here is also God, and the one talking about the Son obviously is God. God is prophetically declaring that He would beget a Son who will receive the nations for His inheritance.

Not only to David the prophet but the existence of two God Beings was also revealed to Daniel the prophet in a vision. He writes in Daniel 7:13-14, “13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they [the angelic host] brought him [the Son of Man] near before him [the Ancient of Days]. 14 And there was given him [the Son of Man] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Many times, in the New Testament Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. The kingdom that will last forever and ever (Revelation 1:6, “And has made us kings and priests unto God [meaning Jesus Christ] and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever) is identified as God’s Kingdom which Jesus Christ will rule and shall never be destroyed. Revelation 20:4-6 also talks about God’s kingdom with the resurrected and glorified saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6 and 5:10). Jesus Christ will remain King of these kings and Lord of these lords (Revelation 17:14 and 19:16). Deuteronomy 4:19 shows that God’s kingdom will extend to the universe after God’s plan of salvation is complete on earth after the thousand years.

The writer of the book of Hebrews confirms the fulfillment of the prophecies of David and Daniel about Jesus Christ the Son of God in Hebrews 1:1-8, “1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Has 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; 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; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6 And again, when he brings in the first begotten into the world, he says, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7 And of the angels he says, Who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8 But unto the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.”

John 1:1-3, 14 also confirms the existence of two God Beings involved in creation, “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made…14 And the Word became 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.”

When we put all these Jewish Scriptures together, we conclude that they mention two God Beings. And the New Testament scriptures also show the existence of two God Beings, though scriptures quoted earlier had said, “God is one.”

***How is God One?***

We see that both the Old Testament and the New Testaments declare God is one. But both the Old and New Testaments also reveal the existence of two God Beings. How can we reconcile these scriptures? How can two God Beings be one?

Jesus said in John 10:30, “30 I and my Father are one.” How are God the Father and Jesus Christ one?

Let’s see examples in the Bible that show how two or more beings can be one.

The very first example of oneness in the Bible is the union of a man and a woman in marriage. When God created the institution of marriage, He said in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

In marriage two beings become one flesh. They still exist as two separate beings, but they have joined together to form one unit. They have become one family. They also become one as they produce children, adding to the family. For example, George Jones marries Sally Smith and become the one Jones family, but still two separate beings, Mr. George Jones and Mrs. Sally Jones. They then have children John Jones, Sara Jones, David Jones and Jennifer Jones. They are all separate human beings but all part of the Jones family. So now many have become one.

A human family is the clue to understanding how God the Father and Jesus Christ are one, though separate Beings. The word translated God in the book of Genesis in almost all places is the word Elohim. Genesis 1:26 states: “26 And God said, Let us make man in our image…” Here God is using the pronoun “us” to describe Himself instead of the pronoun “me”. This means the word God is a uniplural noun like the word family which includes more than one person. The English word God then does not imply just one Being, but more than one Being shares that common name as the family name Jones is shared by many in our example.

So, God is a family name which at present is shared by two members. We identify these two members separately as God the Father, and the other member as Jesus Christ. Now John makes perfect sense when he said in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” That is how Jesus Christ and the Father are One.

The Bible provides other examples of oneness, the Church being one. The Catholic Church is one Church but has more than a billion members.

Paul the apostle compared the Church to the different individual parts of one human body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NKJV). He writes: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

Paul here describes how many individual members become one in a Church when they are baptized into the Church and receive God’s holy spirit.

The Old Testament also provides an example of oneness in the ancient nation of Israel. Judges 20:1, 8-11 (NKJV) state: "1 So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah…8 So all the people arose as one man ... 11 So, all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man." Here the entire nation of Israel came together as “one man” in unity and purpose to deal with a villainous act committed by men of the tribe of Benjamin. All these men were individual citizens of the nation of Israel. But they became one in unity and common purpose.

These examples of oneness in the Bible and the uniplural noun Elohim teach us that the word God, like the words family, Church and nation, is a word for a single entity with two or many members. And that entity can add members and still remain one entity. God in the Bible means the Family of God at present is composed of only two members, Father God and Jesus God. But this family can and is destined to expand as human beings are resurrected as literal immortal sons and daughters of God, as a human family can expand by reproduction.

The Biblical truth is that God is reproducing Himself through human beings to add many sons to His family. John the apostle described man’s potential to become sons of God like Jesus Christ in 1 John 3:1-3: “1 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore, the world knows us not, because it knew him not. 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 [that is Jesus Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him [with a body composed of the same spirit]; for we shall see him as he is.”

John could not have made the potential of man clearer. Man’s potential is to become literal immortal sons of God as Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God’s plan is to have human beings be born into His family as His literal sons and daughters and brothers of Jesus Christ. And when we become Sons of God, we shall be like Jesus Christ, meaning have a spirit body and powers like those of Jesus Christ. But before we can realize that potential, we must become one among ourselves and one with God as Jesus Christ is one with God, totally united in love, faith, direction, thinking, attitude and purpose.

In John 17 Jesus Christ prayed to the Father to accomplish this in God’s Church with the power of His holy spirit. Verses 20-23 (NKJV) state: “20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 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.”

Jesus Himself confirmed that He was divine and that is man’s potential as well when he is resurrected and his powers multiplied trillions of times. He said in John 10:32-35: “32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me? 33 The Jews answered him, saying, for a good work we do not stone you; but for blasphemy; and because that you, being a man, make yourself God. 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods? 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken 36 Say you of Him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, You blaspheme; because I said, I am the Son of God?”

Jesus here quoted Psalm 82:6 to show that man’s potential is to be called gods or become gods as children of God and affirmed that this scripture is the infallible truth and cannot be broken. Here Jesus also plainly said He is the Son of God. A Son of God has to be God.

WAS JESUS ORIGINALLY CREATED?

John 1:1-2 tells us, “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.”

Almost all of Christianity interprets these verses to mean that God the Father and the Word existed for past eternity. But in 2007, two verses led me to question that view.

Colossians 1:15 (KJV) states: "Who [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” And Revelation 3:14 states: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things, says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

If Jesus Christ was the “firstborn of every creature” and “the beginning of the creation of God”, that means that the Word was originally created by God the Father. I decided to research this question further because I was afraid to go against the interpretation accepted by all of Christianity and even God’s Church which accepted the interpretation in bible commentaries.

My research and conclusion follow. Let me state that I reached the conclusion that the Word was originally created by God the Father. I felt the ridicule of my Church because in many sermons after that the Church’s position was stated again and again. So, I prayed to God almighty to settle this question for me. In early 2008, God delivered a message to me through an angel that the Word was originally created by God the Father in a time period which we can term only as “past eternity.” This is explained next. All this is described in my free eBook *“God’s Messages Delivered Through Angels”* with proof that God Himself provided that He had indeed delivered messages to me through angels. The proof is the first message delivered to me was that Sainis are Jews. Then God confirmed to Queen Elizabeth II that I was also a descendant of King David who was a Jew. She shared the message with many leaders.

Now the proofs that Jesus Christ was originally created as the Word.

We learn from John 1:1-3 that the Word existed with God the Father before the creation of anything. Does that mean that the Word has always existed or did God the Father originally create Him?

To answer this question, let us first consider who was Melchizedek?

Melchizedek is first introduced to us in Genesis. After Abraham rescued his nephew Lot, Melchizedek met him: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God” (Genesis 14:18).

Then David in Psalm 110 sheds further light on the identity of Melchizedek. In the first verse David talks about both God the Father and the Word: “The Lord said unto my [David’s] Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” It is Christ who now sits at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

Now notice verse 4: “The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Here the same Lord is speaking of David’s Lord that He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This certainly identifies Melchizedek as the Word. The book of Hebrews provides further strong evidence of the identity of Melchizedek.

Consider Melchizedek’s attributes described by Paul: “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.”

(Hebrews 7:1-3).

The title “King of Righteousness” cannot apply to any human being for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Only a divine Being can properly bear this title.

Melchizedek’s next awesome title is “King of Peace.” That too cannot apply to human beings, because fallible human beings do not know the way to peace (Romans 3:10, 17).

Then verse 3 describes Melchizedek as being “without father, without mother, without descent [or genealogy], having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abides a priest continually.” This means Melchizedek’s priesthood never ceased. The only high priest who could fit this description was the Word. He had no physical human parents. “Having neither beginning of days” seems to imply that He has always existed.

And the phrase “made like the Son of God” means that He was not yet the Son of God, that is, until He was begotten by God the Father.

Melchizedek could not have been the Father because he was the "priest of the Most High God." He could have been only the eternal, preexistent Word who later became Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

These attributes of Melchizedek seem to imply that the Word always existed along with God the Father. But to understand if the Word always existed, or was at some point created by the Father, we need to analyze other Scriptures.

One of the basic principles for understanding the Bible is that we must consider all scriptures on a subject together. Only then can we come to a complete and accurate understanding of the subject. To understand if Jesus always existed along with the Father, or was at some point created by the Father, we must study all scriptures on the subject.

It is clear from the gospel of John that God created all things through Jesus Christ. What John wrote is confirmed by Paul the apostle in Colossians 1:16: "For by Him all things were 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."

Thus, the 24 elders mentioned in Revelation 4, 5 and 14, all the angels, all things in heaven, and the entire material universe were created by the Word, who later became Jesus Christ. But before the creation, Jesus Christ was with God the Father and was Himself God. Both God the Father and the Word planned and thought through the whole creation before actually creating it.

Micah 5:2 states: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

The New International Version (NIV) renders this verse: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me, one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

New American Standard Bible renders this verse: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel, His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

This verse states that the Messianic King to come was 'from everlasting.'

The Hebrew word translated 'everlasting' is *owlam* or *olam*, which is number 5769 in the *Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. It can mean concealed, i.e. the vanishing point; generally of time out of mind (past or future), i.e. (practically) eternity; frequently as an adverb always, ancient (time), any more, continuance, eternal, for everlasting, evermore, of old, lasting, long (time), perpetual, at any time, (beginning of the world) plus without end. Therefore, the words 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting' can mean from so old that we human beings cannot imagine it, or from way before the world began, or from ancient time, or practically eternity. However, 'practically eternity' does not necessarily mean absolute eternity, i.e. without beginning.

But let us examine more scriptures to see if the Word has always existed along with the Father. IN HIS MESSAGE THIS IS WHAT THE ANGEL GAVE ME AS PROOF

Colossians 1:15 (KJV) states: "Who [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” NKJV renders this verse: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."

If Jesus Christ before His human birth was the image of God the Father, it implies that God the Father had to have existed before Him and the Word then became His image. Someone or something has to exist first before another can become his or its image. If Jesus Christ is the firstborn of every creature, then it implies that He was created before every creature. Firstborn here does not imply firstborn from the dead. By implying 'firstborn from the dead', we are reading something into the text which is not there. So, it does not matter if the translation is 'firstborn of every creature' or 'firstborn over all creation', it still means that Jesus was the firstborn.

We think that being born implies union between a male and female. But God the Father did not need a “female” to produce Jesus from Himself. He is spirit and Jesus was born (or created) from His spirit body. That is the sense in which Jesus was the firstborn of God.

Revelation 3:14 states: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

NKJV also translates it the same way. So does the New American Standard, American Standard, Revised Standard, New Revised Standard and the New Century Version. But New International Version renders it: "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation."

The Greek word translated 'beginning' in this verse is *arche*, pronounced *ar-khay*, number 746 in the Greek dictionary of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. It means a commencement, or chief (in various applications of order, time, place or rank); beginning, corner, first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule.  While this word may mean chief or ruler, nowhere is this word translated chief or ruler in the entire King James Version. Forty times it is translated as 'beginning' and once as 'beginnings'. It is translated as magistrates in Luke12:11, principality in 2 places and principalities in 6 places. But the context of the verse shows that the correct translation is 'beginning', and 'ruler' is the wrong translation.

Before beginning His messages to each of the seven churches, Jesus Christ is revealing something more about Himself that was not previously known before the book of Revelation was given, or to confirm His identity as the God of the Old Testament. Jesus had already revealed Himself as 'the ruler over the kings of the earth' in Revelation 1:5, and the gospels and the epistles had made it abundantly clear in many places that Jesus is the Creator of all of God's creation and ruler over it. Jesus therefore could not have meant 'ruler of God's creation' in Revelation 3:14. Jesus meant to reveal something new about Himself, that He was 'the beginning of God's creation,' meaning that He was the first Being that God the Father created. This confirms that Jesus was created, or as Colossians 1:15 says "the firstborn of every creature."

Here is what Jesus revealed about Himself before beginning His message to each of the seven churches:

Revelation 2:1:"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things says he that  holds the seven stars [angels of the seven churches - Rev 1:20] in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks [the seven churches - Rev 1:20].”

Revelation 2:8: "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things says the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive:"

Revelation 2:12: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things says he which has the sharp sword with two edges:"

Revelation 2:18: "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass:"

Revelation 3:1: "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things says He that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works…"

Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel 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:"

Revelation 3:14: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

These messages reveal something new about Jesus Christ, or confirm that He was 'the First and the Last' mentioned in Isaiah 41:4, 44:6 and 48:12 as in the message to the church in Smyrna. Therefore, the translation of Revelation 3:14 as 'ruler of God's creation' is totally out of place in the messages to the churches. It does not fit the pattern of what Jesus Christ was revealing about Himself, or describing about Himself.

Other sayings of Jesus also lend support to His statement that He was 'the beginning of God's creation', or that God the Father started His creation first with Him.

Jesus Christ Himself said in John 14:28, "…my Father is greater than I." And in John 10:29, "My Father...is greater than all." Paul also stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "...the head of Christ is God." Jesus is clearly subject to the Father, and God the Father is the undisputed Head of the family.

Jesus stated in John 5:26 (KJV): "For as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jesus is stating here that God the Father granted to Jesus to have life inherent Himself. This means that if God the Father had not given to Jesus life inherent in Himself, then He would not have been the Self-existent One. God the Father granted that to Him after practically a past eternity of living together when total trust had been developed between them. This then implies that God the Father gave life to Jesus Christ in the first place, long before the world began, or before anything else was created. This means that the Word had not always existed along with the Father, and that God the Father created Him.

Jesus also said in John 8:28: "...but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things." This is a clear statement that the Father taught Jesus Christ before anything was created by the Word. Earlier in verse 26 Jesus had said, "...I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him." Clearly there was a stage at which the Word did not know everything, needed to be taught and still learns from the Father. This can only mean that the Word has not always existed with the Father, and that He was created by the Father.

God the Father seems to have carried out the creation in stages. He first created the Word. There was no heaven at that time. The days and nights began with the material creation. So, the Word had no 'beginning of days.' He existed before days began. God the Father then taught the Word everything, including His law of love. This could have gone on for a very very long time, and the only words that come close to describing that length of time is past eternity. God the Father had thought through His entire plan of creation well before He created the Word. Then He let the Word plan all the creation in discussion with Himself. The Word learnt from God the Father through this planning process. He had to learn how to create. God the Father taught the Word everything. And He also gave the honor of creating everything to the Word.

The only reasonable conclusion we can reach then is that Jesus Christ was created by God the Father as the Word or Spokesman for the God family. He was the beginning of creation by God the Father.

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

What does the Bible reveal about the holy spirit?

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is most often referred to as God’s divine power. In the Old Testament, Jewish scholars have never considered the Holy Spirit to be anything other than God’s power. For example:

Zechariah 4:6: “…Not by might, nor by power, but my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”
Micah 3:8: “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord…”

Even in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is most often referred to as God’s divine power. For example:

2 Timothy 1:7: “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Here is how the angel told Mary how Jesus would be supernaturally conceived in her womb (NKJV): "The Holy Spirit will come upon you…and the power of the Highest," which "will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35).

Jesus began His ministry "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). This was the same power that enabled Christ to perform many mighty miracles during His ministry. He told His followers, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8 - NKJV). Thus, in many places the Bible depicts the Holy Spirit as the power of God.

**Other attributes of the Holy Spirit**

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit in many other ways that demonstrate that it is not a divine person. The United Church of God (UCG) booklet “*Is God a Trinity*” states on pp 55-56:

“The Holy Spirit is spoken of in many ways that demonstrate that it is not a divine person. For example, it is referred to as a gift (Acts:10:45; 1 Timothy:4:14) that God gives without limit (John:3:34, NIV). We are told that the Holy Spirit can be quenched (1 Thessalonians:5:19), that it can be poured out on people (Acts:2:17, 33), and that we are baptized with it (Matthew:3:11).

“People can drink of it (John:7:37-39), partake of it (Hebrews:6:4) and be filled with it (Acts:2:4; Ephesians:5:18). The Holy Spirit also renews us (Titus:3:5) and must be stirred up within us (2 Timothy:1:6). These impersonal characteristics are certainly not attributes of a person or personal being!

“The Spirit is also described by other designations—"the Holy Spirit of promise," "the guarantee of our inheritance" and "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Ephesians:1:13-14, 17)—that show it is not a person.

“In contrast to God the Father and Jesus Christ, who are consistently compared to human beings in Their form and shape, the Holy Spirit is consistently represented, by various symbols and manifestations, in a completely different manner—such as breath (John:20:22), wind (Acts:2:2), fire (verse 3), water (John:4:14; 7:37-39), oil (Psalm:45:7; compare Acts:10:38; Matthew:25:1-10), a dove (Matthew:3:16) and an "earnest," or down payment, on eternal life (2 Corinthians:1:22; 5:5; Ephesians:1:13-14, KJV).

“To say the least, these depictions are difficult to understand if the Holy Spirit is a person!

“In Matthew:1:20 we find further proof that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct entity, but God's divine power. Here we read that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus continually prayed to and addressed God the Father as His Father and not the Holy Spirit (Matthew:10:32-33; 11:25-27; 12:50). He never represented the Holy Spirit as His Father! Clearly, the Holy Spirit was the agency or power through which the Father begot Jesus as His Son—not a separate person or being altogether.”

**Teaching of the Apostles about the Holy Spirit**

Even the writings of the apostles Paul and Peter do not show the holy spirit to be a person. Paul's standard greeting in his letters to the churches is "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In each of his greetings he never mentions the Holy Spirit. Peter also does not include the holy spirit in greetings in both his epistles. This would be an astonishing oversight if the holy spirit was indeed a person or entity coequal with God the Father and Christ.

Paul states that "there is one God, the Father… and one Lord Jesus Christ …" (1 Corinthians 8:6). He makes no mention of the Holy Spirit as a divine person.

1 John 1:3 tells us, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Thus, the apostle John also does not mention the Holy Spirit in our fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus also never spoke of the Holy Spirit as a divine third person. He spoke only of the relationship between God the Father and Himself as in Matthew 26:39 where He prayed to the Father: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Other verses that describe their relationship are Mark 13:32; 15:34; John 5:18, 22; etc. The Holy Spirit as a person is conspicuously absent from Christ's relationship with God.

We should also consider that, in visions of God's throne recorded in the Bible, although the Father and Christ are seen, the Holy Spirit is never seen (Acts 7:55-56; Daniel 7:9-14; Revelation 4-5; 7:10). Jesus is repeatedly mentioned as being at the right hand of God, but no one is mentioned as being at the Father's left hand. Nowhere are three divine persons pictured together in the Scriptures.

Even in the final book of the Bible (and the last to be written), the Holy Spirit as a divine person is absent from its pages. The book describes "a new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1) wherein "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (verse 3). Christ, the Lamb of God, is also present (verse 22). The Holy Spirit, however, is again absent—another oversight that cannot be explained if this Spirit is the third person of a triune God.

Those who adhere to the trinity doctrine use two small passages in support of this doctrine. One is I John 5:7: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” These words are a spurious addition to the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible in the early fourth century, during the heat of the controversy between the Roman Catholic Church and a Dr. Arius of Alexandria. They do not appear in any of the older Greek manuscripts or in other modern English translations. Bible commentaries explain that these words were never written by the apostle John.

The second passage used in support of the Trinity doctrine is Matthew 28:19 (NKJV), “19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in [the Greek word used here is eis which means into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…”

*Jamieson Fauset Brown* commentary states: “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost--It should be, "into the name"; as in 1 Corinthians 10:2, "And were all baptized unto (or rather 'into') Moses"; and Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ."

This passage is not a description of the nature of God, existing as 3 named persons. It is a comment on the process of becoming disciples by baptism after conversion. And three names are involved in the process. The three do not have to be names of persons and are not. Buildings, mountains, hills etc are named but are not persons.

The process of becoming disciples was described by Peter in Acts 2:38 (NKJV), “38 Then Peter said to them, "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.”

​Therefore Matthew 28:19 is stating that 3 named entities are involved in making disciples which process is completed by baptism. At baptism we enter into a covenant relationship with God (that is God the Father) and Jesus Christ. We enter into that relationship by first repenting of our sins, and it is the goodness of God (God the Father and Jesus Christ) that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). After we are led to repentance and have decided to enter into a covenant relationship with God by being baptized, our sins must first be forgiven. That is possible only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. After our sins have been forgiven which is symbolized by burial of our old self in a ‘watery grave’ at baptism by immersion in water, we are resurrected to a new life when we come out of the watery grave. But baptism itself does not impart us God’s divine nature. God’s divine nature comes only by God’s holy spirit. God gives it to us after the laying on of the hands of a God’s true minister and prayer for us to receive the holy spirit. God imparts to us the seed of His divine nature by giving us an earnest or down payment of His holy spirit. Then that seed must grow in us through spiritual development until Christ is fully formed in us (Galatians 4:19 (NIV), “19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”)

Thus Matthew 28:19 is not providing us 3 names of God Beings existing as a Trinity (or a Triune God) but is describing the process of becoming Jesus’ disciples in which God the Father, Jesus Christ and the holy spirit are fully involved. At baptism we are begotten children of God through the holy spirit and will be born as literal children after we have fully grown (Ephesians4:13, “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 fulness of Christ.”) through spiritual development.

​Clearly, the holy spirit, from the evidence found in the Bible, is not a person in a supposed Trinity. Unfortunately, this unbiblical doctrine obscures the biblical truth that God is a family—a family which is the ultimate destiny of every human being unless they disqualify themselves! Man’s ultimate potential is to become members of God’s family as His literal, immortal Sons, inherit and rule the universe with Him.

CHAPTER 2

BELIEF 2: THE WHOLE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

God’s Church believes that the Holy Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired word of God, infallible in its original manuscripts, hence the foundation for all truth and authority for all Church doctrines and beliefs. It is a perfect instruction manual for humanity, revealing why God created man, His plan of salvation for all of mankind and how man should live to attain salvation. It also reveals God’s attributes, demonstrates His almighty power through prophecy and its fulfillment in history, which also provides proof of His existence.

For proof that the Bible is the inspired word of God, please read my free eBook *“Which Holy Book is the Word of God?"*, available on my religion website.

SCRIPTURES

**Opinion of Jesus, the Prophets and Apostles about the Bible**

Scriptures provide us the opinion of Jesus Christ, the prophets and the apostles, and even God’s loyal angels on the Bible that it is the inspired word of God which has not been corrupted. Jesus said in John 17:17: “…your word is truth.” Thus, Jesus emphatically stated that God’s word, the Old Testament in the Bible (which is what was available as scripture when Jesus Christ was alive) is the truth.

Jesus also said in Matthew 5:17-18: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily [or assuredly] I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle [the equivalent of a fullstop or a coma as punctuation marks] shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Here Jesus was saying that everything written in the Old Testament, including punctuation marks, will be fulfilled. Therefore, it is the truth backed by Almighty God.

Jesus said in John 10:35: “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.” Here Jesus was saying that the scriptures cannot be broken, meaning that the scriptures are infallible. By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament scriptures had been written and preserved for a time period varying from more than 1450 years when Moses delivered his first 5 books of the Bible to about 450 years since Malachi the prophet wrote his book. Jesus thus confirmed that the Old Testament had been faithfully preserved by the Jews till His time.

Here is what the prophet Daniel thought of the scriptures: “But I will show you that which is noted in the scripture of truth…” (Daniel 10:21). This was probably the archangel Gabriel talking to Daniel, and Daniel recorded what was revealed to him, because he knew it was the truth. Thus, even the archangels of God call the scriptures truth.

The angels of God also keep the sayings of the Bible. The angel that was revealing parts of chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation to the Apostle John said in Revelation 22:6-9: “6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8 And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. 9 Then says he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

When the prophecies in the Book of Revelation were revealed to John, all other books of the Bible had already been written and the final compilation already done by him. Therefore, when the angel said that he was a fellow servant like the prophets and kept the sayings of this book, he also signified that the canonization of books that John had done were also scripture. The angel also signified that the New Testament of the Bible had been completed, and he as an angel of God kept the sayings of the entire Bible as they were faithful and true. As the angel had signified to Daniel the prophet that the Old Testament scriptures were the truth, the angel was now signifying to John the apostle that the New Testament that he had finally canonized with the book of Revelation was the truth and even he as an angel of God lived by its words. Besides Jesus Christ, what greater testimony can we have than that of God’s angels that the entire Bible is the true word of God?

The apostle Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture [meaning the Old Testament and the New Testament, because Paul canonized most of the New testament, though the final canonization was done by John who included his epistles and the book of revelation] 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 literal translation in place of ‘inspiration of God’ is “God-breathed.” Thus, according to Paul, the entire Bible is God breathed or inspired by God. In Romans 1:2 Paul calls the scriptures ‘holy.’

Peter the apostle shows in 2 Peter 1:20-21 that God had an active hand in the writing of the Bible. He said that “No prophecy [which means ‘inspired speaking or writing’] of Scripture ever came by the will of man. Instead, holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”  Thus, from the words of Jesus, the prophets, the apostles and even God’s angels, the entire Holy Bible is the true, inspired and infallible word of God.

In His confrontation with the devil, Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, “4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Thus, man is required to live by every word of God in the Bible because it is the truth inspired by God.

CHAPTER 3

BELIEF 3: SATAN THE DEVIL

God’s Church believes that Satan is a real spirit being, originally created by God as the archangel Lucifer with hundreds of millions of other angels. Then the heavens and the earth were created. Lucifer was then given rule over the earth, possibly with one-third of all the angels. But Lucifer and the angels under his rule rebelled against God. Since then, he has become an adversary of God and been known as Satan and the rebelling angels are known as unclean spirits or demons. Satan opposes God at every opportunity and in every project, including deceiving mankind about God’s purpose for creating humans and rejecting His Law.

SCRIPTURES

Everything in the universe including the angels was created by the Word, who later came to earth as Jesus Christ. John 1:1-2, “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

The word angel means “messenger” which is what the angels are.

Hebrews 1:7, 14, “7 And of the angels he says [in Psalm 104:4], Who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire...14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” They are also called “sons of God” because they were created by God and then saw God creating the heavens and the earth (Job 38:4,7, “4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... 7 When the morning stars [another name for angels] sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?).

Lucifer was originally created perfect but chose to sin and rebelled against God (Ezekiel 28:12-17). It seems one-third of the angels followed him in his rebellion and attempted to wrest the throne of the universe from God but were defeated and cast down to earth (Revelation 12:4, Isaiah 14:12-15, Luke 10:18, 2 Peter 2:4).

Hundreds of millions of righteous angels still serve God (Revelation 5:11), even though one-third rebelled.

Some of Satan’s character traits are mentioned in the Bible. Satan means “adversary” in Hebrew. The Greek translation of the word is *diabolos,* from which we get the English word *devil*. It means “slanderer.”

S*atan* is called “accuser” of the brethren (Revelation 12:10, Zechariah 3:1), the great dragon and serpent who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He is a murderer and there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He is described as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). He is also called a destroyer (Revelation 9:11); tempter (Matthew 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 3:5), and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), meaning he broadcasts in thoughts, moods, attitudes and feeling.

Satan is referred to by different names and descriptions that denote some of his evil roles, characteristics and actions. Besides "the devil," he is also called Apollyon and Abaddon, meaning "destroyer" and "destruction," respectively (Revelation 9:11); Belial, meaning "worthless" or "wicked" (2 Corinthians 6:15); Beelzebub, the name of a Philistine god meaning "Lord of flies" (Matthew 12:24-27, compare 2 Kings 1); the great dragon and serpent (Revelation 12:9).

Satan is wily (Ephesians 6:11) and seeks to deprive human beings of eternal life (Luke 8:12). However, Satan can only do what God permits him to do (Job 1:12, 2:6).

The Bible also describes Satan’s future fate. At present he is called “the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), and “ruler of this world (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). However, his reign will end at the return of Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15).and he will be bound in the abyss for a thousand years during the reign of Jesus Christ so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Then he will be released for a short time (Revelation 21:1-3, 7-8) and permitted to deceive the nations for the last time. It appears this is a test for the demons to see which ones will follow Satan to deceive the nations again after the millennium (1,000 years).

After that Satan and the demons who followed him to deceive the nations one last time will be permanently removed and "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (Revelation 20:10), which is "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41)

It appears that Satan’s fate has already been decided that he is to be permanently destroyed. This is indicated in Ezekiel 28:18-19: “18 You [that is Satan] have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you. 19 All they that know you among the people shall be astonished at you: you shall be a terror, and never shall you be any more.”

A normal fire that can consume human beings and material things does not consume spirit beings like Satan and the demons. But God will prepare a special fire (Matthew 25:41) that will consume Satan and the demons who followed Satan to deceive the nations one last time so that they are turned to ashes and are no more (Ezekiel 28:18-19), along with the rest of humanity that failed to repent.

CHAPTER 4

BELIEF 4 – HUMANITY – WHY GOD CREATED MANKIND

This belief of God’s Church is described in detail in my eBooklet “Why God Created Mankind” available free on my religion website (http://www.churchofgodmessage.com/whygodcreatedmankind.html).

God’s Church believes that God first created the angels and then the material universe. Potential of the angels was to rule the universe. God put one-third of all the angels on earth under the leadership of Lucifer. But Lucifer and the angels with him rebelled against God and tried to wrest the throne of the universe from Him. With their rebellion the rebelling angels demonstrated that they lacked God’s holy righteous character as described by the late Herbert W. Armstrong “which is the ability to discern the true and right way from the false, to make voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender to God and his perfect way and to determine even against temptation or self-desire, to live and do what is right.” (*Mystery of the Ages*, p. 69-70)

God then created human beings in His own image and likeness, of flesh, which is material substance. Human beings like the animals live by the breath of life but are subject to decay and are mortal. That means man does not have an immortal soul. God put a human spirit in man that imparts human intellect which makes mankind much superior to animals. However, the human spirit in man cannot produce God’s holy righteous character in man. That requires God’s holy spirit which God gives to those who repent of their sins, make a total commitment to live God’s way, are baptized and receive God’s holy spirit by the laying on of hands by a minister of God. As the man grows in grace and knowledge of God’s way of life, God’s holy spirit combining with the human spirit in man then begins to produce God’s holy righteous character in that person. Thus, human beings have the potential to become literal children of God as His sons and daughters through a resurrection after developing His holy righteous character. In essence, God is reproducing Himself through mankind.

Those who develop God’s holy righteous character will be granted eternal life. Those who fail to develop God’s holy righteous character will not be granted eternal life. They will face the second death which is permanent death. Their lives will be extinguished forever.

Adam and Eve were given a choice. They could qualify to receive eternal life through obedience to God, or they would die if they disobeyed, which is sin. Under Satan’s deception both disobeyed God’s instructions and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were then expelled from the Garden of Eden to develop their own civilization, systems of government and education, but subject to Satan’s influence.

God allotted 6,000 years for man’s self-rule which will bring mankind to the brink of annihilation of all flesh on earth. However, God will then intervene in human affairs by sending Jesus Christ to earth to take over the kingdoms of the world and set up God’s kingdom for 1,000 years. In God’s kingdom only His way of life as explained in the Bible will be taught and no pagan religions will be allowed to be taught and practiced. God will demonstrate that His way of life works best for the welfare of all and will produce the joy, happiness, abundance, prosperity and justice mankind seeks.

God has a plan of salvation for all of mankind. Salvation is to qualify to receive the gift of eternal life from God through a resurrection and become God’s literal immortal sons and daughters. This plan of salvation is pictured by the weekly sabbath and the seven annual holy days God instituted for mankind to observe which are all described in Leviticus 23.

SCRIPTURES

God created mankind from the “dust of the ground (earth)” (Genesis 2:7; 3:19), gave him the “breath of life” and man became a “living being” (translated as ‘soul’ in the KJV which is not immortal [Ezekiel 18:4, 20 “the soul that sins shall die”]) in His “own image and likeness” (Genesis 1:26-27). That means humans were created with a God-like mind, intellect and emotions. Human beings are given the human spirit which imparts human intellect, superior to that of animals. It helps humans know the things of man (1 Corinthians 2:11). Those who repent of their sins and are baptized receive God’s holy spirit (Acts 2:38-39) which enables humans to understand spiritual things or things of God (1 Corinthians 2:11-14). Through the Holy Spirit God transforms human beings by developing His holy righteous character in them (Galatians 4:19, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you...”) who when resurrected or changed to immortal beings at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Luke 20:36) will live with Him forever (Romans 8:11, John 3:16) as children in His family (1 John 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Peter 1:4).

As eternal sons of God, they shall first rule the earth (Matthew 5:5, Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6) and then the universe (Revelation 21:7, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things [the universe]”).

Although God will in His great mercy extend the opportunity for salvation to every human being born, some will still refuse to repent and accept God’s way of life. What is their fate? The Bible reveals that, rather than be tortured forever in an ever-burning hell, their lives will simply be permanently extinguished. They will cease to exist and will be as though they had never been.

Revelation 20:15 reveals that, after the final judgment depicted by the seventh annual holy day called the Last Great Day, "anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 21:8 adds, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

These verses make clear that the fate of the incorrigible is clearly death, not eternal life of torture. Their lives will be extinguished forever.

Paul also made it plain that the punishment of the wicked is death. He stated in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death…" Malachi the prophet also described the fate of the incorrigibly wicked in Malachi 4:1-3: "'For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,' says the LORD of hosts."

CHAPTER 5

BELIEF 5 – SALVATION AND STEPS TOWARDS SALVATION

Mainstream Christianity and almost all other religions believe that humans have an immortal soul that never dies. They believe that if one has done good in one’s life, one goes to heaven after death and lives forever. If one has done evil, then one still lives forever, but is tortured in hell forever. However, the Bible teaching is different.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 tell us “The soul that sins, it shall die.” And sin is defined as “transgression of the law” or lawlessness (1 John 3:4).

Romans 3:23 says, “23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 states, “23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

These two verses tell us that all humans have sinned and earned the death penalty for their sins, because the soul [being] that sins shall die. But God offers us eternal life as a gift through Jesus Christ whose sacrifice paid the death penalty on our behalf. Thus, salvation is obtaining eternal life as a gift from God.

Romans 5:8-10 tell us that we are justified by having our sins forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus Christ: “8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath [death penalty] through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Salvation according to the Bible is having our sins forgiven (which have earned us the death penalty) through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and receiving the gift of eternal life. 1 John 3:2 tells us what kind of eternal life we will have: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Jesus Christ] is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” In 2 Corinthians 6:18 God says, “And [I] will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Thus, salvation is receiving the gift of eternal life from God with a glorified body like that of Jesus Christ as His literal sons and daughters.

STEPS TO GAINING SALVATION

*1) God does the Calling*

God takes the first step to lead an individual on the road to salvation. This means, God opens the mind of the individual to understand His truth. A person cannot completely understand God’s truth on mere Bible study on his own. Jesus said in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the day.”

Peter said in Acts 2:39: “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.”

Paul wrote in Romans 8:28-30, “28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

This does not mean that only some will be saved whereas others will be condemned. As will be explained later, God has a plan to offer one chance for salvation to every human being ever born, which is pictured in God’s seven annual holy days. Some will be called in the first 6,000 to receive their one and only chance for salvation. Then in God’s kingdom during the millennium, all human beings living will be called. After the millennium, God will resurrect every human being who has ever lived but was not called by God during the first 6,000 years and give them their one and only chance for salvation. Thus, God will call human beings at different times.

After God calls us, He earnestly wants us to take the path to salvation. He tells us in 2 Peter 3:9 that He “is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

*2) Faith in God and Jesus Christ*

After God calls us and opens our minds to understand His truth, we have to answer the call, which means that we have to choose to accept His way of life. That means, to gain salvation we have to have complete faith in God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, believe that they exist, have created everything and that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid the death penalty on behalf of all humanity.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

*3) Repentance from Sin*

The next vital step to gaining salvation is to repent of one’s sins, or transgressing God’s laws (1 John 3:4).

On the day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. when God’s true Church began, Peter was inspired to preach a sermon to the people gathered to celebrate the Feast. When he preached that Jesus whom they had crucified was both Lord and Christ, they were pricked in their heart and asked Peter in Acts 2:37-39, “...Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Peter told the people that they must repent of their sins. Jesus pointed out the importance of repentance to be saved when He said, "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5). God commands everyone to repent (Acts 17:30). 2 Peter 3:9 says, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Jesus said in Mark 1:15, “...the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel [good news]”.

Repentance from sin does not mean only to feel sorry and show remorse for one’s past sins. It goes way beyond that. It should produce godly sorrow in us for having sinned. Paul the apostle describes what godly sorrow produces in us in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11, “10 For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world [mere remorse for having sinned but doing nothing about it] works death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

True repentance produces godly sorrow for having sinned. It is followed by diligence to clear out sin in oneself with anger at having sinned and fear of God because of the consequences of continuing to sin. Then with vehement desire and zeal one works to completely turnaround one’s life from sin to stop sinning by diligently obeying God’s law.

*4) Water Baptism by Immersion*

After repenting from sin, the next step on the road to salvation is to make a total commitment and solemn covenant with God to live His way of life from that day forward by keeping all His commandments, obeying His Law and living by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). One demonstrates that total commitment, with never going back, by being baptized. Peter mentioned this as the next step in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38, “38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Baptism is performed by total immersion in water because it pictures total surrender to God and completely burying the old self. An example of the baptism performed by Philip the evangelist is provided in Acts 8:35-39. When we are baptized, God forgives all our past sins.

After baptism we are dead to sin and should walk in newness of life as mentioned by Paul in Romans 6:3-6, “3 Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

*5) Receiving God’s Holy Spirit*

In Acts 2:38, Peter said, “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

So, the next step on the road to salvation after water baptism is receiving the gift of the holy spirit. Members of God’s true Church are those who receive God’s holy spirit. Romans 8:9, “...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

God gives His holy spirit to those who are baptized by the laying on of hands of a genuine minister of God’s true Church and praying for the baptized person to receive the holy spirit. Examples are given in Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6. Acts 8:17, “17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

The act of immersion in water at baptism forgives all our past sins. But merely the act of baptism does not give the holy spirit to the repentant person. Acts 8:14-17 and 19:1-6 show that laying on of hands of a genuine minister is necessary to receive the holy spirit.

God’s holy spirit, the spirit not of fear but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) helps a Christian keep all of God’s commandments and obey His Law. In the New Covenant God has not done away with His law but with the help of the holy spirit writes His laws in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:8-10). By receiving God’s holy spirit, we also become members of God’s true Church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

*6) Grow in Grace and Knowledge*

After baptism and receiving God’s holy spirit, as newly begotten children of God, we must continue to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord” (2 Peter 3:18). We must exercise living faith to produce works, which involves obeying God and *doing what He says!* James 2:20 tells us, “Faith without works is *dead*”.

God’s holy spirit begins the process of transformation in us. The transformation is not instantaneous. It requires continuous gradual change in our thinking, attitude, outlook and behavior from producing fruits of the flesh to producing fruits of the holy spirit. Galatians 5:19-25, “19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envying, murders, drunkenness, reveling, 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.

“22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

A Christian’s goal is to develop god’s holy righteous character in himself, a lifelong process by putting on the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16, “...we have the mind of Christ). Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”. Our goal is to have Christ be formed in us (Galatians 4:19, “19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”).

*7) Putting on Immortality*

Once a Christian has developed God’s holy and righteous character through tests and trials, he qualifies to receive the gift of eternal life from God in His kingdom through a resurrection. The final step to salvation, therefore, is to be changed from mortal to an immortal son of God with a spirit body like that of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2).

1 Corinthians 15:47-54 tells us how this takes place, “47 The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord [Jesus Christ] from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

“50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the [seventh] trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 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.”

This change takes place at the return of Jesus Crist to earth to establish God’s kingdom as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, “14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. 16 For 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: 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.”

CHAPTER 6

BELIEF 6 – REPENTANCE AND FAITH

God’s Church believes that those who truly repent of their sins and are willing to totally surrender to God, live His way of life by obeying His laws and have faith that Jesus Christ is their Savior Who fully paid the death penalty for their sins on their behalf by sacrificing His life, will have their sins forgiven by the grace of God. Such individuals can then be pardoned from the death penalty, receive the gift of God’s holy spirit which will abide in them, imparting God’s divine love which alone can enable them to obey God’s law and produce righteousness. They receive the gift of the holy spirit by being baptized into the Body of Christ, which is the true Church of God. Those who are led by the holy spirit become Christ’s. The holy spirit then produces a change in their attitude and life leading to righteousness.

Though I explained this belief as part of *“Belief 5 – Salvation and Steps Towards Salvation”*, I am explaining it separately because it is a foundational belief in Christianity and those cursorily reading this eBook would be looking for it as a separate Chapter and may miss it as part of Belief 5.

SCRIPTURES

Sin is defined as “transgression of the Law” (1 John 3:4).

Jesus pointed out the importance of repentance to be saved when He said, "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5). God commands everyone to repent (Acts 17:30). 2 Peter 3:9 says, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” When Peter preached the first sermon in the New Testament and the Jews convicted in their conscience about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ asked him and the other apostles in Acts 2:37-38, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul also preached "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Jesus said in Mark 1:15, “...the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe the gospel [good news]”.

True repentance involves a recognition of our carnal nature and its opposition to God (Romans 8:7) which requires a complete turnaround from transgressing God’s law to ceasing from sin and obeying God’s law. It is not merely feeling sorry for one’s sins or showing remorse for one’s past actions but sorrowing in a godly manner that leads to being careful to not commit sin again with vehement desire and zeal to put away sins as Paul described in 2 Corinthians 7:11 (NKJV), “11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!”

Godly repentance is not something that we can work up in ourselves. Goodness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is a gift from God (2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 11:18). It is one of the many good things our Heavenly Father gives us (James 1:17).

We must realize that repentance must be an ongoing process. Vestiges of human nature remain in us for the rest of our lives, warring against our minds and leading to sin (Romans 7:17; Romans 7:20-21). Therefore, even a converted person will have to continue his battle with sin throughout his life and will need to repent of it (1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1).

We need deep faith which is belief and trusting confidence in God to come to Him. Hebrews 11:1, 6, “1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen... 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Many examples of the deep faith and trust in God such as those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and others are provided in Hebrews 11.

True faith leads a person to act in accordance with God’s will and produce works of righteousness (James 2:17-26).

As Peter said in Acts 2:38, after repentance, a person who wants to make a total commitment to God’s way of life is then baptized and receives the gift of God’s holy spirit by the laying on of hands by a true minister of Christ. Then an important result of having the Holy Spirit within us is the development of faith (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9). We then live by "The faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20, KJV). Those who are just (that is those who are justified or made right with God) live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

The converted person continues through repentance and faith to rely on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ throughout his life to forgive his sins and receive help in overcoming them. With Jesus Christ living in him through the Holy Spirit, the Christian is able to grow in God's way of life, increasingly walking by faith in obedience to God's law of love (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 1:29).

CHAPTER 7

BELIEF 7 – WATER BAPTISM AND LAYING ON OF HANDS

God’s Church believes in the requirement of water baptism by total immersion in water after repentance for an individual to make a total commitment to God’s way of life. Then through laying on of hands by a minister of God’s Church and prayer to God, the individual receives God’s holy spirit to enable him or her to obey God’s commandments and live His way of life. The individual then becomes part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, the Church of God. (Matthew 3:13, 16; John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 19:5-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Though I explained this belief as part of *“Belief 5 – Salvation and Steps Towards Salvation”*, I am explaining it separately because it is a foundational belief in Christianity and those cursorily reading this eBook would be looking for it as a separate Chapter and may miss it as part of the Belief 5.

In Hebrews 6:2, Paul the apostle mentions the “doctrine of baptisms” and “laying on of hands” as two of the six foundational principles of Christ.

The concept of baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins was first introduced to Israel by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 1:4-5). Jesus, who needed no repentance from sin because He never sinned, set an example for God’s Church to follow by Himself being baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17).

The English word baptize is derived from the Greek word *baptizo* which means “to immerse.” Therefore, by definition, to baptize means to completely immerse in water. Complete immersion in water, therefore, is the only acceptable form of baptism, and not sprinkling or partial immersion. John the Baptist baptized in a particular place in the Jordan river because there was much water there (John 3:23).

For a Christian, the importance of baptism is that it pictures the death and burial of his old self with its sins in a “watery grave” to be resurrected as a new person to walk in newness of life as stated in Romans 6:3-7, “3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.” (See also Colossians 2:12-13).

After baptism, the individual’s sins are washed away, all past sins forgiven, has been freed of the death penalty. He must now live a new life in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:21-24, “ 21 if indeed you have heard Him [Jesus Christ] and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

The process of baptism was explained by Peter the apostle in Acts 2:37-38, “37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said to them, “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.”

Baptism, therefore, must be preceded by acknowledgement of our guilt for sins, the consequence of which is the death penalty and the need to be saved from the death penalty through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That means we have faith that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will wash away our sins, deeply repented of them, have had a complete change of heart and no longer wish to live that old way of life. We want to “bury” the old sinful life (Romans 6:11), make a total commitment to God the Father and Jesus Christ and live the way Jesus lived (Colossians 2:12, Luke 14:25-33).

These scriptures clearly show that baptism is not appropriate for children. The bible provides no example of children being baptized. Only individuals mature enough to understand their old sinful self, the need to change and able to make a total lifelong commitment to God the Father and Jesus Christ should be baptized.

God castigated ancient Israel for disobeying his commandments, statutes and judgments and prophesied through Ezekiel the prophet that when He gathers them from all nations back to the land of Israel, He will put a new spirit, his holy spirit, within them to enable them to obey His Law.

Ezekiel 11:17-20, “17 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ 18 And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. 19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” The same promise is repeated in Ezekiel 36:26-28.

Therefore, a person who has repented of his sins, has decided to make a total commitment to live God’s way by obeying His commandments, must receive God’s holy spirit that will enable him to keep the commandments, statutes and judgments. This is all part of the process for receiving God’s holy spirit mentioned by Peter in Acts 2:38, “38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The process for receiving God holy spirit is mentioned in Acts 8:17, “17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Other examples of being baptized and receiving the holy spirit are mentioned in Acts 9:17; 19:6 and 2 Timothy 1:6. God’s holy spirit, the spirit not of fear but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) helps a Christian keep all of God’s commandments and obey His Law. In the New Covenant God has not done away with His law but with the help of the holy spirit writes it in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:8-10). ).

It is through the indwelling Holy Spirit that Christ lives within the Christian (John 14:16-17, 23; Galatians 2:20). By receiving God’s holy spirit, we also become members of God’s true Church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

CHAPTER 8

BELIEF 8 – GOD’S HOLY DAY PLAN OF SALVATION FOR MANKIND

This belief of God’s Church is described in detail in my eBook *“God’s Plan of Salvation for Mankind”* available free on my religion website (http://www.churchofgodmessage.com/whygodcreatedmankind.html).

Leviticus 23 describes the weekly sabbath and the seven annual holy days ancient Israel was required to keep.

The weekly sabbath (Leviticus 23:1-3) broadly pictures God’s 7,000-year plan of salvation for mankind in which God has allotted 6,000 for mankind to labor and develop its own civilization, systems of government and education, but subject to Satan’s influence. During this time, God will call only a few people in a relationship with Him by giving them His holy spirit so that they can develop His holy righteous character with His help and qualify to receive the gift of eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ as His immortal sons and daughters. The seventh day Sabbath as day of rest (Hebrews 4:4-9) pictures God’s kingdom for 1,000 years (Revelation 5:10; 11:15; 20:4-6) when mankind will rest from its labors. There will be no war, God’s saints now made immortal sons of God will rule over all nations with Jesus Christ to usher in peace, justice, happiness, joy, abundance and prosperity for all. Only God’s way will be taught and all of mankind will be called and will receive God’s holy spirit, making salvation available to all.

The seven annual holy days then depict God’s plan of salvation for mankind in greater detail.

First annual holy day during the spring early harvest or holy day season (in March or April of the calendar year) is the **Passover** which pictures the sacrifice of the sinless Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God without blemish, to pay the death penalty on behalf of every human being for their sins (1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Romans 3:25).

Passover is observed the way Jesus kept the last Passover with His disciples which included foot-washing and the partaking of unleavened bread and wine as symbolic of Christ's body and shed blood offered as sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

The second feast during the early spring harvest season is the **Feast of Unleavened Bread,** observed for seven days immediately following the Passover in which we put all leaven out of our homes (Exodus 12:19). Leaven symbolizes sin. Therefore, this festival teaches and reminds us annually that after our sins have been forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are not to remain in sin, but to work diligently to put all sinful thoughts, attitudes and actions out of our lives (1 Corinthians 5:7-8, Matthew 4:4).

The only annual feast during the late spring harvest season, is called the **Feast of Pentecost**, also known as the Feast of Firstfruits, celebrated in May-June of the calendar year. On this day in 31 A.D., God's holy spirit was first given to a group of disciples to begin God’s New Testament Church (Acts 2:1-4). Without the holy spirit, we cannot belong to God and Christ (verse 9) and cannot be a part of God's Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Firstfruits are the first agricultural products that mature and ripen. This feast, therefore, pictures the calling out by God of a few people during the first 6,000 years of man’s history, granting His holy spirit to enable them to understand His laws and live a righteous life to qualify to receive eternal life through a resurrection at Jesus Christ's second coming (Exodus 23:16; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:37-39; James 1:18; Romans 8:23). Jesus Christ is the first of the firstfruits as pictured by the waive sheaf ceremony during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:9-14, 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). It pictured the resurrection of Jesus Christ to eternal life, the first human being to be resurrected as first of the firstfruits.

Pentecost teaches us that this is not the only time for salvation. Most of humanity will be called later, as pictured by the much greater autumn harvest.

The remaining four holy days come in the autumn season. The first of these holy days is the **Feast of Trumpets**. It pictures a time of unprecedented global wars and catastrophes and God’s intervention in affairs of mankind with the return of Jesus Christ to earth at the sounding of the “last (seventh) trumpet” (Revelation 11:15) to save mankind from annihilating all life on earth, establishment of God’s kingdom and resurrection of the firstfruits to eternal life (Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) to reign with Christ for 1000 years as priests of God and kings (Revelation 5:10, 20:4, 6).

The fifth holy day is called the **Day of Atonement** which pictures the putting away of Satan, the primary cause of sin as ruler of the earth and the demons who constantly tempt human beings to sin, so that they can no longer influence mankind. Satan will be bound for a thousand years (Leviticus 16:29-30, 20-22; Revelation 20:1-3). Once Satan and his deception are out of the way, all mankind can be reconciled (become at one) with God.

The Day of Atonement is observed by fasting for 24 hours without food or water which enables us to draw closer to God and be reconciled to Him. It also pictures Jesus Christ as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15; Hebrews 5:4-5, 10) making atonement for the sins of all mankind (Hebrews (9:8-14, 10:19-20).

The sixth holy day is called the **Feast of Tabernacles,** also called the Feast of Ingathering, celebrated in September-October in the modern calendar year. It pictures the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints in God’s kingdom on earth (Leviticus 23:39-43, Revelation 19:11-16, 20:4.) Christ’s rule will start at Jerusalem and spread throughout the world to usher in unprecedented thousand years of peace, prosperity, happiness and joy (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:35, 44; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:13-14). It also pictures God harvesting the greater part of humanity for salvation which is eternal life in His kingdom (John 4:35-36; Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14).

This festival is observed for seven days by members of God’s Church gathering throughout the world at regional feast sites and living in temporary dwellings for the entire period such as in hotels or camp sites.

The seventh holy day is called the **Last Great Day,** which is the eighth day following seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36-39). It depicts the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-13. It pictures the resurrection to physical life of all the estimated 100-120 billion human beings who have ever lived (Ezekiel 37:1-14) but died without receiving knowledge of God’s ways and their human potential. Almost all will truly repent of their sins, will be taught God’s ways and will receive their one and only chance for salvation to qualify to receive the free gift of eternal life as God’s literal immortal sons and daughters (Romans 11:25-27; Luke 11:31-32)

God’s seventh day Sabbath and the seven annual holy days depicting God’s plan of salvation for all mankind show how merciful God is to forgive sins, give ALL of mankind an opportunity to qualify to receive the gift of eternal life and become His sons and daughters in His universe-ruling kingdom. Vast majority of mankind will qualify to receive God’s gift.

CHAPTER 9

BELIEF 9 – WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Mainstream Christianity believes that the gospel (which means “good news”) is the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which paid the death penalty on our behalf for our sins. Romans 3:23 says, “23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and Romans 6:23 states, “23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

While forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is part of the gospel, the gospel or “good news” that Jesus preached is the restoration of God’s kingdom and government on earth. God relinquished His government on earth to man after Eve and Adam sinned by taking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God allotted 6,000 for man to rule himself. According to calculations by Bible scholars, 6,000 years since Adam’s creation are already over (in September 2019). Fulfillment of end of the end time prophecies is at our door.

The Gospel of Christ is the “Good News” of the soon-coming Kingdom and government of God on earth, and of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s sacrifice. Christ’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God reveals how we are to be qualified by God to be ruling members of His Kingdom (Acts 2:38–39; Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 24:14; Acts 8:12; 17:7; 28:30–31; Revelation 2:26–27).

CHAPTER 10

BELIEF 10 - GOD’S LAW AND SIN; SABBATH & UNCLEAN MEATS

God’s ultimate purpose is to dwell in a family of billions of sons and daughters living in conditions described in Revelation 21:3-4, “3 And 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. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Without fail, all sin produces pain and suffering. If there is any sin in God’s family, it will produce crying, tears, sorrow, pain, suffering and possibly death. Therefore, to have a universe in which there is no pain and suffering, everyone in God’s family must become sinless, incapable of sinning.

And how do we know what sin is? “Sin is the transgression of the Law” (1 John 3:4). We would not know what sin is if we did not have the Law. The five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are known as the Law. How to live the laws, statutes and judgments in the five books of the Law are elaborated in the rest of the Bible.

God’s spiritual law is summed up in the “Ten Commandments” (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Jesus Christ gave the essence of the Law in the two Great Commandments, love towards God and neighbor (Mark 12:30-31, “30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these”; Matthew 33:36-40; Luke 10:27”). The first four of the Ten Commandments teach us how to love God and the last six commandments teach us how to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love for neighbor means having outgoing concern for neighbor.

Paul tells us in Romans 7:12, “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

In the “Sermon on the Mount”, Jesus magnified God’s Law as prophesied in Isaiah 42:21 (“21 The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law and make it honorable”) showing we must obey it in both the letter and the spirit (Matthew 5-7).

Mankind’s experience with keeping the law has not been good. Romans 3:23 tells us, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” As a result, all have earned the death penalty: “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

God has called human beings to become perfect, incapable of sinning as stated in Matthew 5:48: “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” How can human beings become perfect, sinless and incapable of sinning? That will become possible after human beings as individuals have answered God’s call, been baptized, received God’s holy spirit, started growing in grace and knowledge and begun to develop God’s holy and righteous character in themselves. God will then through a resurrection give them spirit bodies with power and abilities multiplied billions or trillions of times like the angels (Matthew 22:30), making them perfect and incapable of sinning, like Himself and Jesus Christ.

At present, humans have limited mental and physical capabilities and limited memories. As immortal sons of God with spirit bodies with memory and mental capacities billions or trillions of times greater than human capacity, we will be able to instantly evaluate and apply God’s law to every situation and know how we should behave in every situation. That’s how we will become sinless and live as God’s family where there is no more crying, tears, sorrow, pain, suffering and death.

THE SABBATH

Seventh day of the week, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is the Sabbath of the Creator God and we are commanded to rest from our labors and worship God so that we can stay close to Him throughout our lives.

In Genesis 1, God made the earth’s surface fit for life and then created vegetation and animal life in six days. Then on the sixth day God created man in His own image and likeness. God then rested on the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart for holy use) as a day of rest for man as stated in Genesis 2:1-3, “1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

The Sabbath day is, therefore, a memorial of creation and identifies the Creator of everything as the God to be worshipped. The Sabbath day was sanctified, or set apart for holy use, which is worship of God, for man to maintain a close personal relationship with his creator. Since it was ordained when man was created, all of mankind, not just the Jews or Israelites, is required to keep it holy. Jesus told the Pharisees in Mark 2:27... “27 The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath because He as the Creator God of the Old Testament (John 1:1-3, 14).

In God’s calendar for reckoning time, days begin and end at sunset because in Genesis 1 when God began His creation each day He started and ended at sunset in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. It is still God’s way of reckoning time. In Leviticus 23:32 concerning keeping the Day of Atonement, an annual Sabbath, God instructed, “32 It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.” The modern custom of beginning and ending days at midnight follows the ancient pagan Roman custom of reckoning time.

Keeping the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments. It is stated in Exodus 20:8-11, “8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 provides another reason for observing the Sabbath day, “12 ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” The additional reason for keeping the Sabbath is that for the ancient Israelites it was a reminder that the Creator God freed them from bondage in Egypt as Jesus Christ has freed us from bondage to sin with His sacrifice.

Leviticus 23:3 tells us that the Sabbath is kept holy by attending a holy convocation or assembly which in today’s language is called a Church service.

In Exodus 31:12-17, God told the Israelites about the Sabbath law that “it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death...15...Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant...” The Sabbath is thus a perpetual covenant (agreement) between God and His people that those who keep the Sabbath are set apart (sanctified) as holy and are His people and He is their God. It is a sign that the true Creator God is their God. That is how important the Sabbath is to God and it should be for every human being.

If you worship God on the Sabbath day, you are worshipping the Creator God. If you are worshipping god on Sunday, you are worshipping the “Sun” god on his day of worship, Sunday. And the Sun is no god. Thus, if you worship god on Sunday, in addition to violating the fourth commandment, you are also violating the first commandment to “have no other gods before the Creator God.”

In Isaiah 66:23 God tells us that in the millennium when Jesus returns to earth and establishes God’s kingdom over all nations, “all flesh (humans) will come to worship before Me.”

Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:31). The apostles followed the example of Jesus Christ and kept the Sabbath. Paul taught the Gentiles and Jews on the Sabbath (Acts 13:42-44, Acts 17:2, 18:4). Nowhere does the Bible indicate that the apostles and the Churches of God changed from the example of Jesus Christ in keeping the Sabbath day holy.

Hebrews 4:9 shows that "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." God has given 6,000 years for man to labor and rule himself. Man’s rule has been full of pain and suffering and hard for many to make a decent living. But then for 1,000 years of God’s kingdom, humanity will find true rest when God blesses humanity with peace and prosperity. The seven-day week pictures 7,000 years of God’s plan for humanity; 6,000 years for man to rule himself followed by 1,000 years of God’s kingdom pictured by the seventh day Sabbath.

Jesus Himself set a righteous example in His life of observing the Sabbath (Luke 4:31), and the New Testament records that His followers continued that practice long after His death and resurrection.

Paul taught the Gentiles (non-Israelites) on the Sabbath (Acts 13:42-44), following both the law of God and the example of Christ. Wherever Paul went he taught on the Sabbath, as was his custom, and established churches that kept the Sabbath (Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4). No example can be found in the writings of the apostles or the practice of the New Testament Church that shows any hint of change in the example and teaching they received from Christ. The original Church in the days of the apostles never worshipped on Sunday.

Hebrews 4:9 declares that "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (NASB). The context of this passage, Hebrews 3-4, presents the seventh-day Sabbath as symbolic of the rest that the ancient Israelites sought—fulfilled in part in their settlement in the Promised Land, but to be ultimately fulfilled in the future rule of God over all nations, when all people will find true rest. Other verses in Hebrews 4 show that Christians now are to be diligent to enter God's future rest as well as the weekly rest that prefigures it (Hebrews 4:4; Hebrews 4:9-11).

Thus, by worshipping God on the Sabbath, we declare that the Creator God is the one we worship. In so doing, we are keeping His fourth and first commandments and following the example of Jesus Christ and the apostles. The Sabbath also pictures the 1,000 years of rest for humanity in God’s Kingdom on earth.

GOD’S FOOD LAWS; CLEAN & UNCLEAN MEATS

The Law (first five books written by Moses) in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 contains instructions regarding meats that can be eaten by humans, designated as “clean” and meats that are not to be eaten, designated as “unclean”.

Many in mainstream Christianity believe that we are no longer required to obey the laws concerning clean and unclean meats. They cite Jesus' statement in Mark 7:18-23 and say that Jesus declared all meats clean. It states: “18...Do you not perceive that whatsoever thing from without enters into the man, it cannot defile him; 19 Because it enters not into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the draught, purging all meats? 20 And he said that which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

When you see the context, Jesus was merely referring to all food being eventually purged (eliminated) from the body after the digestive process. He was not discussing clean and unclean meats at all.

Another scripture usually applied in support of the position that God cleansed all meats is Acts 10:11-15, “11 And [Peter] saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call not common.”

Peter saw the vision three times and each time refused to eat the unclean animals. He wondered what the vision was about. That very time men sent by Cornelius the centurion, a non-Israelite, arrived at the house and the holy spirit told him to go with them doubting nothing. Then he realized what the vision meant and said in verses 28-29, “28 Then he said to them [Cornelius’s household], “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”

Again, this vision had nothing to do with clean and unclean meats. Through the vision, Peter was being instructed to not consider any man common or unclean.

Another scripture used to justify eating unclean meats is Genesis 9:3. Immediately after the Flood, God instructed Noah, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs." This does not imply that every animal is fit for human food. The instruction simply meant that just as various kinds of plants have different uses for man, so do animals. Some plants are poisonous, can kill humans and should not be eaten. They are not fit for human food. In the same way, all animals are not fit for human consumption. In Genesis 7:2 God had already shown the distinction between clean and unclean animals when Noah was instructed to take seven pairs of clean animals and only one pair of unclean animals into the ark with him.

Jesus certainly did not eat unclean animals because if He had, the Pharisees would have accused Him of violating these laws.

God’s other laws concerning food prohibited eating fat and blood (Leviticus 3:17, “This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood”). In Leviticus 7:22-26, eating fat of animals is prohibited but not that of birds, and eating blood of both animals and birds is prohibited. In Acts 15:19-20, 28-29, the apostles instructed gentile converts not to eat the flesh of strangled animals from which the blood had not been drained.

The difference in approach to God’s Law between mainstream Christian denominations and God’s Church is that God’s Church searches the scriptures for God’s will and obeys what He has instructed. Mainstream Christianity on the other hand tries to twist scriptures to claim support for its position such as eating all meats, including unclean meats such as pork, shellfish and other unclean fish.

CHAPTER 11

BELIEF 11 – PASSOVER AND JESUS CHRIST’S SACRIFICE

God’s Church observes the New Testament Passover on the night of the beginning of the 14th of Abib or Nisan, the first month in the Hebrew Calendar in commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Savior (Luke 22:13-15). It is the first of God’s seven annual holy days mentioned in Leviticus 23.

Observance of the Passover was revealed to the ancient Israelites at time of their deliverance from Egypt and the instructions for observing it are recorded in Exodus 12-13. Each household was required to sacrifice an unblemished lamb on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar and to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were also required to place the blood of the Lamb on their doorways so that they would be spared (“Passed over”) when God slew the firstborn of Egypt. The Israelite firstborn were thus redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Passover observed by ancient Israelites prefigured the much greater sacrifice of Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Peter the apostle tells us in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that we are “redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"

God begins and ends days from sunset to sunset. In the beginning of the 14th of Abib after sunset, first Jesus and the disciples had a regular Passover meal with lamb according to the Old Testament instructions so that Jesus could keep the Law blameless. Then Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, explaining that He was setting Christians an example to humbly serve fellow human beings. Then He gave them a piece of unleavened bread, explaining it symbolized His broken body for the sins of mankind, making eternal life possible for us. It also symbolizes Jesus Christ living His life in us through the holy spirit, just as bread nourishes our bodies. Then they took a sip of wine from the cup with Jesus saying of the wine, "This is My blood of the new covenant" (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24). He explained its symbolism as shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus commanded His disciples that from then on, they were to observe the Passover in remembrance of Him with a foot washing ceremony and with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine as representative of His body and His blood given in sacrifice.

After singing a hymn, Jesus and the disciples then went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Around midnight He was arrested by the temple officers sent by the high priests. Then through the night He was tried by the High Priest, then by Pilate, then by Herod and finally He was crucified around 9.00 AM and died on the cross around 3.00 PM before sunset, which was still on the 14th of Abib just before the day ended and the 15th began.

Thus, Jesus and the disciples ate the Passover on the beginning of the 14th of Abib after sunset and Jesus died on the cross still on the 14th of Abib towards the end of the day but before sunset. We know this because it was the preparation day for the annual Sabbath called the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed on the 15th (Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14; John 19:31; John 19:42).

God’s Church follows the example of Jesus Christ and observes the Passover on the beginning of the 14th of Abib whereas the Jews observe it on the beginning of the 15th of Abib.

The New Testament is more than the mere death of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. It is also about His suffering (Luke 22:15). Sins of various kinds produce physical, mental, emotional and spiritual pain and suffering. During the Passover, after His arrest till His death Jesus suffered in all these ways. He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, the disciples forsook Him, He was scourged, shamed by the Roman soldiers and the common people who slapped Him, spat on Him and shouted all kinds of insults at Him, then He suffered the physical agony of crucifixion and finally had His blood shed when a Roman soldier used a spear to pierce His heart and kill Him. Thus, He suffered physical, mental, emotional and spiritual pain and anguish so that we can be forgiven the consequences of our sins and be healed physically of our sicknesses and diseases, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Observing the Passover is so important in God's sight that if a person was unable to keep the Passover on the 14th of the first month due to unavoidable circumstances, then he was allowed to observe it on the 14th of the second month.

For more information on the Passover, please read my free eBook *“God’s Plan of Salvation for Mankind.”*

THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ as the Word was the Creator (John 1:1-3, 14) of humanity, angels and the universe. As a result, His life was of more value than all of humanity and His creation put together. He emptied Himself of His divinity, came to earth as a human being and was also God because He was the only begotten Son of God the Father and lived a sinless life in the flesh though He was tempted in all points (Hebrews 4:15). He did not deserve the death penalty according to God’s Law because He lived a sinless life. But He died so that His sacrifice could pay the death penalty for the sins of all mankind. This was God’s plan from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8, “...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”) to demonstrate His love for the world (“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.”)

Life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are central to Christianity. Acts 4:12 states, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Only through Christ’s sacrifice can our sins be forgiven upon repentance and the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice so that we can receive the gift of eternal life. Romans 5:8-10 (NIV) tells us, “8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

The important question is: Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer so much and die an excruciatingly painful death? If only His sacrifice was required to forgive our sins and qualify us for eternal life, then God could have insured that He died by being quickly beheaded, without much suffering? But God allowed His Son to suffer horribly during approximately the last 21 hours of His life.

During the Passover, He dealt with the carnality of the disciples. He had to deal with Peter first refusing to let Him wash his feet and then asking that his hands and his head should also be washed. He had to deal with the betrayal of Judas. The disciples’ minds were also on which one of them should be the greatest in God’s kingdom. He also knew that the disciples were going to abandon Him and flee during the time of His greatest trial on earth.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed in agony knowing that His worst suffering lay just ahead. Then He was betrayed by Judas. Then He was arrested and brought before the High priests for trial where He, while completely innocent, was condemned in a mock trial.

After Jesus was convicted, the multitudes around Him let loose. The people and officers standing by slapped Him in the face as hard as they could and spat on Him. Others stared and jeered at Him with mocking faces, laughed Him to scorn, hurled insults and blasphemies at Him. They pushed and shoved Him around violently as they had opportunity to belittle Him. He endured all this shame and reproach in His weakened condition with no sleep for about 21-22 hours by this time. Then Jesus was marched off to the Sanhedrin which confirmed the death sentence on Him.

Then Jesus was taken before Pilate for trial. Since Herod was in town, Jesus was marched off to him to be examined. It would have been a harrowing experience to be marched in the streets of Jerusalem to first go before Annas, then Caiaphas the High Priest, then before Pontius Pilate and then to Herod.

After Herod could find nothing worthy of death in Jesus, he with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.” Jesus endured all the undeserved contempt, abuse and shame heaped on Him.

Pilate then ordered Jesus to be scourged. Due to the scourging Jesus’ flesh had been shred to ribbons. Then the soldiers pressed down a crown of thorns on his head with the thorns entering the scalp, causing shooting pain. Then they beat Him on the head with a stick, further pressing the thorns into the scalp. The pain would have been unbearable. He would have felt numb with all the pain, while the insults like mockingly bowing before Him and shouting “Hail, king of the Jews!”, and blasphemies were being continuously shouted at Him. Then Jesus was crucified to suffer the most excruciating death invented, though He actually died when a soldier stabbed Him with a spear.

So, why did Jesus have to die such an excruciatingly painful death, all pre-planned by God?

Isaiah the prophet provides us the answers. He writes in Isaiah 53:3-8: “3 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows…” That is the reason Jesus died in great grief and sorrow. He bore grief and carried sorrows on our behalf, which we would have had to suffer because of God’s judgment for our sins.

Isaiah continues: “Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him…”

Jesus suffered because of our sins. Our sins have alienated us from God. But He took the chastisement or beating on our behalf to reconcile us to God and be at peace with Him throughout eternity.

Isaiah continues further: “And by His stripes we are healed.”

This means that the brutal beatings and scourging Jesus suffered makes supernatural healing of our bodies from sickness and disease possible. Human body is not designed to become sick. Sickness, disease and death is the penalty for violation of God’s physical laws. Jesus Christ paid that penalty on our behalf by being subjected to the brutal beatings and scourging. Since the penalty for broken physical laws has been paid for all of us, God can then supernaturally heal us.

Isaiah the prophet thus provides the answer to the question why Jesus Christ had to die a horribly cruel death, but all pre-planned by God. He had to be the perfect sacrifice for us, to pay every aspect of the penalty for all our sins.

Jesus died to pay the death penalty on our behalf which sin has brought on us so that our sins can be forgiven, making eternal life possible as God’s sons.

Many of us have committed unspeakable crimes for which we deserve the worst form of shame, ignominy and reproach. But after we repent and have washed our sins in the blood of Jesus Christ, we should put away the guilt and no longer feel shame, mental and emotional suffering in this life now and in God’s kingdom. Jesus Christ tells us that He has borne all the shame and reproach also on their behalf.

Thus, there was no alternative to the Word emptying Himself of His divinity and all privileges and coming to earth in the flesh as Jesus Christ to die a horribly painful death, suffer shame and reproach to demonstrate that God does not compromise with sin, and the penalty for sin is death. But God loves His creation so much that He was willing to let His Son sacrifice His life to pay every aspect of that penalty including all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual suffering. His death and suffering were thus a complete sacrifice on our behalf in every way.

CHAPTER 12

BELIEF 12 – THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE GRAVE

God’s Church believes that God the Father raised Jesus Christ to life from the dead after His body lay full three days and three nights (72 hours) in the grave. He then ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our faithful High Priest and Advocate.

Mainstream Christianity’s has its tradition of Good Friday death of Jesus Christ and Sunday morning or Easter resurrection. Muslims claim that as proof that the Bible is not the word of God. They say that the Bible is inconsistent because when questioned by the scribes and Pharisees to prove that He was the Messiah, Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" .

Three days and three nights mean a period of 72 hours. But between a 3.00 PM Friday afternoon death and 6.00 AM Sunday morning resurrection, only 39 hours can fit in. We cannot fit "three days and three nights" between a Friday-afternoon death and a Sunday-morning resurrection that mainstream Christianity believes in. Some try to argue that Christ’s statement about "three days and three nights" does not have to cover 3 full days and 3 full nights as part of a day can be counted as a day. Thus, they say that Jesus died in the afternoon making the remainder of Friday as one day, then Saturday as the second day and Sunday morning as the third day. But in this time frame only 2 nights, Friday and Saturday night, can be fitted in.

The problem lies with mainstream Christianity and Muslims not understanding that an annual holy day is mentioned in the Biblical record, also known as a high day. Let’s carefully study the details provided in the gospels.

Each of the Gospel writers provides an account of the events of Jesus’ crucifixion, death and resurrection, but each presents different aspects that need to be correctly synchronized and harmonized to produce a clear sequence and understanding of what happened. We will see that, when each account is considered, the chronological details mesh perfectly proving that Jesus Christ was in the tomb exactly three days and three nights.

For instance, John 19:31 preserves a crucial point that provides insight into the other accounts. The preparation day on which Jesus was crucified is described as the day before the Sabbath. But John clarifies it by stating that this approaching Sabbath "was a high day." This does not refer to the weekly Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) but to the first day of Unleavened Bread, which is one of God's annual high days, or Annual Sabbath days (Exodus 12:16-17; Leviticus 23:6-7), which could—and usually did—fall on other days of the week.

Luke 23:46-53 describe Jesus' moment of death, as well as His hasty burial because of the oncoming Sabbath. Verse 54 then states, "That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near." This Sabbath that drew near was the High Sabbath, the First day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which that year in 31 A.D. fell on Thursday. So, the women rested on this Sabbath according to the commandment.

Then verse 56 of Luke 23 tells us that the women, after seeing Christ's body having been laid in the tomb, "56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.” This work of purchasing and preparing the spices and fragrant oils could not be done on the Sabbath day. So, this work was done on Friday after the High day Sabbath on Thursday. Then verse 56 says they rested again on the Sabbath day. So clearly two Sabbaths are mentioned here.

When we consider the details in all four Gospel accounts, the picture of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, death and resurrection that emerges is this. Jesus was crucified and entombed late on Wednesday afternoon, just before a Sabbath began at sunset. However, that was a high-day or annual Sabbath (the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread), falling on Thursday that week, rather than the weekly Sabbath from Friday sunset through Saturday sunset. The women saw Jesus’ body laid in the tomb late Wednesday afternoon, then rested on the high day Sabbath on Thursday. Then they prepared spices and fragrant oils on Friday for the proper burial of Jesus’ body and then rested again on the weekly Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Jesus remained entombed from Wednesday just before sunset until Saturday end just before sunset, when He rose from the dead. Thus, when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on Sunday morning before sunrise, "while it was still dark," she found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Before Sunday sunrise He had already risen. John 20:1 states: “1 Now on the first day of the week [meaning Sunday] Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark [meaning before sunrise Sunday], and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” This clearly shows that Jesus had already risen before sunrise on Sunday.

Jesus rose late Saturday afternoon around sunset—not Sunday at sunrise—which was precisely three days and three nights, 72 hours, after He was placed in the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday. Jesus was not resurrected on Sunday at sunrise as the false Roman Catholic Church claims, and mainstream Christianity blindly believes, but on late Saturday afternoon.

CHAPTER 13

BELIEF 13 – THE THREE RESURRECTIONS AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT

We believe that the Bible reveals three resurrections for man. The FIRST RESURRECTION is to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ of all those who were called by God in the first 6,000 years of man’s history, developed God’s holy righteous character and qualified to receive eternal life as immortal sons and daughters of God. They reign with Christ during the 1,000 years of God’s Kingdom on earth.

After the 1,000 years, all humans who have ever lived but were not called by God, meaning that they did not receive their one and only chance for salvation, will be resurrected to physical life to live 100 years. They will receive their chance for salvation at that time, which is called the White Throne Judgment. This is the SECOND RESURRECTION. All those who accept Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for the remission of their sins, develop God’s holy righteous character, will qualify to receive eternal life and will be changed into immortal beings as God’s sons and daughters.

All those who were called during the first 6,000 years of human history, or during the 1,000 years of God’s Kingdom but failed to develop God’s holy righteous character, willfully rejected God’s offer of salvation, meaning they did not qualify to receive eternal life, will be resurrected to a physical life. This is the THIRD RESURRECTION. They will join those who failed to qualify to receive eternal life in the White Throne Judgment and will then be burnt up alive in the Lake of Fire and their lives permanently extinguished. This is the second and permanent death.

SCRIPTURES

Religions have various misconceptions about death, life after death and about an immortal soul. The Bible tells us that death is like sleep (Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). There is no conscious awareness of anything in death (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Psalm 6:5) In the Bible resurrection means being raised from the dead to life again.

God says He has the power to kill and to make alive (Deuteronomy 32:39; I Samuel 2:6). He can raise a human to physical life as demonstrated in John 11:43-44 when Lazarus was raised to physical life and Matthew 27:52-53 when many were raised to physical life, or spirit life as Jesus was resurrected (Matthew 28:6-7).

Man does not have an immortal soul. Ezekiel 18:4, 20 tell us “The soul that sins, it shall die.” There is no conscious immortal soul in a human body which leaves at death to either go to heaven and live in bliss or be tortured forever in hell. These concepts of an immortal soul or going to heaven or hell originated in false pagan religions and mainstream Christianity has misread or misapplied scriptures in the Bible to claim support for them.

All humans who have died will be raised to life again. John 5:28-29 tell us that “all who are in the graves” will be resurrected. Those who have done good will be resurrected to life, meaning eternal life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation, meaning eternal death. Daniel 12:2-3 state the same thing. Paul tells us that there is an order to the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23-24, “Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” which is the first resurrection).

John the apostle mentioned all the three resurrections in Revelation 20. Let’s consider each of these resurrections.

Revelation 20:4-6 mentions the *First resurrection* to eternal life by name: “And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

1 Corinthians 15:50-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 describe how the righteous dead are resurrected to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ to earth. It is called the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35) because it is to eternal life to rule with Jesus Christ during His 1,000-year (millennial) reign.

Salvation or eternal life is a gift of God. But during the millennium, each person is rewarded according to his works (Matthew 16:27), meaning that the person is given responsibilities of ruling in God’s kingdom according to how much the person grew in character and God’s way of life during his physical life as illustrated in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

Revelation 20:5, 11-13 mention the *Second resurrection*, “5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished... 11 And I saw a great white throne [that’s why it is also called the Great White Throne Judgment], and him that sat on it...12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

The second resurrection takes place at the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints and is known as the Great White Throne Judgment. The books from which the resurrected are judged are the books of the Bible to which their understanding is opened to give them their first chance for salvation to qualify to have their names written in the Book of Life, which is the book of the saved. These people are not already judged to be condemned to death, but will be evaluated according to their works, that is, how they live their lives from then on from what they learn from the Bible.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 shows this is a resurrection to physical life. Matthew 11:20-24; 12:41-42 provide examples of people in Jesus’s days, from Sodom and Gomorrah, from Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba who will all be in the resurrection indicating that all human beings who have ever lived and did not receive their chance for salvation will be resurrected.

Isaiah 65:20 indicates that a period of 100 years has been allotted for the White Throne Judgment: “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 a hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.”

2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4 tell us that God is not willing that any should perish, desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth, repent and be saved. However, even with their understanding opened to the truth and given sufficient opportunity to repent and live by God’s laws, some will still refuse to do so and willfully reject God’s offer of salvation.

All those who were called during the first 6,000 years of human history, or during the 1,000 years of God’s Kingdom but failed to develop God’s holy righteous character, willfully rejected God’s offer of salvation, meaning they did not qualify to receive eternal life, will be resurrected to a physical life. This is the THIRD RESURRECTION. They will join those who failed to qualify to receive eternal life in the White Throne Judgment and will then be incinerated alive in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15) and their lives permanently extinguished. This is the second and permanent death (Revelation 21:8). They will be as if they never existed. They are not tormented forever in the Lake of Fire which is the common teaching about hell fire. It is called the second death because they die and are not tortured forever.

Without fail all sin produces pain and suffering. If those who refused to repent continued living forever, they would continue to be a source of pain and suffering for all those they come in contact with. That’s why the just punishment for the incorrigible who refuse to repent and change is permanent death.

Hebrews 9:27 tells us “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...” That requires every human being who has died to be resurrected so that they can be judged after receiving knowledge of the truth.

CHAPTER 14

BELIEF 14 – MILITARY SERVICE AND WAR

Church of God believes that its members are forbidden by God’s commandments to voluntarily engage in military service because we are forbidden to take human life directly or indirectly. It is forbidden by the sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13, “You shall not murder.”

Jesus taught His disciples, “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either” (Luke 6:27–29). Jesus stated one of the great commandments when He said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). And the apostle Paul said, "Love does no harm to a neighbor" (Romans 13:10).

James the brother of Jesus addressed the motivation for fighting and war in James 4:1-3, “4 From where do wars and fighting come among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. 3 You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.”

In His trial before Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight..." (John 18:36).

God’s Church is a spiritual nation as mentioned in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...” God the Father “has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...”(Colossians 1:13). Our citizenship is now in heaven (Philippians 3:20) We now represent the Kingdom of God as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20) though living in earthly kingdoms. Therefore, we do not participate in earthly warfare.

If Christians in God’s Church were to take up arms and fight in war in the armies of their respective countries, they would be fighting and killing each other. And God’s true Church has members in most countries. This is contrary to Christ’s teaching that His disciples are to be characterized by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). As Christians, we are to love even our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Matthew 5:43-44). We are also instructed not to avenge ourselves because vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19).

In 2 Timothy 2:3-4, Christians are instructed “3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life [which includes participating in nations’ wars], that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” As Christians, our warfare is spiritual, not with flesh and blood (2 Corinthians 10:3) but with wicked spirits [ Satan and the demons] in high places (Ephesians 6:12). This means that we obey God’s laws under all circumstances. When man’s laws conflict with God’s laws, we “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29.)

A person in the military is not free to decide what he can or cannot do. He may be asked to take human life or violate God’s other laws. That’s why members are advised not to come under military authority and are advised to be conscientious objectors concerning military service and war. History of God’s Church in the USA shows that from the American Revolution, in the two World Wars and later conflicts, members of the Church of God have consistently been conscientious objectors against joining the military.

CHAPTER 15

BELIEF 15 – ISRAEL AND GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

God’s Church believes that to demonstrate His righteousness and faithfulness, God made incredible promises to Abraham, the father of the faithful, and has fulfilled them all. His purpose was to demonstrate that He makes promises to human beings and has the power to faithfully fulfill them in every precise detail so that they can believe and trust Him that He will faithfully fulfill His promise of salvation and eternal life to all of humanity as His sons and daughters.

God’s promises to Abraham were passed on by him to his son Issac who passed on Abraham’s promises to his son Jacob whose name was changed to ISRAEL by God (Genesis 32:28). God fulfilled His promises to Abraham through the descendants of Israel.

These are the promises God made to Abraham which have been fulfilled and or are being fulfilled or will be fulfilled in the future.

**God’s Promises to Abraham**

God appeared to Abraham and gave him a command and a new plan for his life. This is recorded in Genesis 12:1-5 (NKJV):

“1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So, they came to the land of Canaan.”

Note that all peoples on earth shall be blessed materially and spiritually through Abraham’s descendants.

Abraham was completely obedient to God and did not question why God asked him to go to Canaan. He did not argue with God to bless him in the land where he was rather than asking him to go to a strange land. He simply obeyed God’s instructions and departed.

God later began to add more details to His promises. Genesis 13:16 adds (NIV): “16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.” This means descendants of Abraham will increase greatly in population.

God then further expanded the scope of His promises to Abraham in Genesis 17:1-7 (NKJV): “1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless [“be perfect” as translated in the KJV]. 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." 3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. Also, I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Now the promises include instead of one nation, many nations being formed from the descendants of Abraham, and him becoming an ancestor of kings. Also, God promised him all the land of Canaan in which he was a stranger.

Later when Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, God’s promises to him became unconditional. The account is stated in Genesis 22:11-12, 15 -18 (NKJV): “11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me…15 Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-- 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate [the translation could be gates because possessing the gate of each enemy would be many gates] of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

This time the promise of Abraham’s descendants possessing the gates, meaning narrow land and sea passages of access to enemies’ lands and strategic islands around the world is added.

**Promises to Abraham Passed on to Isaac and Jacob**

God then reconfirmed His covenant or unconditionally binding agreement [meaning Abraham had to do nothing more, but God was binding Himself to do His part and perform His promises to Abraham] with Abraham’s son Isaac and his descendants in Genesis 26:1-5. Then in Genesis 27:26-29, 28:1-4, 10-14, 25:9-12, the covenant and the promises were reconfirmed with Abraham’s grandson Jacob.

In confirmation of God’s promises to Jacob, many additional interesting details are revealed. First, Jacob received the birthright, which naturally belongs to the firstborn. Esau the firstborn sold the birthright to his younger brother Jacob for bread and stew of lentils.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains that the birthright was "the right belonging naturally to the firstborn son...Such a person ultimately became the head of the family, the line being continued through him. As firstborn he inherited a double portion of the paternal estate...The firstborn was responsible for...exercising authority over the household as a whole" (1979, Vol. 1, "Birthright," pp. 515-516).

Isaac pronounced the following blessing on his son Jacob in Genesis 27:28-29 (NKJV): “28 Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you and blessed be those who bless you!"

Isaac also let Jacob know that the promises of Abraham were being passed on to him in Genesis 28:3-4 (NRSV): “3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples. 4 May he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham." Here Jacob is promised that his descendants will become a company of peoples, meaning many nations.

God then revealed through Jacob what the birthright and the blessing entailed in Genesis 28:14 (NKJV): “Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God promised that peoples and nations would serve the descendants of Jacob and bow down to them, meaning they will be the foremost nations on earth. They would spread around the world in all directions, north, south, east and west, from the Middle East. They would multiply greatly in numbers, as the dust of the earth. These are not idle words. When we consider what God has in store for humanity for eternity in the universe, descendants of Jacob will literally multiply in numbers as the dust of the earth and the stars in heaven.

**Jacob Passes on God’s Promises to his Twelve Sons**

Before Jacob’s twelve sons, God had passed on His promises to Abraham to one son Isaac, preferring him over the other son Ishmael. Then Isaac passed on Abraham’s promises to his son Jacob instead of his older son Esau. But then God began to pass on Abraham’s promises collectively to all the twelve sons of Jacob. Among the twelve sons of Jacob, God chose out two sons for special national blessings.

In Genesis 35:11-12 (NKJV) God promises Jacob: “Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." Here God promises Jacob that a great nation and a company or commonwealth of nations would proceed from him.

That part of God’s promise Jacob then passed on to his two grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of his son Joseph in Genesis 48:14-19 (NKJV): “14 Then Israel [Jacob’s other name] stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, 16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." 17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

So, God’s promise to Jacob that a great nation and a commonwealth of nations would proceed from him is conferred by him on his son Joseph’s two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. This way, the birthright that conferred a double portion of the paternal estate was given to Joseph because each of his sons became the separate tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. However, not all dimensions of the promises to Abraham would go to Joseph. Judah received a very important promise of great physical and spiritual dimension.

Through Jacob God prophesied in Genesis 49:10 “the scepter [ruler’s staff] shall not depart from Judah.” That prophecy pointed to the dynasty of Israel’s future king David, a descendant of Judah, and also to Jesus, a descendant of Judah and King David as the Messiah, and ruler of the earth as King of Kings.

1 Chronicles 5:2 clarifies these two promises: “…Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.” Thus, the birthright promise of great material blessings and to become a great nation and a company or Commonwealth of Nations went to the descendants of Joseph, but the promise of rulership went to the descendants of Judah.

**Details of Promises to Joseph and Judah**

When Jacob was close to death, he called his twelve sons together and prophesied what would happen to descendants of each of them in the last days, meaning our time. These blessings provide more details on the birthright promise to Joseph.

Genesis 49:1, “1 And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.” Then Genesis 49:22-26 (*New Century Version*) state: “22 "Joseph is like a grapevine that produces much fruit, a healthy vine watered by a spring, whose branches grow over the wall. 23 Archers attack him violently and shoot at him angrily, 24 but he aims his bow well. His arms are made strong, and his strength from the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. 25 Your father's God helps you. God Almighty blesses you. He blesses you with rain from above, with water from springs below, with many babies born to your wives, and many young ones born to your animals. 26 The blessings of your father are greater than the blessings of the oldest mountains, greater than the good things of the long-lasting hills. May these blessings rest on the head of Joseph, on the forehead of the one who was separated from his brothers!”

These prophetic blessings pronounced on Joseph's descendants "in the last days" mean that they will live in a very fertile, well-watered highly fruitful land. They will be a people “whose branches run over the wall” means they will expand their territory by being a colonizing people. At times they will be attacked by their enemies, but they will remain strong and victorious through God’s miraculous intervention and help.

Their population will continue to grow steadily, enjoying blessings of great herds of livestock, bumper crops due to climate favorable for agriculture, and extensive mineral resources to support a robust economy. They will receive these blessings "in the last days," meaning in our time.

God’s promise of the scepter [or kingship] to Judah would be fulfilled through the descendants of King David. After David planned to build a temple for God, He made a covenant with David which provides details of the promise of that kingship as stated in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (NKJV): “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name [which was fulfilled by David’s son King Solomon], and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." Here God promised David that his dynasty would last forever.

*Summary of God’s Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*

God’s promises and blessings to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah and King David can now be listed as follows:

1) Jacob or Israel will be a father of many nations. Each of the tribes of Israel has become a nation. Joseph’s son Ephraim has become a commonwealth of nations (Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and whites of South Africa) and son Manasseh has become the greatest single nation on earth, the USA.

2) God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob “you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This simply means that those nations who work with the descendants of Jacob will be blessed and those who don’t and curse them will be cursed.

This also puts an obligation on the descendants of Jacob to be a blessing to other nations and not a curse to them. That means they are required to help other nations to grow their wealth and prosperity or help them when in distress.

God also promised to curse those who curses them. Recently nations have formed a confederacy to commit genocide on the descendants of Israel which means to curse them. In doing so, they have cursed themselves. I don’t know in what form yet but rest assured that curses from God are coming on them.

3) God promised incredible material blessings of resources of the earth and riches to all of Jacob’s descendants, but primarily to Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh in the last days.

4) The land of Canaan, or what is called Israel today is promised to the descendants of Jacob.

5) God promised to increase their population. The USA is the third most populous nation on earth and the population of British Commonwealth nations would make them the tenth most populous nation on earth, equal to Russia.

6 Descendants of Jacob would possess the gates or narrow sea and land passages of their enemies.

7) God promised that peoples and nations would serve the descendants of Jacob and bow down to them, meaning they will be the foremost nations on earth.

8) The descendants of Jacob, particularly Joseph would be a colonizing people. That’s also how nations served the descendants of Jacob and bowed down to them.

9) All nations would be blessed materially and spiritually through the descendants of Jacob. That means they would be the engines of the world’s economy, and salvation and the knowledge of salvation and the true religion would go out to the world through them. They have fulfilled that promise through Jesus Christ the descendant of King David being the Messiah and the Bible being translated into almost every language in the world and distributed at very low cost by Britons and Americans.

10) In the last days enemies will attack the descendants of Joseph, meaning the USA and British Commonwealth nations, but God will help them. God preserved us through two world wars and has preserved us miraculously through a total genocide attempt in the past year.

11) The chief ruler would come from Judah through king David, with an everlasting dynasty. King Charles rules in Britain as a direct descendant of King David. Jesus Christ, also a descendant of David will rule for eternity.

**Fulfillment of the Promises**

All these promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were major prophecies. To see how all these incredible promises have been fulfilled, we must first identify who the modern descendants of Jacob are. Fortunately, various Church of God organizations have published excellent books and booklets on the subject. For comprehensive proof that white Americans are mainly the modern descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the son of Jacob or Israel, and the British are the modern descendants of Manasseh’s brother Ephraim, the reader may refer to the following six free books or booklets:

1. *“The United States and Britain in Prophecy*”; by Herbert W. Armstrong, available from the Philadelphia Church of God at www.pcog.org.

2. *“The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy”;* published by the United Church of God, available at www.ucg.org.

3. *“The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future*,” eBook published by the United Church of God, available at its web site www.ucg.org under booklets.

4. *“America and Britain in Prophecy”*, by David C. Pack; published by the Restored Church of God, available at www.rcg.org.

5. *“The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*”; published by the Living Church of God, available at www.lcg.org.

6. *“Jews Behold Your God”,* author’s free eBook, available at www.ChurchOfGodMessage.com.

For detailed proof of where the other tribes of Israel are settled, the best source is *“America and Britain in Prophecy”* by David Pack. From his book, here is where the modern descendants of the other tribes of Israel can mainly be found:

Joseph’s son Manasseh – USA. Whites in the USA have come from almost all white nations. How can they all be descendants of Manasseh. The answer is found in Amos 9:9, “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.” Descendants of Manasseh were sifted and herded through all nations and brought to the USA.

Joseph’s son Ephraim – British Commonwealth nations of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and whites in South Africa mixed with the Dutch Boers who are descended from the tribe of Zebulun, which is settled in Holland.

Reuben – France

Simeon and Levi – Prophesied to be dispersed among all the tribes of Israel. Largest portion of Levi or the priestly tribe lives among the Jews.

Judah – The Jews worldwide, with a branch in Ireland.

Zebulun – Holland

Issachar – Finland

Dan – Primarily Ireland and Denmark

Gad – Switzerland

Asher – Belgium

Naphtali – Sweden

Benjamin – Norway, Iceland and among the Jews

[Much proof of the modern identity of the twelve tribes of Israel has been added by the Israeli scholar Yair Davidy in his books “The Tribes: The Israelite Origins of Western Peoples”, “Ephraim” and “Lost Israelite Identity.”]

Here is how God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been fulfilled in the American, British and Jewish people.

1) God promised incredible material blessings of resources of the earth and riches. This promise has been fulfilled in the descendants of Jacob in our time which are the people of the USA, British Commonwealth Nations, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Scandinavia, the Benelux countries and the Jews.

2) The nations of the earth would be blessed through them both materially and spiritually. The world has indeed been materially blessed through them by trading with them, and the British have been the engine of the world’s economy in the 19th and the Americans in the 20th century. The industrial revolution started in Britain. The French too made significant contributions.

These blessings also obligate the descendants of Jacob to be a blessing to other nations and not a curse to them. That means they are required to help other nations to grow their wealth and prosperity or help them when in distress.

The world has also been spiritually blessed through them because the Savior Jesus Christ was a descendant of Judah, the son of Jacob. In addition, the knowledge of the true God has been preserved through them and propagated by the British and the Americans by translating the Bible in virtually every language on earth in our time and making it available to the world at subsidized rates. Knowledge of salvation would not be available without the Bible.

It is important to bear in mind that the promise of salvation is not by race only to the descendants of Israel but to all of humanity. All in the world will be called by God to receive His holy spirit to offer them a chance for salvation. We become children of God in Christ through the holy spirit (Romans 8:9, 14-17) and spiritually become “Abraham’s seed “and heirs of salvation (Galatians 3:28), and “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

3) God also promised to bless those who bless them and seek their welfare, and curse those who curse them and seek their destruction. When the catastrophes that are soon to engulf the entire world are all over, we will see that this promise will have been fulfilled, and we will continue to see its fulfillment throughout God’s Kingdom into eternity.

4) The patriarchs were promised that their descendants would multiply as the stars and the sand on the seashore in number. They already number more than 500 million today. Besides descendants of the Israelite nations, children of Abraham include the Arabs, the Turks and some other eastern nations descended from Abraham’s children through his wife Keturah. But true fulfillment of this prophecy will go on throughout eternity.

5) The promises included the land where the patriarchs roamed. The Jews today possess that land. But the true fulfillment of this prophecy will be in God’s Kingdom when descendants of Jacob will possess all the land between the Nile and the Euphrates rivers, as promised in Genesis 15:18. Eventually Israelites will fill much of the world with fruit, meaning with their population (Isaiah 27:6, “6 He [God] shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.”)

6) In Genesis 17, when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord changed his name to Abraham and promised that he would become the father of many nations and of kings. Today, the Israelite nations, the Jews, the Arabs, the Turks and many other nations we may not fully know are all descendants of Abraham, including obviously all their royalty. So, this promise has been fulfilled.

7) Abraham’s promises were passed on to his son Isaac, who then passed on the promises to his son Jacob and not his brother Esau. Many more prophetic details were further added to the promises. Isaac pronounced the following blessing on Jacob in Genesis 27:28-29: “28 Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren and let your mother's sons bow down to you.”

Here instead of merely the land of Canaan, the promise of land is expanded to include the fatness of the earth, meaning lands that are richest in agriculture and mineral resources of the earth. Just look at the lands possessed by the British, American, French, Irish, Swiss, Scandinavian and Benelux peoples to see how this promise has been dramatically fulfilled. And nations of the world have bowed down to and served the British through their colonial empire.

8) Then Isaac also let Jacob know in Genesis 28:3(NRSV) that his descendants would become a company of peoples, meaning many nations. Jacob passed on these promises to his 12 sons. The company of peoples promise has been fulfilled in the nations descended from the 12 tribes of Israel in Europe, and the Jews worldwide.

9) When passing on these promises to his sons, Jacob singled out Joseph and his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim that they would become a great nation and a commonwealth of nations. Their descendants are the peoples of the USA and the British Commonwealth nations. There has been no other single greatest nation on earth than America and the greatest Commonwealth of Nations than the British Commonwealth that have ever been closely allied before in the history of mankind.

Joseph was given the birthright of the firstborn which is a double portion of a father’s inheritance. Joseph’s two sons Manasseh and Ephraim became two tribes, each receiving their separate inheritance, thus obtaining a double portion of their father’s inheritance.

The birthright people were also promised they would be famous on earth and possess the richest resources of the earth. At the zenith of their power, the British and the American people constituted only 4% of the world’s population but possessed about 70% of the world’s agricultural and mineral resources.

10) When Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, God’s promises to him became unconditional. In Genesis 22:11-12, 15 -18 the additional promise that Abraham’s descendants would possess the gates, meaning narrow land and sea passages of access to enemies’ lands was added. This incredible promise has been fulfilled in the British and American peoples who at the zenith of their power have possessed almost every major gate and strategic island on land and sea such as the Suez and Panama canals, the Rock of Gibraltar, the Khyber Pass, Hong Kong, the islands of Malta, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Singapore, the Falklands Islands and virtually every other gate around the world. Outcome of the Second World War hinged on the possession of these strategic gates. Most of the world’s commerce also passes through these gates. Even the Strait of Bosporus has been possessed by the Turks, the descendants of Esau, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham.

11) In prophesying the future of Joseph’s descendants, Jacob stated in Genesis 49:22: “22 Joseph is like a grapevine that produces much fruit, a healthy vine watered by a spring, whose branches grow over the wall.” A people "whose branches grow over the wall," or beyond their original borders, certainly means that they will be a colonizing people. There have never been such a colonizing people in the history of man as the British and American peoples. Thus, this prophecy stands fulfilled about 3,500 years after it was given.

12) In the last days enemies will attack the descendants of Joseph, meaning the USA and British Commonwealth nations, but God will help them. God preserved them miraculously through two world wars and recent attempts at genocide at the hands of German masqueraders (people of German ancestry living in our countries) in collusion with Germans.

13) And finally, the promise of the scepter, meaning the chief ruler would come from Judah through King David, with an everlasting dynasty. Today, King Charles of Britain sits on that throne in unbroken dynasty from King David. In God’s kingdom, Jesus Christ, also a descendant of King David, will be the chief ruler over the earth, occupying that throne for eternity. What an incredible way for God to fulfill His promise and continue to have this prophecy come true throughout eternity?

From the founding of ancient Israel as a nation after the Exodus from Egypt around 1443 BCE till God began to bestow His blessings on Israel around 1800 A.D., there has been a time gap of more than 3,240 years. God gave many detailed and incredibly intricate prophecies to chart the future course of Israel and Judah after coming out of Egypt till these prophecies would be fulfilled in these “last days”. It makes for a story more thrilling than fiction and shows God’s Almighty power in fulfilling all the prophecies over a period of more than 3,000 years. Details can be found in my free eBook *“Jews Behold Your God”* and the free books and booklets offered by the various Churches of God as mentioned earlier.

A people can fulfill one or two prophecies by mere coincidence, but when a people fulfill hundreds of prophecies, then probabilistically we can be absolutely certain of the identity of those people as the ones whom the prophecies were written about. If Britain and America fulfill hundreds of prophecies about Ephraim and Manasseh and Israel, then there can be no doubt in our minds that they are in fact the descendants of those patriarchs.

CHAPTER 16

BELIEF 16: THE CHURCH

The biblical name of God’s true Church is the “Church of God” stated in 12 places in the New Testament, in both singular form as “Church of God” and in plural form as “Churches of God, including in Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 1 Timothy 3:15. It is a body of believers who have received God’s holy spirit after water baptism and laying on of hands by God’s true ministers from the Church of God, and are led by the holy spirit. It is a spiritual entity and not a building.

God’s Church started on the day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. On that day when the disciples were assembled together on Jesus’s instructions to remain in Jerusalem, God’s holy spirit was poured out on them (Acts 2:1-4; 5:32; Luke 24:49). Over the next several days God “added [disciples] to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

The mission of God’s Church for all times has been to preach the true Gospel [good news] of the coming Kingdom of God at the return of Jesus Christ to be established on all the earth as a witness unto all nations (Matthew 24:14, Mark 1:14). Preaching of the gospel will result in repentance and conversion of people whom God calls to become members of the Church of God (Mark 16:15-16, 20; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-39, 47; Romans 8:14)). The Church is to organize local congregations to feed and nourish the flock and provide for the spiritual and material needs of its members.

We are living in the very end of the end times. God has given His Church understanding of prophecies that are soon to be fulfilled which include global catastrophic events resulting in the Great Tribulation for three and a half years for the entire world. However, it is a time of the greatest trouble for the USA, British Commonwealth nations and the Jewish state of Israel (Matthew 24:21-22) and these nations have to be specifically warned about the coming global catastrophes. In the end of the end time in which we are now living, the Church’s preaching to the world is to be focused on prophecies to fulfill Revelation 10:11, “And he said to me, you must prophesy again about many peoples, and nations, and tongues [in many languages], and kings.”

SCRIPTURES

The word Church is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* which means a body of called out ones to assemble together; or an “assembly or congregation of called out ones.”

No one can become a member of God’s Church on his own. God initiates the call by opening a person’s mind to understand His truth preached by His Church, leading to repentance and baptism for the remission of sins and receiving the gift of God’s holy spirit (Acts 2:38) to become a member of God’s Church. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44) and unless "it has been granted" by the Father (John 6:65).

Indwelling of God’s holy spirit identifies God’s people (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) and its members as “living stones...[are] being built up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5), or a “holy temple” as a dwelling place for God in the spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22). The Church is also referred to as the “body of Christ” with Jesus Christ as the living Head of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 1:18).

God calls His New Testament Church "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Peter 2:9). It is also called the "general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23) and "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16), meaning the Church is God’s spiritual Israel. In prophecies in the Old Testament, some of the prophecies concerning Jerusalem and Zion apply to God’s true Church. These references to God’s Church are important to understanding prophecy.

In the false concept of replacement theology, some in mainstream Christianity believe that all prophecies concerning Israel apply to the Church. That is not true. Most of the prophecies concerning Israel or House of Israel and House of Judah apply to the modern physical descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, primarily the USA, British Commonwealth nations and Israel and not to the Church. Some prophecies concerning Jerusalem and most concerning Zion apply to God’s true Church, mainly in the end time. In some prophecies, God’s Church in the end time is referred to as “the daughter of Zion” (2 Kings 19:21; Isaiah 16:1; 37:22; 62:11).

Jesus Christ is called the first of the firstfruits because He was the first to be resurrected to eternal life. All people whom God has called during the first 6,000 years of human history, including the patriarchs and the prophets, most of them after the Church began after Jesus’s ascension, are called the firstfruits. Those who qualify to receive eternal life will be resurrected to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ to earth. They are called the firstfruits of God because they are firstfruits of God’s harvest of humans to eternal life as His literal sons and daughters.

God of the Old Testament was the husband of physical Israel (Jeremiah 31:32), but they broke the covenant by disobeying Him. At present, the Church is betrothed to Jesus Christ but will become His bride at His return at the beginning of God’s Kingdom. Thus, the covenant between Jesus Christ and the Church will be a marriage covenant. Human marriage has been modeled after that marriage covenant (Ephesians 5:22-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7, 9).

God’s true Church is a mother to its begotten children, the baptized members. Just as a begotten child receives physical nourishment from its mother in the womb and grows till birth, a child of God begotten through God’s holy spirit receives spiritual nourishment in the Church and grows spiritually till he is ready to be born as God’s literal immortal son at the resurrection. Thus, human marriage and physical birth of a newborn is modeled after humans being born into God’s family as His literal sons and daughters.

Jesus called His Church “little flock” in Luke 12:32 because till the return of Jesus Christ, only a few have been called and God’s true Church will always be small in numbers, unlike mainstream Christianity’s Churches which number in the millions. However, Jesus promised that His Church would never die out (Matthew 16:18) and that there will always be some true members of His Church living and obeying His laws. He promised that He would never leave or forsake members of His Church (Hebrews 13:5) and will be with them “even to the end of the age” [meaning till His return to earth which will end man’s age] (Matthew 28:19-20.)

At the return of Jesus Christ, all those who were called into the Church during the first 6,000 years and have qualified will be resurrected to eternal life. They will constitute God’s "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Peter 2:9), that will rule over the kingdoms of the world as kings and priests (Revelation 2:26; Revelation 3:21; Revelation 5:10; Daniel 7:22; Daniel 7:26-27).

CHAPTER 17

BELIEF 17: TITHES AND OFFERINGS

God’s Church believes in tithing (which means to “give a tenth of” one’s income) to honor God, to acknowledge that He is our Creator and has provided all human beings the means to make a living. Tithing is a law which God has instituted to provide the means to serve Him by preaching the gospel of salvation and the soon coming kingdom of God, to spiritually care for the Church, help the needy and make attending God’s festivals (seven annual holy days) possible. In addition to tithes, God also requires His people to give freewill offerings (not a fixed percentage of income but the amount is freely chosen by the one giving the offering), especially during the annual holy days, according to the blessings received during the year.

SCRIPTURES

Church members are required to give a “tithe of all the increase” in Deuteronomy 14:22, “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year,” meaning the income produced from agriculture, property, business or employment.

God reminds us in the Scriptures that everything belongs to God. Psalm 24:1 says: “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” (Repeated in I Corinthians 10:26, 28; see also Job 41:11; Psalm 50:12; Haggai 2:8).). In Exodus 19:5 God says, “...all the earth is Mine.” Then in Deuteronomy 8:18 Moses instructed Israel "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth."

Tithing was codified as a law as part of the covenant God made with ancient Israel in the time of Moses. However, before Israel became a nation, people faithful to God tithed. After Abraham rescued his nephew Lot by defeating a coalition of Assyrians and an Elamite king (ancestors of the Persians), he tithed of the spoils of the battle to Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, who was actually the Word who later came to earth as Jesus Christ (Genesis 14:18-22), recognizing that God is the “possessor of heaven and earth” Who gave him the victory. By tithing we worshipfully recognize that, first and foremost, God is the source of our existence, blessings and our provider.

Then Abraham’s grandson Jacob followed his example by promising to God “Of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth [or tithe] to You" (Genesis 28:20-22) when God’s promises to Abraham and Isaac were reconfirmed to him. Certainly, he learnt of the practice from his father Isaac who also tithed.

The practice of tithing was later written into law. Numbers 18:21-23, 26-28 state: “21... behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation...23...it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24 But the tithes of the children of Israel...I have given to the Levites to inherit...26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, when you take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up...a tenth part of the tithe...28...to Aaron the priest.”

The tribe of Levi was separated from the other tribes to offer services in the Tabernacle/Temple. People in Israel paid tithes to them and the Levites paid tithes to the priestly family of Aaron which performed religious services in the Tabernacle/Temple. The priests paid their tithes for the upkeep, maintenance and other expenses for the temple.

God promises to bless the tithe payer. Prov 3:9-10 says, “9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.”

When the Jews returned to their land from the Babylonian captivity, they neglected tithing. God rebuked the nation in Malachi 3:8-12, “8 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the Lord of hosts.”

Did you notice, God here mentions “tithes and offerings.” Thus, God expects His people to give offerings over and above their tithes. Offerings could be given to God at any time, but they are given especially during the seven annual holy days or festivals. The amount of the offering is determined by the individual according to the blessings he has received from God during the year (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

Jesus in His ministry upheld the practice of giving tithes and offerings when he rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin [garden herbs] and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Jesus here confirmed that tithing should be diligently practiced in minute details along with the more important or “weightier matters of the Law.”

*What are the Tithes Used For*

What are the tithes to be used for? In ancient Israel, the tithes were paid to the tribe of Levi, one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Levites paid their tithe to the priests the descendants of Aaron the high priest, also of the tribe of Levi. The priests paid their tithes which were put into the temple treasury and used for temple related expenses.

The priests and Levites provided religious services and instructions to the people and served in the temple according to their courses. They were the most educated people in ancient Israel and educated the rest of the tribes. In addition, they were responsible for administering justice in Israel.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) wrote in the final book of his life that he authored, *“Mystery of the Ages”* on page 322: “Today’s governments demand up to 40, 50, and even 90 percent in inheritance taxes, income taxes, hidden taxes, federal, state, county, school board and city taxes.

“But God requires only ten percent. And out of that ten percent will be financed the entire governmental, educational and spiritual leadership of the whole earth.”

Clearly the purpose of the tithe was to finance the entire governmental, educational, religious, legal and justice systems in the nation. This was possible when God was the king of ancient Israel. But when Israel asked God for a king like the other nations around them, God warned them through Samuel the prophet in I Samuel 8:9, 15, 17: “…you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them…He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants…He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.”

So, the purpose of the tithe in ancient Israel was to finance the entire governmental, justice, legal, educational and religious systems in the nation. But when a king ruled, he took another tenth of their income as tax to finance the army and other governmental functions.

Once Jesus started the Church, the tithes were to be paid to the ministers in the Church for financing God’s work of preaching the gospel to all nations, making disciples and caring for the disciples who were added to the Church.

God’s Church believes that HWA was the end time prophesied Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6, “5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”) who was sent to restore all things as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 17:10-11, “10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things.”

“Restore all things” means a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah will be sent by God to restore all true doctrines or fundamental beliefs and correct worship of God to His true Church. That’s what HWA did in God’s Church. That means all his judgments, including those concerning tithing, are still binding on the Church.

MORE THAN ONE TITHE

The Bible actually describes more than one tithe. The first tithe in ancient Israel was used to finance the entire governmental, educational, justice and religious systems.

God’s true Church also keeps God’s seven annual holy days or feasts as described earlier. Out of these holy days, God’s Church keeps the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day at gatherings in special places throughout the world. Members travel to these festival sites and keep these two feasts for a total of 8 days. They have to meet their travel, lodging and meal expenses at these feasts. Entire families of the members keep these feasts together. In addition, we have special meals at the other feasts.

Members of God’s Church set aside a separate10% of their income, called the second tithe, to finance these feasts, just like the ancient Israelites did. This is commanded in Deuteronomy 14:22-27, “22 You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. 23 And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. 24 But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, 25 then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. 26 And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. 27 You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.”

Members and their families spend this money on themselves and share with others less fortunate and is not sent to the Church, except a tenth of this tenth (or 1%) is sent to help finance rentals of meeting halls and other facilities during the Feast of Tabernacles and other Feasts.

Members in the Church of God are also required to set aside another tenth, called the third tithe, every third year to help the poor and needy. In a seven-year cycle, this third tithe applies to the third and sixth years. No third tithe is set aside in the seventh year. The commandment for the third tithe is stated in Deuteronomy 14:28-29, “28 “At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”

In modern times, particularly in western countries, national governments institute mandatory taxes for social welfare and care for the poor. Under such circumstances is a Christian obligated to pay the third tithe as well? The position of the United Church of God (UCG) is stated in its booklet titled *“What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?”:*

“The Council of Elders has resolved that where governments provide programs, the intent and purpose of which is to provide for the needs of those that the biblical third tithe was designed to assist, and that where such programs are funded by an annual rate of taxation greater than the biblical third tithe, members are not obligated to pay what amounts to an additional third tithe to the Church.

“The Council of Elders further resolves that since there will always be members of the Church whose needs will not be adequately provided for by national governments social programs, and since the clear example in Scripture is that the Church care for its members in need, that those members of the Church who are able are encouraged to contribute to the Church Assistance Fund so that the biblical injunction to care for the needy within the Church can be fulfilled.”

I agree that is a fair statement. I will provide my own experience with the third tithe and my judgment on how this command should be implemented.

HOLY DAY OFFERINGS

In addition to the three tithes, God also requires members of His Church to make freewill offerings on each of the seven holy days. Each member should contribute according to the blessing he has received during the year. This command is recorded in Deuteronomy 16:16-17: “Three times a year [correct translation should be “three seasons in the year during which all the seven annual holy days are celebrated] all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses; at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.”

Thus, during the seven annual holy days, members of God’s Church contribute whatever they wish for furthering God’s work of preaching the gospel to all the world.

HWA’S JUDGMENTS CONCERNING TITHING

Mr. Armstrong made judgments concerning implementing the tithing system in God’s Church which are binding on Church members. But the Church has had to make further judgments in implementing the tithing system in high tax countries. And God requires Christians to pay their full taxes.

Some countries have tax rates as high as 50-70% and some had marginal tax rates as high as 90%. Clearly, a rich man with $1 million in annual income in a third tithe year cannot pay first, second and third tithes amounting to 30% of gross income, after paying say 80% in his country’s income tax first. He’ll have no money left over for his family’s living expenses or even pay the three tithes after paying taxes. In such cases, the ministry had to make judgments to suggest how much the person should pay in tithes.

Let’s take a more realistic example in an American setting. Suppose a family with husband, wife and two children earn $80,000 gross in annual income, say, in a state like Wisconsin where I lived for 16 years. Suppose the family gives 3% of its income in freewill offerings during the holy days. Then in a third tithe year, the family’s take home income after taxes would be $65,610, an effective tax rate of 10.87% besides 7.65% in social security taxes. The three tithes and offerings would total $26,400. The family would be left with $39,210 to meet all its living expenses, including rent/mortgage, car expenses, all living expenses, needs of the children and other requests for money from the Church such as building fund, local Church requirements and possibly other charitable giving in the community. Very little could be saved for retirement. In a non-third-tithe year, the family would be left with $46,786 to meet all its expenses and save what it can for retirement.

For a single person whose salary was $56,000 (that’s what I earned in one particular year), in a third tithe year, the take home pay would be $45,135, with an effective tax rate of 11.75% and 7.65% in social security taxes. The three tithes and offerings would total $18,480. The net pay to meet all expenses would be $26,655. In a non-third tithe year, the net pay would be $31,942. When I earned $56,000 about 25 years ago, federal and state taxes in Wisconsin were much higher, an average of about 17-18%, so that I was left with very little for my own living expenses. If I remember correctly, the amount left over was around $22,000 because I felt blessed and paid around 5% of gross income in offerings.

Clearly, members earning middle-class income after paying all their tithes on gross income, offerings and taxes, were reduced to poor-class families and individuals. As a single individual, because of all the tithes, offerings and taxes paid faithfully, I lived at the poverty level and was unable to save anything for retirement. But after beginning to preach the gospel in 2006, I paid the first tithe and most of the offerings to myself. The reason is that I incurred all the expenses for buying equipment and other expenses on my own and was not supported by anyone. I also paid lower 3.33% to the Church for the third “tithe.”

In ancient Israel, the tithe was used to finance the entire governmental, educational, religious, legal and justice systems in the nation. These functions were performed by the priests and Levites. I have not been able to find any statistics that show what percentage of the total population was constituted by the priests and Levites. To start with after the Exodus, they numbered only about 3% of the population. But since they did not perform military service, most likely their numbers grew over time to perhaps 8-10% of the population. However, I have not been able to find information in the Bible for unequivocal support for my statement.

Today, the Church has to finance only the religious system, because the government collects taxes for financing the other systems. Moreover, the number of paid ministers and other Church employees are only about 1-1.5% of the number of tithe-paying members in the Church. The lower percentage was appropriate in the 1970s and 1980s while the higher percentage is more appropriate after splits in the Church. Therefore, contribution of 1-1.5% of gross income should ensure salaries for Church employees equal to average earnings of members. However, the Church incurs other expenses besides ministers’ salaries such as meeting hall rentals, administrative offices, equipment, costs of media, publishing literature and potential member visits. Therefore, members should not have to pay a full 10% of their gross income to the Church as first tithe. The amount needs to be discussed, but in my judgment 3.33-5%, depending on the tax rate in the country would be more in keeping with what God wants the first tithe to be used for. Beyond ministers’ and administrative staff salaries and expenses, the rest would be available for preaching the gospel.

The reason I give a range of 3.33-5% for the first tithe is that ministers have to be adequately compensated. God’s Church selects the best men available for the job. They deserve to be compensated better than the average earnings of members. In addition, if by any chance large number of members are unemployed, or the number of paid ministers is greater than 1% of the tithe-paying members, the higher percentage of 5% could be requested. We need to remember God’s admonition to the returning Jews in Malachi 3:10, “10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house...” The ministers need to be well compensated. If not, you won’t have the best men available for the ministry or them serving wholeheartedly.

The issue of providing good income as an incentive for capable men to serve in the ministry is the same as the nation encouraging intelligent and capable men becoming doctors and dentists. Nobody wants “idiots” to become doctors because pay is low. That’s why doctors should be some of the best paid professionals.

However, healthcare is an essential service needed for every citizen. I believe it should be the government’s responsibility to provide healthcare to every citizen. A national health service is the best and most cost-effective way to do so.

Doctors in the USA have argued that they are not well paid and compare what they are paid to the compensation of the best paid CEOs of large companies, who are paid tens of millions of dollars. I hope nobody is a fool to accept this argument that each doctor must be paid a salary of more than $1 million and the best doctors paid salaries of $5 million. In that scenario, healthcare expenditures will consume more than 50% of the nation’s entire budget.

Healthcare should be available for every citizen free of cost. Doctors should be the best paid professionals to attract among the best people to the profession. The number of CEOs who get paid tens of millions of dollars annually is only in the dozens in the entire nation. And their average tenure is around 7 years. The number of doctors on the other hand is more than one million and they serve 30-50 years in their profession. When we take all large and small corporations into account, the median CEO salary is around $206,000. In 2024, Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) in the United States earned an average of $287,000, while Specialists earned an average of $404,000. Therefore, average pay of a doctor is higher than the median pay of a CEO.

With an average salary of $2 million, the doctors’ salaries would cost $2 trillion. Then there are more than 4 million nurses and millions of other hospital and medical practice staff to be paid. That’s why the doctors’ argument of the 1980s and 1990s that they are not paid adequately when compared to CEOs of top corporations is not a valid argument. Becoming a doctor is a special calling. A nation cannot compensate them as much as the top CEOs of the largest corporations. But on average they are still the best paid professionals.

The argument that applies to doctors applies also to ministers. They have to serve the entire Church of God. Therefore, many men are needed to serve in the ministry than just one man preaching as happens in a modern mega church. Leaders of mega churches keep all the offerings totaling in the millions of dollars as personal income. And they sell the gospel, charging for all their books and educational videos. But in God’s Church the gospel is to be provided free of cost to the world and many more paid ministers are required. Therefore, each minister or even top leader cannot be paid in the millions. But to attract the best available men for the job, they have to be adequately compensated above the average earnings of members.

Requirement of the second tithe for keeping God’s holy day remains unchanged. However, I see nothing in the scriptures that says ministers are not required to keep the second tithe. In an agrarian society like ancient Israel in which the Levites and priests had no land and no agricultural income, and during the holy day feasts there were enough sacrifices to provide meat for the priests and Levites, there was no need for them to keep the second tithe. Since they had no agricultural produce or income, that’s why Israelites were told not to neglect the Levites during the feasts. But today the ministers are paid a regular salary. That’s why I believe they should also keep the second tithe which will keep them humble and make them feel like the people they serve.

While I agree with the view expressed by UCG regarding the third tithe because government takes in taxes and provides welfare for the poor, there are certainly people in the Church who fall through the cracks in the government welfare system and need help sometimes in their lives. Therefore, some amount of third tithe should be given.

In this regard, I have had personal experiences from which members could benefit. I am sure other members have had similar experiences. My third tithe years have been my best years financially. I always earned more in those years and also received unexpected gifts, benefits and blessings. My experience has been that God blesses the third-tithe payer because he wants to help the poor in the Church. Because of these experiences, I have made it my practice to pay 3.33% of my income to the Church during my third tithe years, even after I started preaching the gospel myself and did not pay first tithe. IN FACT, I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO MY THIRD TITHE YEARS BECAUSE I KNOW GOD WILL BLESS ME WHEN I PAY MY THIRD TITHE. I have always used the full second tithe for keeping the holy days.

Though my suggestions are different from what was practiced in the days of HWA, they are still in line with what he instituted in the Church. They are in line with what he stated about how the first tithe will be used to fund various government functions in God’s kingdom, which now governments provide themselves. Because the tax burden is high in most countries, after paying all the tithes and offerings, members with middle-class income in western countries were reduced to living poor class lives with what was left over for personal expenses. Hence, the Church was already making judgments to reduce the amount to be paid in tithes.

Now I must share some personal experiences. I am always scared to offer any suggestions that might differ somewhat from what HWA instituted in the Church because he was sent by God to “restore all things,” including his judgments on how the Church should be governed.

Recently, an issue came up concerning voting in elections and participating in politics which I discuss in the Church’s belief concerning voting. HWA’s judgment concerning voting was that members should not vote or participate in politics. I have never disagreed with that judgment and have never voted or participated in politics in my entire life. But a situation came up recently when I had to consider whether I or members could relax that judgment temporarily because of the current situation in the USA with about 41 million Christians choosing not to vote. I prayed to God for guidance, and I believe my prayers were answered. I discuss that in the Church’s belief number 23 concerning voting and taking part in politics.

I simply tremble to differ from the judgments made by HWA. Just as I prayed to God for guidance concerning voting, I prayed to God for guidance concerning tithing as well. Just as God answered my prayer concerning voting through a dream, I believe God answered my prayers concerning tithing also through a vivid dream on July 15, 2025.

In my dream, I gave tithes and large amounts in offerings to the Church. The result was that I was unable to pay all my expenses and had to beg the Church for help. But no help was forthcoming from the Church. Then I woke up.

I believe God’s message was that one should be able to take care of one’s own and family’s needs. But one cannot disregard God’s admonition in Malachi 3:8-11 quoted earlier, “8 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Providing “meat in God’s house,” means that God’s work and salaries of ministers are adequately financed. Also, one must remember that God promises to bless the tithe-payer. In his autobiography, HWA provided many examples of how people were immediately miraculously blessed when they started giving tithes and offerings.

I also have another real-life example I faced with Joseph W. Tkach Sr, the successor appointed by HWA, and his son Joseph Tkach Jr. I knew I had been racially discriminated against. So, I went to our Church headquarters in Pasadena, CA, to ask for legal help in filing lawsuits for racial discrimination. I did not receive any help. But through a German masquerader (people of German ancestry living in white countries) Church member, the message was conveyed to me that I should give all the money I receive for racial discrimination to the Church for preaching the gospel. I seriously contemplated doing that. But I thought it through and realized that if I gave all the money to the Church, I would have to beg the Church for help if I needed it sometime. I decided it would be a very foolish thing to do, and I would not do it. This is precisely how I was guided through my dream recent dream. Of course, later the Tkaches were discovered to be German masqueraders bent on destroying the Church from within.

Today, Gerald R. Flurry (GRF), head of the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG, a splinter group from the original Worldwide Church of God) and David C. Pack (DCP), head of the Restored Church of God (another splinter group) are requiring full tithe payments from their members and are asking them to give over and above that. DCP is in fact asking members of his group to sell all they have and put the money in common for the last great effort to preach the gospel and warn the world of coming catastrophes. Some members of DCP’s group did that a few years ago and are now living in dire poverty with no help from the Church. I advise no one to make such a foolish decision ever. In PCG’s case, the information is that ministers are very well paid, but members face financial hardships.

I believe my suggestions concerning tithing are in line with the purpose for tithing. HWA also acknowledged that the tithes and offerings in ancient Israel were used to finance the entire governmental, justice, legal, educational and religious systems in the nation. Many of those functions are performed by governments today with taxes. Therefore, members should not have to pay the full tithes as the Church performs only the religious function for its members with some financial help given to needy members. We must avoid falling into the Us vs. Them mentality the develops when ministers and members follow different rules. Ministers or lay members, we are all human beings with the same needs, desires and aspirations. In the Church, we must look out for each other’s welfare.

In many mega churches in the USA today with tens of thousands of members, the leader treats the contributions by members as his personal income and feels no obligation to merely take a salary for his family and use the rest of the funds for preaching the gospel or for charitable purposes. For such leaders, preaching the gospel is mere investment to increase membership leading to greater contributions which would be greater personal income for the leader. Many such leaders are multi-millionaires.

In contrast in God’s Church, the income from tithes and offerings is considered God’s money from which the top leader and the ministry are paid salaries and expenses while the rest of the funds are used for preaching the gospel. The top leader does not accumulate huge amount of assets for his future generations like leaders of mega churches do.

As I stated, I am very fearful of making any suggestions that might be different from what HWA instituted. Concerning the ministry paying second tithes, I prayed to God to guide me, whether through a dream or otherwise as He guided me through dreams regarding voting and tithes and offerings. Since God did not communicate with me through a dream or otherwise despite prayers for many days, I am assuming that my suggestion that ministers should also pay second tithes is just and fair. Being not required to keep the same rules also generated a Us vs Them mentality in the ministry and the lay members. I believe that being required to keep the same rules keeps the ministry humble and avoids the Us vs Them mental attitude in the Church.

I also understand that the ministry were paid modest salaries during HWA’s days. Perhaps, the no second-tithe requirement judgment was made keeping that in mind, especially when requiring tithe of the second tithe to be given to headquarters provided adequate funds to finance the feasts for the ministry. But according to my observation it led to a Us vs Them unhealthy mentality. That’s why some members were not paying their tithes faithfully. But we all serve the same God and are fellow laborers in His work and have the same needs desires and aspirations. The tithing system should be fair and equitable and not generate an Us vs Them mentality.

I believe our side (white Americans of non-German ancestry) has impounded all the stock assets in U.S. companies the Germans bought in the early 2000s and is keeping them for my benefit as compensation from Germans and German masqueraders for destroying my businesses and unprecedented discrimination against me for over 40 years in the USA. I am allowed to give some of it away. When I have access to that money, the Church will have more than enough money for preaching its warning message and the gospel (good news) of the soon coming Kingdom of God. There will be no need for members to pay tithes to meet ministers’ salaries or for preaching the gospel, no matter what the costs.

Moreover, in the Internet age the cost of preaching the gospel has reduced considerably.

CHAPTER 18

BELIEF 18 – RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST TO ESTABLISH GOD’S KINGDOM

God’s Church believes that Jesus Christ will soon return to earth amid global catastrophes and cataclysmic events called the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-22) to prevent mankind from annihilating all life on earth. He will then subdue all nations, establish God’s kingdom on earth and rule over all nations for 1000 years, as King of kings and Lord of lords, sitting upon the throne of David. God’s kingdom will continue forever and ever.

SCRIPTURES

The book of Revelation puts end of the end time events in a chronological sequence as contained in the messages in the seven seals. The world has reached a period called “No more delay” (Revelation 10:6, NIV) in fulfillment of end time events. The next prophesied event is stated in Revelation 10:11 (NKJV), “And he said to me, you must prophesy again about many peoples, and nations, and tongues [meaning in many languages] and kings.”

The prophecy in Revelation 10:11 has already been fulfilled. I, a lay member, was asked by many ministers in God’s Church to start preaching the gospel around January 2005. An unprecedented development! It took me some time to get organized as I did not even own a decent personal computer at that time. I started with a blog on September 26, 2006. Then on December 2, 2006, I started preparing messages and read them out aloud every Saturday morning at 10.00 a.m. USA Eastern Standard Time (later switched to 9.00 a.m.). I took advantage of the fact that demons had started broadcasting my thoughts around 2001. After July 2007, every Saturday, God’s angels have been rebroadcasting my messages to every human being on earth in his or her language. Whoever wants to hear the messages has to merely tune his ear to hear and he will hear them. That’s how dramatically this prophecy has already been fulfilled. Now there is no longer any delay in fulfillment of the events described in the seven seals of the book of Revelation, beginning with chapter 6. I have described all these events in my free eBook “*Summary of Sequence of end Time Events”* and the larger eBook *“World in Bible Prophecy.”*

The first four seals in Revelation 6:1-8 describe the Third World War that is about to take place. The fifth seal in Revelation 6:9-11 describes the Great Tribulation of 1,260 days or three-and-a-half years for God’s true Church and the American, British and Jewish people in the state of Israel after their defeat at the hands of the German-led seventh resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire in alliance with other global partners. Then Revelation 6:12-17 describe the sixth seal at the end of two and a half years or 900 days into the Great Tribulation, which pictures a great worldwide earthquake and frightening meteor showers, signaling the beginning of the terrible events of the “Day of the Lord,” which is one year of God’s wrath on all nations.

The seventh seal is divided into seven trumpets. The first four trumpets picture a war between the King of the North, or the German-led Holy Roman Empire against an Islamic-African alliance called the King of the South in which the Islamic alliance is annihilated.

As an Eastern Alliance, known as the Kings of the East see the war between the King of the North against the King of the South taking place, they mobilize for war against the King of the North and his allies who pre-emptively attack them with chemical and biological weapons. This is the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:1-11). The Eastern alliance also uses similar weapons against the King of the North and his allies. This war and its effects last five months (verse 5). Then the Eastern alliance mobilizes a 200-million-man army to attack the King of the North and his allies. This global war kills one-third of the world’s population at that time (Revelation 9:13-18). It devastates the Holy Roman Empire’s forces. This is the sixth trumpet.

After this war, the Holy Roman Empire is contemplating using nuclear weapons to stave off total annihilation. Kings of the East are contemplating the same. If this war is allowed to take place, all life on earth could be destroyed. That’s when God the Father sends Jesus Christ to earth like lightening flashing from the east to the west to intervene in human affairs and put an end to man’s madness under Satan’s influence.

*Establishment of God’s Kingdom*

Return of Jesus Christ to earth will be heralded by the seventh trumpet blast (Revelation 11:15, “15 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 for ever and ever.”) It will not be a secret event. The whole world will see this event (Matthew 24:26-27, 30, “26 “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be...30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”) Also, Revelation 1:7, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (And 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

When Jesus Christ returns to earth, nations will not automatically submit to His rule because Satan and the demons will have deceived them into believing He is the antichrist. They will have to be brought into submission. Revelation 11:18, “18 And the nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth.”

The seventh trumpet is divided into seven bowls which symbolize the seven plagues which Jesus Christ will have to pour out to subdue all of humanity under His rule.

Jesus Christ first preaches the gospel of the Kingdom of God through three mighty angels. One angel announces the good news of God’s Kingdom on earth. The second angel announces the judgment of the great whore, the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, and the third angel announces God’s judgment on those who received the mark of the Beast (Revelation 14:6-11).

Jesus Christ also demands that the nations release their Israelite slaves. The nations do not repent, and do not want to release their Israelite slaves. As a result, Jesus Christ pours out His plagues on them. These 5 plagues, symbolized by pouring out five bowls of the seventh trumpet, include a loathsome, foul-smelling sore upon those who had the mark of the beast; the Mediterranean Sea turned to blood; then rivers and springs of water around the world turned to blood; mankind scorched with great heat; and the throne of the Beast [King of the North] and his kingdom become full of darkness (Revelation 16:1-11).

These plagues make the nations hopping mad, and Satan and his demons also arouse them to war with Jesus Christ (Revelation 16:13-14).

Because of what they suffered from the plagues that Jesus Christ poured on them, nations gather at Armageddon (or 'Hill of Megiddo') to attack Jesus Christ. A massive army perhaps more than a hundred million strong is gathered from all around the world. This will be the largest concentration of armies in one battlefield in the history of man (Revelation 16:12, 16). Then they go to Jerusalem for the attack, where Jesus' headquarters are located. But the nations are defeated and their armies totally annihilated. This is the 6th bowl or plague, described in Revelation 16:12-16.

The annihilation of the world's armies is described in Zechariah 14:12: "And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: 'Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.'"

The result of this war is that blood flows out from the soldiers in the army, making a huge river of coagulated blood, bodies and weapons of soldiers that is about four feet deep and 184 miles long (Revelation 14:19-20).

Not only are the armies of the nations that came to Jerusalem destroyed, but Jesus Christ also further pours out His wrath on the nations for having sent their armies to attack Him. There is a massive, global earthquake the like of which the world has never experienced in its history. All the cities and mountains are leveled; ocean floor rises so that there are no more islands left. There is massive loss of human life. In addition, there is great hail with huge hailstones weighing 100 pounds each falling on human beings to kill them. This is described as the 7th bowl or plague of God’s wrath poured out on the nations (Revelation 16:17-21). The end result of all these plagues is that very few human beings are left alive (Isaiah 24:6). The population of the earth left alive because of the earthquake and the hail perhaps could be in the hundreds of millions.

But there is a great positive outcome from the earthquake. More land becomes available for cultivation. Deserts disappear; mountains and plateaus are leveled and become fertile land. Even the land under the permafrost becomes available. More fresh water becomes available all over the world, and because the floor of the oceans rises in many places to form land, the mineral wealth of the oceans becomes available for man's use.

With the greatest ever earthquake and the plague of great hail, the 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation will end.

Jesus Christ will first rescue the surviving American, British and Jewish slaves. They will all be brought to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel (Isaiah 11:11-12, 15-16; 43:5-6; 49:22-23) in a much greater Exodus than the first Exodus of ancient Israel from Egypt (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

Then Jesus Christ will bring all the culprits to justice who brought all the catastrophes on earth. The Beast (German head of the Holy Roman Empire) and the false prophet - the pope of the Roman Catholic Church - are captured alive and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20).

After all the nations are subdued and there is no more opposition from human rulers, God’s kingdom is established on earth. The establishment of God’s Kingdom is celebrated with a great feast and marriage of the Lamb. This is when Jesus Christ symbolically marries His Church, the saints collectively, who were resurrected to eternal life (Revelation 19:6-9) when Jesus Christ returned.

Finally, Satan, the original instigator of all evil on earth is bound and imprisoned in solitary confinement in the abyss for the 1000 years of God's Kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:1-3). After the removal of Satan and his demons from rulership of the earth, Jesus Christ will rule as King of kings [King is Jesus Christ and “kings” refers to the resurrected saints] and Lord of lords [Lord is Jesus Christ and “lords” also refers to the resurrected saints] in God’s Kingdom. The saints of God are resurrected to eternal life at Jesus Christ's return to earth and will reign with Christ as kings and priests (Revelation 5:10) for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). The world will at last begin to live in peace, harmony, justice, great abundance and prosperity.

Coming of the Messiah, the Christ, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords was prophesied in the Old and New Testaments (See Isaiah 40:10; Daniel 2:44; Micah 1:3, Matthew 24:30; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7; Revelation 19:16). The fact that Jesus Christ shall sit on the throne of His human ancestor David and rule over Israel and all Gentile (non-Israel) nations is prophesied in Isaiah 9:7 (“7 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 for ever...”); Jeremiah 3:17, “17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord...”); Jeremiah 23:5, Luke 1:32 (“32 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:”); Romans 15:12 (“12 And again, Esaias [Isaiah 11:10] says, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.”)

The fact that God’s Kingdom will last forever and ever is attested to in Isaiah 9:7, Daniel 2:44, Revelation 11:15, and Daniel 7:13-14, 18, 27.

Since God’s kingdom will continue forever and ever, what happens after the 1,000 years is mentioned in my short eBook *“Summary of Sequence of end Time Events”* , available free on my religion website www.ChurchOfGodMessage.com. Here is the listing of those events:

1) After the 1,000 years, Satan is released for a short season. He will go to deceive the nations one final time to attack Jesus Christ and the saints at Jerusalem. The Russians and the Chinese will be deceived by him and will come to Jerusalem for the attack. Fire from heaven will devour this army. Satan and the demons who joined him will be imprisoned, this time in the fire that will be burning at Jerusalem. Their fate is now sealed (Revelation 20:7-10).

2) Then all human beings who have ever lived and did not receive their chance for salvation during the first 6,000 years by being called into God’s Church will now be resurrected to physical life (Revelation 20:11-13; Ezekiel 37: 37: 1-14, 26-28; Matthew 10:20-24, 12:41-42). Isaiah 65:20-25 tell us that these physical humans will all be given 100 years to live and their conduct judged. They will have their minds opened to understand God’s truth and His plan of salvation, to repent of their sins and qualify to receive eternal life as God’s sons and daughters.

3) Those who still refuse to repent and accept God’s way of life will have their lives permanently extinguished, rather than be tortured forever in an ever-burning hell. They will cease to exist and will be as though they had never been (Revelation 20:15; 21:8; 2 Peter 3:7, 10-12, Obadiah 1:16).

4) After the present earth is consumed, God will then create a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1-3) and God will dwell among former human beings now made His literal immortal sons and daughters.

5) God has promised all things, meaning the entire universe, for man to inherit (Revelation 21:7; Hebrews 2:6-8). Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (NKJV): "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit."

In fact, God has already allotted the universe to nations (Deuteronomy 4:19, “19 And lest you lift up your eyes unto heaven, and when you see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, should be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord your God has divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.”). This indicates that what God accomplished on earth will then be done in the entire universe by humans made immortal as God’s literal sons and daughters. That’s the awesome future that awaits mankind.

CHAPTER 19

BELIEF 19 – KNOWLEDGE OF BIBLE PROPHECY DISTINGUISHES CHURCH OF GOD FROM OTHER CHURCHES

God revealed to John the apostle in Revelation 12:17, “And the dragon [another name for Satan] was wroth with the woman [a symbol for a Church; in this case God’s true Church] and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Then in Revelation 19:10,”... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

This shows that the testimony that a Church is God’s true Church is that it will understand prophecy and preach it to the world. This is one of the features that distinguishes God’s true Church from other churches in the world.

Many end time prophecies were revealed to Daniel the prophet as well as other prophets. But the angel Gabriel who revealed prophecies to Daniel told him that many of the prophecies given to him will be understood only in the end time.

Daniel 12:4, 8-10, “4 But 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... 8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 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.”

Daniel was told to seal the book, meaning prophecies revealed to him, till the end time. Then the characteristics of the end time are identified: “many shall run to and fro [worldwide air travel], and knowledge shall be increased.” This shows we are living in the end time.

Understanding about all the various beasts mentioned in the books of Daniel and Revelation was first revealed to Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) through whom God founded the modern era of the Church of God, known initially as the Radio Church of God and then as the Worldwide Church of God.

HWA passed away on January 16, 1986. Since his death, Church of God has splintered into several different organizations. Some leaders of those Churches have built upon the basic understanding of prophecy provided by HWA. I have also built my understanding of prophecy on the foundation provided by HWA, which I have described in my eBook *“World in Bible Prophecy”* available free on my religion website www.ChurchOfGodMessage.com.

Many other Christian denominations have now started dabbling in prophecy. They admit that the great contribution HWA made to religion was explaining bible prophecies. But none have as good an understanding of prophecy as God’s Church because that is Jesus Christ’s testimony that we are His true Church.

CHAPTER 20

BELIEF 20 – DIVINE HEALING

God’s Church believes that a person can be healed even today according to his faith but according to God’s will for the individual. One of God’s names in Hebrew is Jehovah-Rapha, which is translated as “The Lord Who Heals.”

The title is mentioned in Exodus 15:26. In this event, ancient Israel found no water in the wilderness for three days. Then they came to Marah but could not drink the water there because it was bitter. God then showed Moses a tree and asked him to cast it into the waters which were made sweet. Then God told the Israelites in Exodus 15:25-26, “25... There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, 26 and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”

David wrote in Psalm 103:2-3, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases...”

Peter the apostle wrote in 2 Peter 2:24 (NIV): “He [the Messiah] himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds [stripes] you have been healed.” Here Peter was quoting the prophecy by Isaiah the prophet that the Messiah would fulfill in Isaiah 53:4-5, “ 4 Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

James gives the instructions on how we ask God for healing in James 5:14-16, “14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

The procedure of anointing for healing is very simple. A sick person goes to a Church minister and requests anointing for healing. The minister takes a drop of oil on his finger, puts it on the forehead of the sick person and prays for 1-2 minutes asking God for His intervention to heal the sick person as He has promised in His word, the Bible. There is nothing more to it. Many members in God’s Church have been miraculously healed of dreadful diseases and infirmities.

Ability to heal persons is a “spiritual gift “God gives to certain individuals as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4, 9, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:...4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit...9 to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same spirit...”

We understand that God will heal a person according to his faith but also according to His own will for the person.

When two blind men came to Jesus to be healed, he told them in Matthew 9:29-30, “29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” 30 And their eyes were opened.”

God used the Apostle Paul to heal many people by anointing with oil and many other ways. In Acts 19:11 “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” However, Paul asked God to heal him on three occasions as described in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, “7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul certainly did not lack faith to be healed. But God told him that it was not His will to heal him to keep him humble.

Elisha the prophet raised a Shunammite woman’s dead child to life in 2 Kings 4:32-37. He also healed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy in 2 Kings 5:1-19. But he was not healed of his own sickness and died from it (2 Kings 13:14, 20).

We must acknowledge that all of us are going to die. It is God’s plan for mankind. While God can heal people repeatedly, He will not continue healing people so that they can continue living. He lets people die of old age.

Some believe that if you go to doctors and take medicines when sick then you are demonstrating lack of faith in God. Some (tares or infiltrators in the Church) have misguided people in God’s Church with serious illnesses into canceling their health insurance because they were told they are lacking faith by relying on doctors to heal their sickness. Once canceled, they could not get health insurance again because of pre-existing conditions. This was wrong advice. I know of people who have died of sickness because they refused to rely on doctors or take medicines to be healed. We need to exercise balance.

Jesus Christ did not dislike doctors or think them to be evil. He stated, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matthew 9:12). In this verse, Jesus indicated that physicians could help with sickness and disease. The Apostle Paul would not have called “Luke the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) if he disliked doctors.

There are certain health situations where medical help is necessary and should be taken. In case of injury, it is important to bind up wounds and apply some antiseptic to prevent infection. For example, in the parable of the “Good Samaritan” Jesus mentioned how the “good Samaritan” bound up wounds and applied wine as an antiseptic (Luke 10:33-34). If some bones are broken in an injury, it is best to use the services of an orthopedic surgeon. Help of pediatricians should be sought for prenatal care, delivery and post-natal care. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul counseled Timothy to use some wine for his stomach’s infirmities.

Every true Christian needs to understand that balance is required on this issue. It is up to the individual to make his decision as to when and how much to seek medical help when ill or injured. Seeking medical help and relying on God to heal are not mutually exclusive.

God always fulfills His promises. In James 5:14-16, God has promised to heal. When God will fulfill that promise is His prerogative. When a person is resurrected to eternal life in the first resurrection, he will be healed of all sickness. When a person is resurrected to physical life in the second resurrection, including a person who would have died sick and feeble at more than 100 years of age will be given a healthy, healed body that would allow the person to live another hundred years so that he can receive his one and only chance for salvation. God will fulfill His promise to heal.

CHAPTER 21

BELIEF 21 – FIRST DEATH AND SECOND DEATH

THE FIRST DEATH

Death is the natural “cessation of life.” God told Adam in Genesis 2:17, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely [begin to] die.” God said in Ezekiel 18:4, “...4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die.”

Romans 5:12 (*New Living Translation*) says, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone [has] sinned.” ). 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us, “...in Adam all die,” and Hebrews 9:27 says, “...it is appointed for men to die once...”

All these scriptures are mentioning the first death. The first death is described as sleep in Acts 13:36, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep...” 1 Corinthians 11:30, “30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,” and in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

After experiencing the first death, all human beings will be resurrected to life as mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

As described in Chapter (Belief) 13 on the three resurrections, all those who were called by God during the first 6,000 years of human history and qualified to receive eternal life will be resurrected to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ. After the millennium (1,000 years of God’s kingdom), all those who were not called during the first 6,000 years of history will be resurrected to physical life to receive their first and only chance for salvation. They will live 100 years. This is called the White Throne Judgment period. At the end of the 100 years, those who qualify to receive eternal life will be made immortal. Then, those who were called during the 7,000 years but did not qualify to receive eternal life will be resurrected to physical life. They along with all those during the 100 years who did not qualify to receive eternal life will have their lives permanently extinguished. That is the second death.

Jesus mentioned this in John 5:28-29, “28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life [the first resurrection]; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [the third resurrection].”

THE SECOND DEATH

The “second death” is eternal death—complete extinguishing of life without the possibility of ever again becoming alive. Those who experience the second death will never ever regain consciousness. They will be turned to ash permanently. This is described in Malachi 4:1, “For, 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.”

Matthew 10:28, “28 And fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The word translated “hell” is the Greek word “Gehenna” which means “hellfire” at the end when God’s plan of salvation is complete. Also, Matthew 25:46, “46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Revelation 20:14-15 mention the second death, “14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

After a person receives his chance for salvation and receives knowledge of the truth and then “sins willfully,” such willful sins cannot be forgiven. Those are the persons who will die the second permanent death. Hebrews 6:4-8, “4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.”

Also, Hebrews 10:26-31 describe the second death, “ 26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

CHAPTER 22

BELIEF 22 – GREAT TRIBULATION, “DAY OF THE LORD” AND FALSE BELIEF IN RAPTURE

God’s Church believes that the Bible prophesies of an unprecedented time of trouble accompanied by great catastrophic and cataclysmic events called the “Great Tribulation” at the end of man’s age. It is also called the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble.” Jacob means the descendants of Jacob, primarily the USA, British Commonwealth nations and Israel, but also include those living in France, Switzerland, Ireland, Scandinavian and Benelux countries. It will be a time of trouble that mankind has never experienced before and unless those days were shortened by the return of Jesus Christ to earth, “no flesh would be saved.” We believe that this time is almost at our door. The “Great Tribulation” will be of three-and-a-half years duration. Last one year of the Great Tribulation is called the “Day of the Lord” or “Lord’s Day”, in which God pours out His wrath on ALL nations for their sins.

God’s Church believes that “Rapture” is a false doctrine believed by mainstream Christianity. They falsely believe that before the beginning of the seven-year-long Tribulation (they call the last three-and-a-half years the Great Tribulation) devout Christians will be suddenly taken away from the earth to heaven to be protected from the Tribulation with its catastrophic events and destruction on earth which all those who are left behind will suffer. Therefore, pastors urge their followers to be good Christians so that they can be raptured and saved from worldwide destruction.

SCRIPTURES

*The Great Tribulation*

Jesus Christ prophesied about a time of catastrophic events called the “Great Tribulation” in Matthew 24:21-22, “21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”

The parallel account about the Great Tribulation is given in Mark 13:19-20. The account in Luke 21:19-36 provides additional details.

Conditions for those in God’s Church who find themselves in the Great Tribulation are described in Matthew 24:9-13, “9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Daniel 12:1 (NKJV) also mentions the Great Tribulation: “At that time Michael [the archangel] shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people [physical Israelites and spiritual Israel which is God’s true Church]; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.”

Jeremiah 30:5-7 calls the Great Tribulation the “time of Jacob’s trouble”: “5 “For thus says the Lord: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6 Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? 7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”

Jacob refers to nations descended from Israel, which are the USA, British Commonwealth nations, the Jews in the state of Israel, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Scandinavian and Benelux countries.

*Why Will God Punish Israel*

Why Will God Punish Israel? The answer was provided at the time God made a covenant with ancient Israel in the time of Moses.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 (NKJV), “5 “Surely, I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?”

Verses 23-27, “23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. 25 “When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image [don’t we see images of Jesus and Mary in stained glass windows in Christian Churches and crosses?] in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. 27 And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.”

In their time of great distress during the Great Tribulation, Israelites will repent of their sins and call on God, and He will deliver them from their slavery among other nations. This is mentioned in verses 29-31: “29 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days [latter days refers to the end time, meaning our days], when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice 31 (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.”

“Not forsake you nor destroy you” should be words of encouragement for Israelites in slavery because God can prevent them from being destroyed by the cruelest of masters, whether they be Germans or of any other nation. One turns to God by beginning to obey His commandments and His Law.

Ezekiel 5:7-9 also refers to this time of unprecedented trouble: “7 Therefore thus says the Lord God; Because you [Jerusalem, which was the capital of the undivided kingdom of Israel. Hence this prophecy refers primarily to USA, British Commonwealth nations of U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and whites of South Africa - and Israel] multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; 8 Therefore thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against you, and will execute judgments in the midst of you in the sight of the nations. 9 And I will do in you that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all your abominations.”

*Great Tribulation also for God’s True Church*

In the Olivet prophecy written in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, Jesus’ disciples asked Him in Matthew 24:3, “...what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Jesus returns to earth near the end of the Great Tribulation. He was telling the disciples specifically what would happen to the disciples, meaning members of God’s Church, at that time. He said in:

Matthew 24:9, “9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”

Mark 13:13, “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved”

Luke 21:12, “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake.”

Members of God’s Church are called “Saints” in the Bible. A great leader called the Beast who will literally be given authority over the world will make war with the saints in collaboration with a religious leader [pope of the Roman Catholic Church] and overcome them in Revelation 13:7, “7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.” This authority was granted to him by Satan as stated in verses 2, 4: “2...The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority... 4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

A woman in prophecy is a Church. Revelation 17:5 discusses a “Mother of Harlots”, which means a false Church and what it will do in verse 6: “6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

Daniel also prophesied about the persecution of the saints by the “little horn”, a false religious leader [the pope of the Roman Catholic Church] in Daniel 7:25, “25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.” The pope calls himself “Vicar of Christ” which means “in place of Christ.” Those are certainly very pompous words.

A time in prophecy is one year of 360 days, times is two years, and half a time is half year. The persecution, therefore, lasts for 1,260 days.

God’s true Church is promised protection during the Great Tribulation in Revelation 3:10, “10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” That protection is promised in a place of safety in Revelation 12:13-14, “13 Now when the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place [place of safety], where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [1,260 days], from the presence of the serpent [another name for Satan].”

While members of God’s Church who persevere in overcoming sin and doing God’s work are protected during the Great Tribulation as stated in Revelation 3:10, some who do not persevere will have to go through the Great Tribulation to try their faith. They will be persecuted by Satan: Revelation 12:17, “17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [those who were not considered worthy to be protected in the place of safety], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”.

*Duration of the Great Tribulation*

As already mentioned in Daniel 7:25, saints will be given into the hands of the false religious leader for a time, times and half a time or 1,260 days. That is the duration of the Great Tribulation.

When the book of Daniel discusses the Great Tribulation in Daniel 12:1, its duration is given in verse 7: “...it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.”

It is also the time when the woman [God’s Church] is protected from Satan in Revelation 12:14 which is for a time, times and half a time or 42 months, or 1,260 days, each month being 30 days. The holy city, Jerusalem will be given to the Gentiles to “tread underfoot” during the same 42 months (Revelation 11:2).

DAY OF THE LORD

The “Day of the Lord” or “Lord’s Day” is mentioned in many prophecies.

Isaiah 13:6-13, “6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man’s heart will melt, 8 And they will be afraid... 9 Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11 “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible...13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.”

A day in prophecy equals one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). Therefore, the day of the Lord is one year of God’s fierce anger on sinning humanity.

“For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8). Chapter 34 is also discussing God’s wrath on the nations, particularly Edom (which is modern Turkey and the Palestinians, verses 5-6 ), for the controversy concerning Zion, or Jerusalem. Zion is also God’s Church. Therefore, this prophecy concerns punishment on the nations for brutally treating God’s Church [“cause of Zion”] and the Jews in Israel during the Great Tribulation.

Day of the Lord is also mentioned in Obadiah 1:15, “15 “For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.” This is directed at nations, particularly Edom (verse 1, 6-10, 18), who will treat their Israelite slaves brutally. They and all nations will suffer the same that they will have done to their Israelite slaves.

Joel 2:31 mentions conditions on earth just preceding the Day of the Lord: “31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.” It is pictured by the sixth seal of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 6:12-16).

These are also the conditions prophesied by Jesus Christ immediately after the tribulation but just before His return in Matthew 24:29-30, “29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

The Book of Revelation also concerns the Day of the Lord. John says in Revelation 1:10, “10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day...” John saw visions concerning events that would take place during the Lord’s day. John recorded what was revealed to him in the messages of the seven seals.

Messages revealed in opening of the seven seals parallel what Jesus mentioned to His disciples in the Olivet prophecy in Matthew 24. Here are the parallels:

SEAL 1 (Revelation 6:1-2; Matthew 24:4-5): Religious deception.

SEAL 2 (Revelation 6:3-4; Matthew 24:6-7): The Third World War and wars around the world and devastation.

SEAL 3 (Revelation 6:5-6; Matthew 24:7): Famines following the war.

SEAL 4 (Revelation 6:7-8; Matthew 24:7): Disease epidemics following the famines, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

The first four seals thus describe the Third World War and its aftermath.

SEAL 5 (Revelation 6:9-11: Matthew 24:9-13): The Great Tribulation with persecution of God’s Church and Israelite nations, particularly USA, British Commonwealth nations and the Jewish state of Israel [UBI nations] during their slavery.

SEAL 6: (Revelation 6:12-16; Matthew 24:29): A great earthquake, meteor showers and other terrifying heavenly signs. Revelation 6:17 tells us that the day of God wrath has come. Since day equals one year in prophecy, this means that the tribulation [for UBI nations] lasts two-and-a-half years followed by one year of God’s wrath on all nations [including UBI nations as they will be slaves living in other nations] during the “Day of the Lord.”

The catastrophic events during the day of the Lord are pictured by the seventh seal.

Before the plagues pictured by the seventh seal begin, 144,000 from the tribes of Israel are sealed (Revelation 7:4-8) to be protected during the catastrophic events of the Day of the Lord. Revelation 14:4 declares these to be the firstfruits to God. This means they have been sealed to receive the reward of the firstfruits. They will be changed to spirit beings as sons of God at the return of Jesus Christ to earth. The reason they receive the reward of the firstfruits is that these Israelites went through two and a half years of the Great Tribulation and did not give in to the beast and the false prophet but instead preached the good news of the very soon coming kingdom of God wherever they found themselves as slaves among the nations. These are literally those who were called into God’s Church during the eleventh hour.

Preaching of the 144,000 and Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 will result in conversion of tens of millions around the world of all nations and languages who will also be protected through the catastrophic and cataclysmic events during the Day of the Lord. Revelation 7:9-15 describe this group.

SEAL 7: (Revelation 6:17; 8:1-2, 6; Matthew 24:30): Day of the Lord (“the great day of His wrath”). Seventh seal includes the seven trumpet plagues. The seventh trumpet is further divided into seven vials (bowls) of God’s wrath poured out over the nations.

In the seventh seal, seven angels blow their trumpets one after the other. Blowing of each trumpet by an angel is followed by a cataclysmic or catastrophic event.

TRUMPETS 1-4: The first four trumpets picture the war Between the King of the North (the Holy Roman Empire led by a German leader) and the King of the South, an Islamic leader, prophesied in Daniel 11:40-45.

The first four trumpets picture destruction of a third part of trees and all green grass burnt up (Revelation 8:7); devastation of a third part of ocean and sea life (Revelation 8:8-9; since this is a war between the King of the North and King of the South involving Europe and the Middle East, the ocean and sea life destroyed is most likely in the Mediterranean sea, Red Sea and Arabian Sea); devastation of a third part of rivers and other fresh water sources (Revelation 8:10-11); sun, moon and stars darkened for a third part (Revelation 8:12).

The fifth and sixth trumpets describe wars between the King of the North and an Eastern Alliance, known as “Kings of the East.”

TRUMPET 5: Fifth trumpet is described in Revelation 9:1-12. It pictures the pre-emptive strike of the King of the North (also known as the Beast or the Holy Roman Empire) against the Eastern Alliance with biological, chemical and other weapons. These weapons do not kill human beings but inflict terrible pain and suffering on them for five months. Undoubtedly Satan guided the development of these weapons. He now leads the armies of the beast against the Eastern Alliance.

Description of this war in verse 4 indicates that the effects of the biological and chemical weapons will be felt globally. That means the Eastern Alliance has similar biological and chemical weapons and uses them against the King of the North and those loyal to him.

TRUMPET 6: Sixth trumpet describes the counterattack of the Eastern Alliance against the King of the North and his alliance partners. This is described in Revelation 9:13-21.

After 5 months of incredible physical suffering throughout the world pictured by the 5th trumpet, the Eastern Alliance then counterattacks with a massive army of 200 million.

Both the King of the North and the Eastern Alliance have weapons that could destroy all of humanity. That’s why each side is reluctant to use them. That is why the King of the North had used biological/chemical weapons in his pre-emptive strike. Therefore, the only alternative for the Eastern Alliance to retaliate against the King of the North is to send a huge 200 million strong army to fight him globally rather than use nuclear weapons. A third of mankind will die in this war from the fire, smoke and brimstone (or weapons) alone. As many as 2 billion people could die worldwide in this war. The King of the North and his alliance partners worldwide will take a very severe beating in this war.

Notice God’s purpose in allowing humanity to inflict this catastrophe on itself. Revelation 9:20-21 state, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders, or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” God wants humanity to wake up and repent of worshipping Satan and the demons and idols, and of their murders, sexual immorality and thefts. Despite this catastrophic war, humanity still refuses to repent.

TRUMPET 7: Seventh trumpet sounded and great voices in heaven announce the return of Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15) accompanied by the resurrected saints, saying: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

After the war between the King of the North and the 200 million-man-army of the Eastern Alliance in which the Holy Roman Empire is decimated, the King of the North will be contemplating using all his nuclear weapons to stave off utter destruction. If God does not send Jesus Christ to take over the kingdoms of the world, all life on earth would be destroyed (Matthew 24:21-22).

God the Father then sends Jesus Christ to earth and the saints are resurrected to meet the returning Jesus Christ in the air (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). They return to earth at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). They do not go to heaven to be protected for seven years as the false Rapture idea teaches. Return of Jesus Christ to earth is urgent to stave off destruction of all life on earth. He will not be thinking of whisking away the resurrected saints to heaven to protect them from the remainder of the events of the “Day of the Lord.”

Jesus Christ returning to earth will not be a secret event but will be seen by everyone. Matthew 24:27, “27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” It will get everyone’s attention.

Jesus then sends three angels with three messages to proclaim a final warning to the world to repent. Revelation 14:6-11:

“6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— 7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

“8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon [The Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church] is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” 9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand (Revelation 13:14-18), 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb [another name for Jesus Christ. This verse also shows that Jesus Christ is on earth at this time and not in heaven with the resurrected saints]. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Humanity rejects even this last dramatic warning. Nations and individuals don't repent of their sins, do not submit to God's rule in worship, and don't release their Israelite and Jewish captives. As a result, Jesus Christ has no alternative but to punish the nations and pour out plagues on an unrepentant world.

BOWLS 1-5: (Revelation 16:1-11) - Jesus Christ then sends 5 angels one after the other to pour out the plagues of His wrath on unrepentant humans. The five plagues of each bowl are: 1) A foul and loathsome sore comes upon men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; 2) Sea turned to blood as of a dead man and every living creature in the sea dies; 3) Rivers and springs of water become blood; 4) Men scorched with fire [This means the orbit of the earth around the sun may be slightly altered to cause temperatures on earth to rise which starts fires that burn alive many people as punishment for having burnt alive members of God’s Church in the recent persecution against them] Men scorched with great heat, and they blaspheme the name of God but do not repent and give Him glory; 5) Throne of the beast, and his kingdom become full of darkness.

BOWL 6: (Revelation 16:12-14) - Because of the pain, sores and suffering due to these plagues, humans blaspheme the God of heaven and still do not repent of their evil deeds. They become hopping mad and are led by demons working through the Beast [German head of the Holy Roman Empire] and false prophet [Pope of the Roman Catholic Church] to gather at Armageddon (Hill of Megiddo in Israel) to attack Jesus Christ. Then they move to Jerusalem for the attack.

This will be the greatest war the world will ever fight in the number of people who descend on the battlefield, perhaps more than 100 million. Literally people from all over the world gather to fight. One can gauge the number of people involved from the amount of blood that pours out of their bodies, as indicated in Revelation 14:20 (NKJV): "And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles [about 4 feet deep], by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs [approximately 184 miles].” Fallen dead soldiers, their armor and coagulated blood that flowed out of their bodies could produce such a huge river of blood. All the people that come to the battle perish.

How all these armies are destroyed is described in Zechariah 14:12 (NKJV): "And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths."

BOWL 7: (Revelation 16:17-21) - Though all the soldiers, captains, generals and rulers gathered at Jerusalem for the war against Jesus Christ perish, the war is not over yet. Almost all citizens of the nations were involved in opposing the rule of Jesus Christ, and against releasing their Israelite captives. They fully supported their armies that attacked Jesus Christ and the saints. They too are guilty of war and deserve to be punished. Their punishment soon follows. The world experiences the greatest global earthquake ever in the history of mankind. It levels the cities of the world and the mountains. Islands are either submerged, or the surface of the oceans is raised so that islands no longer remain islands. Then there is great hail all over the world with hailstones weighing up to 100 pounds each.

With this final plague, the world is finally brought into subjection to the rule of Jesus Christ. These are the events of the “Day of the Lord.”

*“Second Exodus”, Much Greater than Exodus from Egypt*

At the end of the 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation, nations are devastated, finally willing to accept Jesus Christ's authority, and free their American, British and Jewish slaves. Otherwise, they know they could all be dead, just as Pharaoh of ancient Egypt realized after the death of all the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:33 – NKJV: "And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead.")

The nations will think the same and will release the captives. The nations in fact will help bring the Israelites to the Promised Land (the modern state of Israel), as prophesied by Isaiah 43:5-6 (NKJV): "Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, "Give them up!" And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar and bring My daughters from the ends of the earth."

This second Exodus will be much greater than the first. The first Exodus from Egypt involved about 3 million men, women and children. The second Exodus will involve many more millions than that, perhaps 7-15 million. And they will come from all over the world, not just Egypt.

Isaiah 11 (NKJV) mentions the Stem of Jesse and a Branch out of his roots, referring to Jesus Christ who will rule the earth. Verses 11-13, 16 then mention the second exodus:

“11 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 who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 15 The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt (the Red Sea); with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry-shod. [This is how captives in Egypt will be brought over to the holy land, much like the first Exodus.] 16 There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.”

Then Isaiah the prophet continues in Isaiah 43:1-5-6, 21 (NKJV): “1 But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. 5 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east and gather you from the west; 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth…21 This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.”

Jeremiah the prophet also prophesied about the greater second Exodus in Jeremiah 23:3-8 (NKJV): “3 "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King [Jesus Christ] shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 6 In His days Judah (the Jews) will be saved, and Israel (the Americans and the British) will dwell safely…7 "Therefore, behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that they shall no longer say, 'As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' 8 but, 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."

Yes! When the world later talks about the Exodus, they will not refer to the first Exodus from Egypt, but the second Exodus from all around the world.

RAPTURE

I am going to provide the Church of God view on the most popular version of the false theory of “Rapture” believed by most of Christianity. For a more detailed study on the subject of “Rapture” I suggest reading the United Church of God (UCG) booklet titled “The Rapture vs. The Bible” (<https://www.ucg.org/learn/bible-study-aids/rapture-vs-bible>).

The most popular version of the Rapture theory, widely believed by Christianity, is that a seven-year-long Tribulation is soon to strike the earth with the last three and a half years called the Great Tribulation in which humanity will experience catastrophic wars and cataclysmic natural phenomena. During this time the earth will be ruled by an Anti-Christ. Before the beginning of the Tribulation, Christ will whisk away devout Christians (saints) in a secret rapture into the air to meet Him to be taken to heaven to be protected there for the entire duration of the seven years of the Tribulation, while those not raptured will have to suffer the ravages of the Tribulation on earth. After the end of the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will descend to earth with the raptured Christians to establish God’s kingdom which will rule for 1,000 years.

This belief is very comforting for Christians and those who espouse it are called "pre-tribulationists." There are variations of this belief. There are also "mid-tribulationists" who believe in a "mid-Tribulation rapture," thinking that the whisking away occurs at the midpoint of the Tribulation which is 3 1⁄2 years before Christ's return. “Post-tribulationists," believe in a "post-Tribulation rapture," in which believers rise to meet Christ in the air at the end of the 3 1⁄2-years of the Great Tribulation.

Our main concern with this false theory is that Christians will be waiting and hoping to be snatched away from earth to meet Christ in the air but will be disappointed and traumatized when they find themselves in the Great Tribulation because the bible teaches no such thing as “rapture” of Christians.

Idea of the Pre-tribulation rapture is generally attributed to John Nelson Darby, a 19th century Anglo-Irish bible teacher and popularized in the USA by the Scofield Reference Bible and later by the writings of Hal Lindsey. Recently, pre-tribulation rapture was popularized in the 1990s with the *Left behind* series of fictional books authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins some of which were New York Times bestsellers and turned into films.

Idea of the rapture comes from the apostle Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV), “16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The word rapture is nowhere found in the English bible. The idea comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek word *harpazo* for “shall be caught up” in verse 17 into the Latin word *rapiemur* from the Latin verb *rapio*.

Another scripture provided as support for the rapture theory is Matthew 24:40-42, “40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

According to the rapture theorists, verses 40-41 are describing the rapture when one of the two men in the field and one of the two women grinding at the mill will be suddenly raptured into the air while the other will be left on earth. In verses 36-39 Jesus was talking about His return to earth which we know will not be a silent, secret event as 1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us as well as Matthew 24:27. Therefore, verses 40-41 are not talking about a secret rapture, but about the return of Jesus Christ to earth. That’s when the righteous are separated from the unbelievers.

Parallel scripture to Matthew 24:40-42 is Luke 17:34-37, “34 I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36 Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” 37 And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So, He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

A parallel verse to Luke 17:37 is Matthew 24:28, “28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles [vultures] will be gathered together.”

I Corinthians 15:50-53 provide further insight into when this event takes place: “50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Verses 52 and 53 make it clear that those raised to meet Christ in the air are changed to immortal spirit beings. This is a problem for the rapture theory. Those who become immortal beings don’t need to be protected in heaven from the Great Tribulation on earth. They are immortal spirit beings with a body like that of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2). Catastrophic or cataclysmic events on earth cannot hurt them.

Verse 52 also indicates the timing of the event. It occurs at the last trumpet, which is the seventh trumpet mentioned in Revelation 11:7 discussed earlier. When the seventh trumpet sounds, great voices in heaven announce, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” At the seventh trumpet, Jesus Christ has been sent to reign on earth and not merely into the air to meet the believers who rise to meet Him and then take them back to heaven for seven years of the Tribulation.

Seventh trumpet sounds well into the Day of the Lord, after events pictured by the six trumpets have already taken place, which is close to the end of the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation. This is the time Jesus Christ is returning to earth to reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:7; Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6). This is not talking about Jesus coming into the clouds to whisk away Christian believers to take them to heaven to be protected. When they rise to meet Christ in the air, they are changed into immortal sons of God. As immortal beings, they don’t need protection from physical events on earth. Christ has been sent by the Father to earth to urgently intervene in human affairs to prevent man from annihilating all life on earth (Matthew 24:21-22). This is no time for Jesus to go back to heaven with the believers to spend seven years during the Tribulation when His presence is needed immediately on earth. He has to take charge to prevent an imminent catastrophe of global proportions.

It is now clear that Paul in I Corinthians 15:50-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 was discussing the First Resurrection of the saints who were called during the first 6,000 years of man’s history and qualified to receive eternal life and had died, and those who were still alive on earth. The first resurrection is mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6, which also states that the second death has no power over them because they have been made immortal. If second death has no power over them, that means they don’t need protection from physical catastrophic events on earth.

Matthew 24:40-42 and Luke 17:34-37 need further explanation. Who are the men and women who are taken while others are left? Obviously, these are saints who are still alive and changed into immortal beings. Some of the saints are in a place of safety, being protected during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 3:10; 12:14-16). They will be resurrected/changed at the return of Jesus Christ. It’s possible some in the place of safety may include unconverted spouses. The converted spouses are resurrected while the others are left.

However, a remnant is left in the world to face the Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:17). Most of them are likely to be martyred during the Great Tribulation. It’s possible some may survive. And the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4-8 go through the Great Tribulation and are the firstfruits (Revelation 14:4). That means they too are resurrected to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ. They are the men and women who are taken while others are left.

In Luke 17:37, the disciples asked Jesus where the men and women would be taken. “37 And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So, He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles [“vultures” in NIV and most other translations] will be gathered together.” What does this mean?

The place is where the “dead” Babylonian Mystery Religion will be located during the Great Tribulation: Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:4 tells us that Jesus Christ will land at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem with the saints. That’s also where bodies of those who come to attack Jesus will be and the fowls [vultures] will be filled with their flesh (Revelation 19:21). Therefore, the phrase “wherever the body is, there will the vultures be gathered together” identified Jerusalem as the place where the resurrected saints will be taken.

This in summary is what 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 really say:

* Jesus Christ’s return to earth is heralded by the angel’s last (seventh) trumpet blast. It is not a secret event. The seventh trumpet sounds near the end of the 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation and not before the beginning of the Great Tribulation.
* Believers who have died will be resurrected to eternal life and rise in the air.
* Believers who are living will be changed into spirit beings and will rise and join the dead who were resurrected in the clouds.
* Both groups of resurrected saints will then rise in the air to meet Jesus Christ in the air and will be with Him forever. This is the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ that we are looking for (Titus 2:13).
* Then the saints will immediately descend to Jerusalem with Christ to rule with Him in the Kingdom of God on earth for 1,000 years (Zechariah 14:1-5; Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:6). Christ does not take the saints to heaven
* During the Great Tribulation, God’s people will be protected in a place of safety on earth (Revelation 3:10; 12:14) and not in heaven.
* There is no secret rapture of believers before the tribulation period.

This is the great hope of all those who believe in God and trust in Him. God does offer protection through the catastrophic events that are at our very door in this end time followed by resurrection to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ for all those who are diligently working to develop a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. There is no time to waste to begin developing that relationship.

CHAPTER 23

BELIEF 23 – VOTING AND TAKING PART IN POLITICS

God’s Church believes that its members should not vote in elections, hold elected office, take part in elections as candidates or participate in politics such as in election campaigns.

Christians are commanded to be separate from the world in 2 Corinthians 6:17, “Come out from among them [the world], and be you separate.” By voting we would become part of the world.

Soon, Europe is going to resurrect the “Holy Roman Empire” for the seventh and last time. In Bible prophecy it is called the Babylonian system. God’s Church is warned to not be part of the system or those who join it through its politics for financial advantage because they will then partake in its plagues that will destroy the system. Revelation 18:4, “4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her [verse 2 mentions Babylon, “Babylon the great is fallen”] my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.”

When Jesus was on trial before Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked Him in John 18:33, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus replied in verse 36: “36 My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence [here].” We in God’s Church believe we are Christ’s servants and represent God’s Kingdom. That’s why we do not vote to “fight” elections to defeat opponents.

Paul the apostle wrote in Philippians 3:20, “For our conversation [the Greek word here should be properly translated citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” As members of God’s Church, our primary citizenship is in heaven and not on earth.

The fact that we are citizens of God’s government in Heaven and represent God’s kingdom on earth is reinforced by the statement in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “Now then we are AMBASSADORS for Christ.” As ambassadors of God’s Kingdom, members of God’s Church cannot participate in man’s systems of government and elect representatives of their host country.

A U.S. Ambassador to India would live in India but would not be an Indian citizen. All his words, statements, actions and appearance would be carefully curated to properly represent the U.S. government. Being resident in India, he would obey Indian laws, but it would be illegal for him to vote in Indian elections.

We can get the picture of how God expects baptized members of His Church to act if we replace the U.S. with God’s kingdom in this analogy. No matter what the country, all baptized members of God’s Church represent the Kingdom of God and their coming King, Jesus Christ. Their primary allegiance is to God’s kingdom and not to the physical nation they live in or are citizens of. We strive to uphold God’s standards in personal appearance, conversation, use of language, conduct in relationships with other people and character. As ambassadors for God’s kingdom, we do not vote in elections in our physical nations.

Jesus told His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [riches].” Christians are to be totally loyal to the heavenly government they represent as ambassadors of Christ.

However, we live on earth and are required in Romans 13:1 to obey the rulers, and laws of the countries we live, “1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” Sometimes man’s laws conflict with God’s laws. In that case we are instructed to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).

As the saying goes, “There is nothing more that divides humans than religion and politics.” That’s a true saying. God wants His people to live together in unity and harmony as stated in Psalm 133:1: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” God hates division and discord as stated in Proverbs 6:16, 19, “These…things does the Lord hate…he that sows discord among brethren”. Paul wrote in Romans 16:17, “Mark [or “take note of”] them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them.”

Involvement in politics would cause division and discord leading to splits within God’s Church! God does not want that to occur in His Church. That’s why members of God’s Church do not vote.

*My Recent Experience*

Because of the Church’s beliefs, I have never voted in any elections in my entire life. However, recently an issue arose that led me to consider voting temporarily.

In the USA and British Commonwealth nations (who are descendants of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim of ancient Israel respectively) we are seeing a dramatic surge in sexual sins, transgenderism (boys and men believing they are girls or women, dressing and behaving as such and vice versa) and vigorous propaganda for acceptance of the LBGTQ lifestyle by making it look mainstream, and persecution of those who criticize it to the extent of losing their job or position and be branded as bigots. German masqueraders, guided by Satan the devil, are behind this propaganda.

God’s law in Leviticus 18 defines what sexual sins are and prescribes the penalty for their violations. God told ancient Israel just before they were to inherit the land of the Canaanites that the land was vomiting the Canaanites out because of their sexual sins mentioned in Leviticus 18 and if they committed the same sexual sins, the land would vomit them out also. That is stated in Leviticus 18:27-28, “27 (for all these abominations [sexual sins] the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), 28 lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”

There is a Satan-led diabolical plot by the Germans in collusion with German masqueraders to facilitate this result so that they can occupy the land for themselves.

A few German masqueraders and their allies by example, threats and coercion have led our people (white Americans of non-German ancestry in UBI nations) to commit sexual sins, promoted homosexuality and transgenderism even in schools beginning with elementary school. Some groups have publicly stated catching our children young is their goal. With their propaganda they have made such sins widely accepted in our society and persecuted those who criticized them knowing that our God, the God of the bible, will punish us for such sins.

God holds us, the people, our clergymen and legislative leaders responsible for such sins as He prophesied in Isaiah 3:12, “As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err and destroy the way of your paths.”

But the diabolical plot goes much further than that. It’s not enough for them that our lands vomit us out for our sexual sins. They live in the land too and want to stay in it. That’s why their latest agenda is to obey God’s laws by banning transgenderism and not promote other sexual perversions. Their reasoning is that because they obey God’s laws, they will not be vomited out of the land, but white Americans of non-German ancestry will be. They also believe that God of the Bible enforces His laws on His people [descendants of Jacob] because He gave His laws only to them, but the laws do not apply to them [German masqueraders] as Satan is their guide, and he has no such laws that they have to obey.

President Trump is now the global chief of the Germans and German masqueraders. He is leading their effort to discourage such sexual deviancy from public life in the USA. Governors Ron DeSantis of Florida and Greg Abbot of Texas are also German masqueraders who are leading the same effort in their respective states.

But German masqueraders are active on both sides of major issues. Governors Gavin Newsome of California and Kathy Hochul of New York are German masqueraders who are defying President Trump on the transgender issue and other sexual sins. That’s why it’s so difficult to tackle issues nationwide concerning violations of God’s laws.

The remedy for us to not be vomited out of our lands is to start obeying the laws. But that is easier said than done. The reason is that the propaganda machine of German masqueraders and their allies will oppose all our efforts tooth and nail to curb sexual immorality in public life and its promotion by getting their people elected to the highest offices like president, governors and mayors, through legislation, propaganda, protests and even violence. That’s where our legislative leaders at all levels in our UBI nations are failing. And many of our leaders are German masqueraders such as governors of California, New York and many other states. The remedy, therefore, is to vote leaders out who promote behavior and lifestyles that violate God’s laws concerning sexual sins.

The problem with removing leaders who promote sexually sinful behavior is that 41 million Christians who are against such behavior do not vote. If they all voted, then it would be easy to vote such leaders out of Congress and state legislatures.

I thought that the reason 41 million Christians do not vote is the same as the reason why God’s Church does not vote. The number of genuine Church of God members eligible to vote in the USA is probably no more than 5,000. Therefore, they can have little impact in elections in small towns leave alone any impact in local, state and nationwide elections. Rest of the members are German masqueraders. But if 41 million Christian voters continue to follow the Church’s example and do not vote, then by default German masqueraders and their allies will continue to win elections and succeed in their agenda to drench the USA in sexual sins so that the land vomits us out.

Since this issue is of such critical importance, to set an example I seriously considered voting temporarily so that 41 million Christians will also start taking part in elections. I reasoned that we must diligently do whatever we can to promote obedience to God’s laws. As soon as laws are passed to curb promotion of sexual sins, shut down propaganda to make them acceptable in society and stop persecution of those who criticize them, I would again stop voting.

I believed that this is an “ox in the ditch situation” (Luke 14:5) and voting temporarily was justified till we can vote out leaders who lead us to violate God’s laws concerning sexual morality which will bring His wrath upon us, leading to national slavery and being dispossessed of our lands. Since, the 41 million Christians non-voters seemed to be following the lead of God’s Church, I mulled the idea for about a week of God’s Church leading by example and voting temporarily.

However, on July 13, 2025, God intervened and changed my view as I was mulling the situation. From the very beginning about a week before I came across the data on 41 million Christians not voting and started to consider and research what action might be appropriate for me and God’s Church, I was fearful to go against any judgments made by Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA), even temporarily. And his judgment was that we as members of God’s Church should not vote in elections or take part in politics. Therefore, every time I prayed, I asked God to guide me in this decision.

In my prayers I reminded God that He responded to the prayers of His servants whenever they had hard questions or decisions to make. Therefore, every time I prayed, I asked God to guide me. I do that in every important decision small or large that I have to make. I remind God that I do not want to make the mistake that Jushua made concerning the Gibeonites who deceived him and the Israelites by saying they were from a far country when they did not inquire of God (Joshua 9:14-15) whether the Gibeonites were indeed from a far country and whether they should make a league with them. I’d rather ask God to guide me even on simple sounding decisions than rely on my own ability to make the correct decision even though my reasoning may sound very logical to me.

When I was thinking that voting temporarily in the “ox in the ditch” situation may be justified, or the reasoning that the “Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” applied in this case, God answered my prayer in a dramatic way.

In his booklet *“Should Christians Vote?”* David Pack of the Restored Church of God describes a dream HWA had concerning leaders in God’s Church trying to inject voting in the Church which impressed him. He quotes from the Church’s September 1980 *Good News* magazine:

“...Mr. Armstrong had a dream he felt was intended to reveal an important lesson to him and the Church. It occurred shortly after the period in the 1970s (...when liberal leaders sought to inject democracy [meaning choosing leaders by voting] into the Church)...:

“I awakened considerably impressed with the dream. Was God revealing to me that TOO MANY within the Church membership are leaving GOD out of the picture?—in their own minds putting GOD out of the Church?…that the people should say to GOD, ‘This is OUR Church, God, we want you to GET OUT of the Church and leave us alone. WE will run this Church OUR way!’ I awakened impressed that TOO MANY of our people are LEAVING GOD AND CHRIST OUT OF HIS CHURCH and trying to make it OUR Church—the church of the PEOPLE, and NOT the CHURCH of GOD!

“[In the 70s] There were at least six or seven in TOP offices next to Christ’s apostle in authority—men trusted and honored. But they were going to make it ‘THE CHURCH OF PEOPLE,’ instead of the CHURCH OF GOD. They could not see God nor Christ in their mental picture of God’s Church. They were LIBERALS!

“Now churches or works OF THEIR OWN have been started [meaning those leaders left the Church and started their own churches]. But they overlook one thing: ‘EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEY LABOUR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT.’

“GOD is not building their houses!”

“Shall We All Leave THE CHURCH OF GOD and join ‘THE CHURCH OF PEOPLE’?”

God too answered my week-long prayers through a very vivid dream in the morning of July 13, 2025. In the dream suddenly everything in my house that I had labored for and accumulated in my life was stolen, including things I had just purchased. I awoke and the dream was very vivid in my mind. Immediately 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 came to mind: “11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

I have no doubt that God answered my prayer and provided the answer to my question through the dream. I am to abide by the judgment made by HWA under all circumstances that members of God’s Church should not vote or take part in politics. Otherwise, I would be in danger of losing my reward that I have worked for throughout my life. So, I will never vote or take part in politics as I have done throughout my life.

CHAPTER 24

BELIEF 24 - GOD’S FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

God’s Church believes that God’s form of government in His Church has always been from the top down, under one man as head of that government. God the Father is supreme in authority, and His Son Jesus Christ is under Him in rank and authority. Jesus Christ is the Head of God’s Church. God the Father and Jesus Christ appoint a man as head of the Church, usually by raising an era of the Church through that man. That man then appoints others under him in authority. He also appoints one man as successor after him.

Jesus said in John 14:28, “...I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:23, “...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.”

Under God the Father and Jesus Christ, there are other human beings appointed to various offices in the Church in order of descending authority as stated in Ephesians 4:11-12, “11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

God’s Church has gone through seven successive distinct eras in its history which was prophesied in advance in Revelation 2-3: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. God raised up each era through one man who then became the head of the Church. He appoints men to other offices in the Church. And he also appoints his successor. That has been the pattern of government in God’s Church throughout most but not all of its history.

How the Church is to be governed by its leaders as servants is described by Jesus Christ in Matthew 20:25-28, “25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

*Recent Church Experiences in Governance*

History of God’s Church shows that God has raised each era of His true Church through the preaching of one man who became the head of the Church in his time. He then appointed his successor.

Satan uses every strategy available to him to try and destroy God’s Church. As soon as an era of God’s Church is being raised, he begins packing it with tares, or infiltrators, with the purpose of destroying it from within. In the parable of the tares when the disciples asked Jesus to explain the tares to them, He said in Matthew 13:37-39, “He who sows the seed is the Son of Man (Jesus Christ). The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one [Satan]. The enemy who sowed them is the devil...”

The tares are influenced by Satan and are engaged in leading genuine members of God's true Church astray. Their purpose is to deprive genuine members of their opportunity for eternal life. Satan uses the tares to try every possible means to lead the Church collectively as well as individual members astray. For such infiltrators to be highly effective, they have to be very well versed in the doctrines of the Church and God's way of life. So, they understand God's way of life very well. They know it is good for those who practice it and order their own lives by it. But they use Satan's cunning and craftiness to try to deceive the true members into believing that some doctrine is in error and needs modification, or some way of life does not work, or they can compromise with it based on their circumstances and treat it as an “ox in the ditch” situation (Luke 13:15; 14:5).

Any compromise with or violation of God’s laws and way of life is sin. The infiltrators try to cause divisions in the Church, or rebellion against authority. All these are contrary to God's way of life. Some genuine members are deceived by them, leave the Church and will lose their eternal life.

The Philadelphia era of God’s Church was raised through the preaching of HWA. He was introduced to God’s true Church by coming into contact with members of the Sardis era of the Church (Revelation 3:1-2, 4, “I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God...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.”)

During the early years of the Sardis era in the USA between the late 1600s to 1800s, because of slow modes of transport and communications, individual congregations or small groups of congregations of the Church of God existed. However, in the early 1800s, a general conference was organized to coordinate their evangelistic efforts and cooperate in the publication of literature. Individual congregations contributed financially to the state conference which contributed to the general conference headquarters for the evangelistic efforts, as well as development of the ministry. Leaders of the General Conference, meaning national leaders, were elected by vote.

When HWA came into contact with the Sardis members of the Church of God, it was on its last legs and had been heavily infiltrated by tares who were at work constantly calling into question one Church doctrine or other, causing divisions. When agreement on doctrines could not be reached, which was always the intended goal of the tares (generally German masqueraders) the Church split. They used the voting process to the hilt. Because of dissensions, many members stopped attending Church altogether while others practiced true Christianity and adhered to the true doctrines individually in their own homes or small groups, thus fulfilling Christ’s prophecies in Revelation 3:1,4, “I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead... 4 You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments [by compromising with doctrines or God’s way of life]; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”

That script was enacted all over again in the Philadelphia era of God’s Church that followed Sardis. God raised the Philadelphia era through the preaching of HWA. When he wrote a paper on the Israelite identity of USA and British Commonwealth nations and sent it to headquarters of the General Conference, the leaders agreed with what he wrote but refused to preach it. Thereafter, local Church members with whom he fellowshipped asked him to preach. That’s how the Philadelphia era started with HWA and grew.

Because of the problems he witnessed in the Sardis era, HWA searched the bible to find out what was God’s method of Church government. He reached the conclusion that “one man in charge” was God’s method of government. He then taught God’s method of government to the Church. When he knew that he could soon die before the beginning of the fulfillment of prophesied end-time events, a few weeks before his death on January 16, 1986, he appointed Joseph W. Tkach Sr. (JWT) as his successor and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG).

JWT turned out to be a German masquerader, and a tare, whose goal was always to destroy the Church from within. Shortly after taking over as head of the Church, JWT with his son and other accomplices started dismantling the Church by first questioning doctrines and then doing away with them. They began firing ministers who would not preach the changes they were making. Some leading ministers set up their own individual Church of God organizations whereas others joined together and formed larger groups.

Members were left in utter confusion including me. Some simply stopped attending and joined churches of mainstream Christianity. Others followed wherever their local minister went. Others went around larger groups for some time like me and selected one of them and made it their Church home. The larger groups further split into smaller groups.

While HWA’s example showed what God’s method of Church government can accomplish, JWT showed how under the same method a wrong leader can destroy God’s Church from within. Method of Church government chosen by different larger groups that came out of the WCG can provide further insights.

As best as I know, among the larger Church groups that came out of splits in the WCG, the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) headed by Gerald R. Flurry (GRF), the Restored Church of God (RCG) headed by David C. Pack (DCP) practice the form of Church government taught by HWA. The United Church of God (UCG), the Living Church of God (LCG) and the Church of God, a worldwide Association (COGWA) are governed by a Council of Elders, a kind of Church Board, which votes for the President of the Church as executive head of the Church and approves his men picked to head various operations departments. Members of the Council of Elders are voted by all the ministers. Leaders of LCG and RCG were originally part of the splinter group, the Global Church of God (GCG). Leaders of LCG and RCG were fired from GCG by its board who then set up their respective organizations. GCG is now defunct. COGWA split off from UCG.

The horrifying tragedy is that almost all leaders, members of their Council of Elders and all paid and unpaid ministers (men who hold other regular jobs) of all these organizations have turned out to be German masqueraders or allied with them and have recently murdered a genuine member of their own Church to join the German masquerader side and prove their loyalty to them. Their motive in doing so was to avoid being martyred in the Great Tribulation when the German-led seventh resurrection of the “Holy Roman Empire” defeats the USA, British Commonwealth nations and Israel and enslaves their populations. Almost all the members who remain in these organizations have also participated in murder and are also either German masqueraders or their allies.

There still are genuine members of God’s Church, but they are part of individual congregations. Some of these congregations have formed a loose network called the Common Faith Network. But unfortunately, tares have infiltrated these congregations also in large numbers

The lesson from this history is that no method of Church government is fool proof. Voting and the democratic method invariably leads to quarrels, divisions and eventually splits. It’s also the method most easily exploited by tares to destroy the Church from within. God’s method of Church government is the best, as long it is led by a leader who has been clearly chosen by God which is evident by the fruits God has produced through him, who also stands firm in the face of opposition. That was the case with HWA. But JWT was appointed by HWA as his successor and could be considered appointed by God. However, he dismantled everything God had restored to His Church through HWA.

So, how could genuine members have avoided becoming victims of the cunning craftiness of JWT, his son Joseph Tkach Jr., and their associates, and not be misled to forsake God’s way and lose their one and only chance for salvation and eternal life?

Jesus Christ is returning to earth very soon to set up God’s kingdom. Members of God’s Church will face the worst deception that Satan can muster in the history of mankind because he knows he has a very short time left as ruler on earth (Revelation 12:12). The purpose of the deception would be to deceive the very elect, meaning members of God’s Church (Matthew 24:24, “24 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.”)

However, in the end time God has equipped His Church with the best weapon ever (Ephesians 6:12-18, “13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins gird about with truth [the truths restored by HWA], and having on the breastplate of righteousness [so that God will be pleased to help us not become victims of Satan’s deceptions and take us to the place of safety]; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace [God has restored to us the true meaning of the gospel]; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” [we have true understanding of the word of God in the fundamental beliefs of the Church of God as restored by HWA], 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” [so that we stay close to God].”

In this end time, God sent a prophet and apostle in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, Herbert W. Armstrong, to “restore all things,” meaning all truths to His end-time Church, which are the fundamental beliefs of the Church of God.

So, how should we as members of God’s Church act when faced with the situation where divisions and splits are taking place in God’s Church, or when leaders, “friends” who are actually tares or individuals try to lead us astray from the fundamental beliefs restored through HWA ? We stick to the fundamental beliefs restored by HWA. We try our best to find people of like mind to fellowship with on the Sabbath and God’s annual holy days (Hebrews 10: 24-25, “24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.”) Even if you find yourself alone and all who you fellowshipped with have gone astray from any of the fundamental beliefs, have been deceived, or were German masqueraders and their allies whose only goal was to deceive you, God requires us as individuals to stay with the truth.

Jesus Christ gave us that perfect guidance in the message to the Sardis Church. Members of Sardis era of God’s Church experienced tares and infiltrators who split and destroyed that era so that many members found themselves alone and no one else who adhered to the truth close to them to fellowship with. Jesus Christ considers them worthy of eternal life (Revelation 3:4-5, “4 You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments [they stuck to the truth]; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 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.”)

That is the great value to us of God having sent a man in the power of Elijah the prophet to restore all truths and fundamental beliefs to His end-time Church. That is the great weapon God has given us to thwart Satan’s attempts to lead us astray and deprive us of eternal life. Never compromise with those truths to the end, no matter what the circumstances. Then Jesus Christ will be pleased to “confess your name before God the Father and before His angels.” Don’t look only to the right form of government. WCG under JWT had the right form of Church government. But he destroyed the Church. As long as you have stuck with all the truths restored by HWA, you remain safe in Jesus Christ. But do seek fellowship with people of the same mind (Hebrews 10:25) who also adhere to the truths restored by HWA.

There is another great lesson we can learn from HWA’s appointment of JWT as his successor. If HWA had known that JWT was a German masquerader and a tare in God’s Church, he obviously would not have appointed him as his successor. But God allowed it to fulfill His prophecies. The prophecy this appointment fulfilled is in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (NKJV), “7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”

This prophecy is very precise. Germans are a lawless people because they follow Satan who does not require them to follow any laws. They were secretly working to undermine God’s Church. That’s why “mystery of lawlessness” is a precise description of them. They tried to make changes to doctrines and secretly worked with many members because well above 80% were German masqueraders like them and their allies, all tares in the Church. Whenever HWA found out about the changes, he disfellowshipped the leaders and those who followed them. That’s how he restrained the lawlessness that was already at work as long as he was alive. But when HWA was taken out of the way by death, there was no more restraint and the “mystery of lawlessness” came out in the open because with JWT’s appointment they were in charge of the Church. Thus, God allowed JWT’s appointment as successor to fulfill prophecy and to test members whether they had the love of the truth.

The tares in the Church did not love the truth. God prophesied as a warning what they would suffer in 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 10-12, “10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned [condemned] who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” The second permanent death awaits them because they have had their only chance for salvation.

Parable of the tares in Matthew 13:24-30 also describes their fate in verse 30: “in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them...”

The lesson, therefore, is that as members of God’s Church, we must love the truths restored by God through HWA, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

CHAPTER 25

BELIEF 25 - CHURCH SERVICES AND RITUALS

While God’s Church does not have a fundamental belief about how Church services should be conducted and does not conduct any rituals in its worship practices, it is necessary to state how Church services are conducted in God’s Church as instituted by HWA, through whom God founded the Philadelphia era of His Church.

It is necessary to state this because many Christian denominations are giving Christianity a bad name by conducting fake healings on TV or fake demonstrations of the holy spirit with the pastor touching a member on the forehead and pushing him and the member falling back or shaking his or her body violently or uttering gibberish which they call “speaking in tongues.”

Mainstream Christian Protestant denominations such as Baptists, Anglicans and others do not indulge in such practices. Their worship practices are similar to those of God’s true Church.

This is how God’s true Church worships God in its Church services. We do not practice deceit in the form of fake healings or utter gibberish to claim that members are speaking in “tongues” as evidence of being led by the ”holy spirit.” In God’s true Church, all things are done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and in order”.)

As an example of how we conduct our Church practices, here is a link to watch a full-length church service conducted in the United Church of God which I attended for more than 20 years. That’s how we conduct our services throughout the year:

https://video.ibm.com/recorded/134377402

In my free eBook *“Why God Created Mankind?”* I explain that God’s purpose for creating mankind is to give human beings an opportunity to become His literal sons and daughters. In my free eBook *“God’s Plan of Salvation for Mankind”* I explain the process God has put in motion to give every human being an opportunity to qualify for salvation, the end result of which is to be made immortal through a resurrection from physical life to spirit life like that of Jesus Christ to become His immortal sons and daughters.

To achieve that goal and become immortal, God has given every human being a mandate which He gave Abraham in Genesis 17:1, “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; WALK BEFORE ME AND BE YOU PERFECT.”

That command was repeated to all Israelites through Moses in Deuteronomy 18:13, “13 You shall be perfect with the Lord your God.”

At the time of dedication of the Temple Solomon had built, he stated in his speech in 1 Kings 8:61, “Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.” That’s how we become perfect: by walking in God’s ways and keeping all His commandments, starting with the Ten Commandments. That means obeying God’s law. King David said in Psalm 19:7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount also succinctly stated God’s mandate to every human being in Matthew 5:48, “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This is the same command God gave to Abraham and to all Israelites through Moses.

Becoming perfect like God the Father and Jesus Christ should be every Christian’s goal and we do that by keeping God’s commandments. India’s Nobel Prize winning poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote in his poem *“Where the Mind is without Fear”,* part of his Gitanjali collection, the line "where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection..." That’s what God wants humans to strive for.

The goal of Christian Church services is to help us in our tireless striving towards becoming perfect like God the Father. In sermons, usually of one hour duration, and sermonettes, usually between 10-15 minutes in length, we learn how to apply God’s Law in our lives so that we can become perfect.

*Weekly Church Services*

This is how God’s Church conducts services every week on the Sabbath day from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, usually of one and a half to two hours duration.

1) First, we sing 3 hymns in praise of God which can take about 10 minutes. After the hymns, we usually say a brief prayer asking God’s blessings on the church service, inspiring the speaker’s message and our hearing.

2) Then a Church elder or member gives a sermonette on a subject concerning personal spiritual development. In the sermonette, usually 3-4 scriptures are quoted to explain the subject. After the sermonette, we sing another hymn in praise of God.

3) Then we usually have announcements lasting from 5-15 minutes about members who may be sick and need prayers for healing or for other reasons; other announcements concerning individual members or Church related activities such as for teaching of children, or picnic or other social activities. After the announcements we sing another hymn.

4) Next comes the sermon by the pastor or other elders which can be 45-60 minutes in duration. Subjects on Christian living, prophecy, how to overcome problems and other many bible-related subjects are covered in depth.

5) After the sermon, we sing a last hymn and close the service with another short prayer. In the prayers, no set words are stated. The one giving the prayer chooses his own words which include giving God thanks for His blessings and asking for help in implementing what we have learnt in our lives.

Before and after Church services members fellowship with each other. There may be snacks before and after services, and sometimes there might be a potluck meal in which all members bring prepared dishes or other kinds of food to be shared among all.

*No Rituals*

Besides what I have stated about our weekly Church services, God’s Church does not conduct any rituals of any kind. But we have only three other special ceremonies.

*Baptism*

God’s Church practices water baptism for adults only which has been explained in Belief # 7.

After an individual repents of his sins, the next step for him on the road to salvation is to make a total commitment and solemn covenant with God to live His way of life from that day forward by keeping all His commandments, obeying His Law and living by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). One demonstrates that total commitment, with never going back, by being baptized. Peter mentioned this as the next step in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38, “38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Baptism is performed by total immersion in water because it pictures total surrender to God and completely burying the old self. An example of the baptism performed by Philip the evangelist is provided in Acts 8:35-39. When we are baptized, God forgives all our past sins.

After baptism we are dead to sin and should walk in newness of life as mentioned by Paul in Romans 6:3-6.

As peter said in Acts 2:38, the next step on the road to salvation after water baptism is receiving the gift of the holy spirit. God gives His holy spirit to those who are baptized by the laying on of hands of a genuine minister of God’s true Church and praying for the baptized person to receive the holy spirit. Examples are given in Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6. Acts 8:17, “17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

This is a very simple ceremony after the individual has counseled with his pastor and decided to make a commitment to God’s way of life. In the ceremony the individual is totally immersed in water, which can be in a tub, pool or a stream. Then the minister lays his hands on his head and says a prayer asking God to forgive the individual’s sins, give the person His holy spirit because he has repented and is making a total commitment to live His way of life. The prayer may be anywhere from 30 seconds to a minute or two. That’s all there is to the baptism ceremony.

*Passover*

Once a year, only the baptized members keep the Passover commanded by Jesus Christ to be kept in remembrance of His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. This observance takes about an hour and a half.

The apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” So, Christians are to follow the example of Paul as he followed Jesus Christ and kept the Passover.

He writes in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: “23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.”

Eating the bread and drinking the wine in the cup that Paul mentions are the new Passover symbols Jesus instituted. Paul says that he received this from the Lord Jesus Christ and delivered the custom of keeping the Passover the way Jesus kept it to the Church members.

Jesus instituted new Passover symbols and practices to teach Christians important truths about Himself and God's plan of salvation. He instituted the foot washing ceremony as a part of the Passover service and commanded us to follow His example. This is stated in John 13:13-15: “13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” The foot washing ceremony is an annual reminder of the importance of humble service to fellow human beings.

The unleavened bread we partake of during the Passover is a symbol of the broken body of Jesus Christ and the excruciating death He suffered for forgiveness of our sins, as well as our physical healing. He said in John 6:48-51:"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." Just as bread sustains us physically, symbolically eating the small 1-2-inch piece of unleavened bread symbolizes letting Jesus Christ live in us through the holy spirit to sustain us spiritually. We should now live an entirely new life, in total obedience to God’s law and overcoming sin.

The purpose of partaking of a small amount of wine as a symbol of the shed blood of Jesus Christ is to deeply impress on our mind that Jesus Christ’s blood was shed for the forgiveness of all the world’s sins.

*Keeping God’s Annual Holy Days*

God’s Church does not keep pagan holidays or festivals such as Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, Valentine’s day, New Year’s day or any others. We observe God’s seven annual holy days, which have been explained in great detail in my free eBook *“God’s Plan of Salvation for Mankind”* available on my religion website www.ChurchOfGodMessage.com.

During the holy days, we conduct Church services on the same format as our weekly church services. During the sermonette and sermon, the significance of the holy day in God’s plan of salvation is explained.

*Tithes and Offerings*

Church pastors have to be paid, Church facilities maintained, or halls rented for holding Church services, and the gospel (which means good news of the coming Kingdom of God) preached to the world which all require money. Members of God’s Church contribute for meeting all these expenses. We usually send in our tithes to Church headquarters or give to pastors anytime by check. Then on the seven annual holy days special offerings are taken up in which members contribute whatever amount they wish based on the blessings they have received from God during the year. We do not take offerings every week during church services.

*Healing*

Some Churches, particularly Pentecostal Churches go through rituals for instantly healing people which all appear to be fraudulent. God’s Church does not do such things. We know God heals and the process for seeking God’s intervention for doing so is stated in James 5:14-15, “14 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: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

When we ask God to heal the sick, the sick person merely discusses the situation with the pastor or an ordained elder. The pastor or elder then takes his small two-inch bottle of olive oil out that he usually carries in his pocket, puts a dab of the olive oil on his finger, applies it to the forehead of the sick person, then says a 30 second to one-minute-long prayer to ask God to intervene and heal the sick person. Then the matter is left in God’s hands to heal the sick person. There is nothing more complicated or ritualistic about it. Individuals in the Church are asked to remember the sick persons in their daily prayers to God to heal them. Members do get healed of deadly diseases. There is no dramatic pushing or shoving the sick person on his forehead to heal him as we see being shown on TV in Pentecostal churches.

*Blessing of the Little Children*

Infants and little children are prone to danger of injury and even death. God’s Church believes in asking God in prayer to protect little children from harm by setting His angels about them. That ceremony to ask God for protection of little children is called “blessing of the little children.” This is done only once in a little child’s life who can be a newborn or up to 12 years of age who has never been blessed before. The minister lays his hands on the child and prays to God to protect the child in his or her life from every kind of danger and set His angels about that child. This ceremony is conducted once a year, usually on the second sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles. This allows members sufficient time to return home from observing the Feast of Tabernacles in other cities so that the ceremony can be held on the same day in the local congregations for all the newborns and other children who have never been blessed previously.

I hope individuals who want to follow good Christianity can take guidance from the way God’s Church practices it and avoid becoming victims of charlatans and frauds masquerading as Christian pastors.

CHAPTER 26

BELIEF 26 – WE DO NOT CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS

Members of God’s Church do not celebrate birthdays.

With his thirty-three years and a half of life lived on earth as a human being, Jesus Christ set the perfect example on how human beings should live. We are to follow His example. Paul the apostle said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

Everything of importance that we are to follow in the life of Jesus Christ, the apostles and other great servants and prophets of God is recorded for us in the Bible.

Celebrating one’s birthday is one of the most important “joyous” annual events in the lives of most people. If joyously celebrating birthdays was important to God, many examples of Jesus Christ and servants of God celebrating birthdays would have been recorded in the Bible. But we find not a single incident of Jesus Christ, the apostles, prophets or other great servants of God celebrating Jesus’ birthday or their own birthday with their family and friends. We in God’s Church follow Christ’s example and do not celebrate birthdays. That was also the judgment HWA made, and we adhere to it.

Mainstream Christianity celebrates Jesus’ birthday on Christmas. But the word Christmas is not even mentioned in the Bible, leave alone commanded to be celebrated as the birthday of Jesus Christ. Birth date of Jesus Christ or any of God’s servants is not recorded in the Bible. It definitely was not on December 25th but sometime in autumn and not in the winter. On December 25, pagans celebrated the birthday of the Sun-god Mithra whose origin is from Persia, but the cult was widely adopted by Roman soldiers.

Only two examples of birthdays being celebrated are provided in the Bible, both by pagans, with both ending in executions. First is the example of a Pharaoh in Egypt celebrating his birthday in which he hanged his chief baker (Gen. 40). The second example is that of Herod who on his birthday was so pleased with the dancing of the daughter of his wife Herodias that he granted her request to have John the Baptist beheaded in prison and his head given to her on a platter (Matthew 14:6-10).

There is another possible example of birthday celebrations, that of Job’s sons. Job had 7 sons and 3 daughters. Job 1:4-5, 19, “4 And his [Job’s] sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day [most of the commentaries say these were birthdays, as in Job 3:1 he referred to his birthday as his day]; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually...19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell you.”

Most of the commentaries state that Job’s sons celebrated their birthdays with feasting, but Job himself did not celebrate his birthday. In this incident also, all ten of Job’s children died. Job was apparently concerned about these activities of his children such that after their feasting "Job sent and sanctified them... and offered burnt offerings... for Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.'" It is also noteworthy that either Job was not invited to these feasts because his sons knew that he would not attend or he chose not to attend.

Job actually cursed his birthdate when he was going through his pain and suffering in Job 3:1-3, “1 After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. 2 And Job spoke, and said, 3 Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.”

The Jews in Jesus’s day did not celebrate birthdays. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian wrote: "Nay, indeed, the law does not permit us to make festivals at the births of our children..." (*Against Apion*, book II, §26).

The following discussion is from an article by Kenneth C. Herrmann titled “Should Christians Celebrate Birthdays?” in the December 1959 “Plain Truth” magazine published by the WCG in the days of HWA. Here is a link to that article: <https://www.hwalibrary.com/cgi-bin/get/hwa.cgi?action=getmagazine&InfoID=1407844261>

People in the world celebrate birthdays using the Roman calendar which is of pagan origin. Of course, those born on February 29 have the problem of celebrating their birthday once in four years. This anomaly affects one in 1461 persons in the world [(365x4)+1]. If one were to use the Hebrew calendar or God’s calendar for celebrating birthdays, one in eight persons would be affected because it has three months that vary in length from 29 to 30 days in a complicated pattern. This irregularity affects three times as many people. Another irregularity in the Hebrew Calendar that affects the day on which birthday is to be celebrated is the insertion of a 13th month in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of a 19-year cycle.

God in His wisdom has given mankind a calendar that is not conducive to observing birthdays or anniversaries. That’s why no birthdays are recorded in the Bible, none of God’s people celebrated their birthdays and as noted by Josephus, Jews in Jesus’s days knew that God’s law did not permit them to celebrate birthdays.

“It is true that some Jewish people, following pagan customs, attempt to use this ancient [Hebrew] calendar to observe their birthdays. A rather intricate set of human rules governs whether to move the celebration ahead or back one day, or back one month in the absence of the 13th month. Differing regulations are applied, and the practice is not uniformly followed by all.”

Important question is: What should be our attitude towards our days of birth and death?

The answer was provided by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:1-2, “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.”

Solomon in his wisdom said the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth, and it is better to attend a person’s funeral rather than a person’s birthday celebration. Why is that so?

Paul the apostle provided the answer in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight [in overcoming his human nature in this life and be considered worthy of eternal life], I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day [the day of Christ's return when the dead saints will be resurrected to eternal life]; and not to me only, but unto all of them also that love His appearing."

The day Paul began his carnal human life as a baby could hardly be compared in importance with the day, he at death, made sure of his reward of eternal life as God’s literal son by enduring the trials and tribulations of life as a Christian to the end! That’s why the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.

Human life does not begin at birth but at conception. And at present humans are mortal, subject to death. The day of one’s human birth can hardly be as important as the day of our new birth into God’s kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ and our resurrection to eternal life.

It is very clear why members of God’s Church as true Christians should not celebrate birthdays. However, I am disappointed to say that organizations that split from the Worldwide Church of God such as the LCG, RCG and PCG while still continue to say that birthdays are not biblical and don’t advise celebrating them, they have started adding comments like they are not prohibited in the bible. That attitude has creeped in because all their leaders and ministers have cemented their relationship with the German masquerader side by murdering a genuine member of God’s Church. That’s why they are engaged in subtly deceiving genuine members with their writings, opening the door slightly to pagan celebrations. UCG now says that celebrating birthdays is a matter of personal choice. COGWA does not address the question of birthday celebrations in their literature. I know for a fact that members in UCG now openly celebrate birthdays because they are German masqueraders or their allies. Please do not follow them or fellowship with them if you are a genuine member of God’s true Church. We should not celebrate birthdays.

CHAPTER 27

BELIEF 27 – OUR BELIEFS CONCERNING HEAVEN AND HELL

[FOR A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING ON THIS SUBJECT, I RECOMMEND READING THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD BOOKLET TITLED “HEAVEN OR HELL: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY TEACH” AVAILABLE FREE OF COST TO READ ONLINE OR DOWNLOAD OR REQUEST A PRINT COPY AT <https://www.ucg.org/learn/bible-study-aids/heaven-and-hell-what-does-bible-really-teach>...]

God’s Church believes that when a person dies, he neither goes to heaven if righteous nor is sent to an ever-burning hell to be tortured forever if unrighteous. Eternity in heaven or hell are not the rewards for any human being. Heaven exists where God and Jesus Christ dwell at present with the angels, but no ever-burning hell exists where souls of sinners are being tortured for eternity. The Bible teaches that humans don’t have an immortal soul. The soul who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) and not live forever. But a person who has sinned (and “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” – Romans 3:23) can repent, accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as payment of the death penalty on his behalf and can qualify to receive the gift of eternal life as God’s literal son through a resurrection to be forever with Jesus Christ and reign with Him on earth in God’s kingdom, and not go to heaven. After God’s plan of salvation for all of mankind is complete, even God the Father will dwell on a new earth with His immortal children.

SCRIPTURES

According to the Bible in Acts 4:12 (NIV): “Salvation is found in no one else [other than Jesus Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

More than 75% of the world’s population are non-Christians. In the history of mankind, perhaps more than 90% of humans ever born have been non-Christians. Many interpret this verse to mean that these people are condemned without hope of eternal life, besides the vast numbers of Christians who may not qualify for salvation because of their conduct in this life. They are condemned to be tortured forever in a burning hell according to the most popular teaching, supposedly based on the Bible. That implies God is a cruel monster Who created humans to mostly fail, and that Satan who deceives humanity is winning the “contest” between God and Satan. But nothing could be further from the truth ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE.

*Do Humans Have an Immortal Soul*

Almost every religion in the world believes that humans have an eternal soul that never dies, and the souls of righteous people go to heaven, though different religions have a different version of what heaven or “paradise” is. Even Christians who believe they go to heaven when they die admit that there is very little in the Bible that indicates what they can look forward to enjoying or doing in heaven. If God is offering heaven as the reward for the righteous, He has revealed very little about it in His word. British historian Paul Johnson says, “Heaven... lacks genuine incentive. Indeed, it lacks definition of any kind. It is the great hole in theology" (*The Quest for God*, 1996, p. 173).

The Hebrew word translated *soul* in the Bible in English is *nephesh*. It simply means a “breathing creature.” In the creation account in Genesis 1, the term is applied to land animals, sea life, birds, reptiles and insects. In Genesis 2:7 (KJV), *nephesh* is applied to humans, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Thus, the term soul is applied to any living creature in the Bible, whether man or animal. Soul is identified as a physical being and not an eternal spirit entity capable of existing independently outside the physical body.

The idea of the eternal soul entered Christianity from the Greek philosopher Plato. The Old Testament does not teach it. Ezekiel 18:4 states, “The soul who sins shall die.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains: "We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness and is nowhere found in the Old Testament" (1960, Vol. 2, p. 812, "Death").

Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us that the dead have no consciousness: "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing." Jesus compared Lazarus’s death to sleep before he raised him to life (John 11:11-14). In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, the apostle Paul refers to the righteous dead who will be resurrected to meet Christ in the air as being "asleep": "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep...”

Daniel 12:2 describes the dead as "those who sleep in the dust of the earth," who later "shall awake" through a resurrection.

Clearly, the Bible compares death to sleep, but unlike normal sleep, there is no thought, brain activity or life whatsoever. However, some misunderstand some scriptures to mean that they support the immortal soul belief.

Matthew 10:28 : "And do not fear those who kill the body (the Greek word is *soma*) but cannot kill the soul (Greek word *psuche*, which denotes a conscious physical being, equivalent of the Hebrew word *nephesh*). But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Here Jesus is not saying that humans have an immortal soul. He is saying that the soul can be destroyed. He was saying that a person killed by human beings is not lost because God can make him alive as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead or resurrect him to physical life. But God can permanently destroy a person in “hell.”

“Hell” in this verse is translated from the Greek word “gehenna” which is derived from two Hebrew words *gai* and *hinnom* which mean “Valley of Hinnom,” a valley in the south side of Jerusalem where pagan deities were worshipped but later was used to burn trash by the Jews. Hence the term *gehenna* was used to denote a site used for disposal of useless things. Therefore, in Matthew 10:28 Jesus was saying that only God can utterly destroy human beings without any hope of ever gaining consciousness through a resurrection as stated in Malachi 4:3.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul wrote, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit (Greek word *pneuma*), soul (*psuche*), and body (*soma*) be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this verse Paul was not discussing “immortal” soul. The word spirit denotes the non-physical component in human beings that combines with the human brain to form the human mind which imparts intellect to humans with the ability to reason, analyze, create, appreciate music and art. It is the spirit in man that makes humans different from animals. “Spirit in Man” as contrasted with the holy spirit will be discussed in another belief.

Other verses interpreted as providing support for an “immortal” soul are Revelation 6:9-10, "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" (Revelation 6:9-10).

The best explanation is provided in UCG booklet *“Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?”*:

“To understand this scripture, we must remember the context. John was witnessing a vision while he was "in the Spirit" (Revelation 4:2). Under inspiration he was seeing future events depicted in symbolism. The fifth seal is figurative of the Great Tribulation, a time of world turmoil preceding Christ's return. In this vision, John sees under the altar the martyred believers who sacrificed their lives for their faith in God. These souls figuratively cry out, "Avenge our blood!" This can be compared to Abel's blood metaphorically crying out to God from the ground (Genesis 4:10). Though neither dead souls nor blood can actually speak, these phrases figuratively demonstrate that a God of justice will not forget the evil deeds of mankind perpetrated against His righteous followers.

“This verse does not describe living souls that have gone to heaven. The Bible confirms that "no one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven [Jesus Christ]" (John 3:13). Even righteous King David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), was described by Peter as being "dead and buried" (Acts 2:29), not alive in heaven or some other state or location (Acts 2:34).”

*Are Sinners Punished Forever in “Hell”*

Would a loving God punish sinners by being tortured forever in an ever-burning hell while the righteous enjoy heaven? The idea of a loving God who tells us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45) does not reconcile with the idea of a God who would be so cruel as to torture human beings in hell for eternity.

And how would those in heaven feel joy when they know perhaps their unbelieving parents, spouses, children or babies or best friends are suffering torture in hell? Would God be fair to condemn billions of non-Christian unbelievers who died never knowing God or Jesus Christ and received no opportunity to be saved?

*Bible Mentions Three Hells*

In the Bible three hells are mentioned, translated from one Hebrew word and three Greek words. The Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades* are translated as “hell” and mean simply the grave. Examples are Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27. In the King James Version (KJV), the Hebrew word *sheol* is translated "grave" 31 times, "hell" 31 times and "pit"—a hole in the ground—three times. The Greek word *hades* is translated as “hell” in all cases except in 1 Corinthians 15:55, where it is translated "grave."

The second Greek word translated “hell” is *tartaroo*, used only in 2 Peter 2:4 and applied only for demons and refers to their condition of restraint on earth, such as not being able to manifest themselves to humans, communicate with them through loud speech but only by putting words or thoughts into their minds, and not harm humans directly physically but can only influence humans to lead them to destructive tendencies and harming each other.

The *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* explains that "*Tartaros* was the Greek name for the mythological abyss where rebellious gods were confined" (Lawrence Richards, 1985, "Heaven and Hell," p. 337).

Peter used this reference to contemporary mythology to show that "...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,” meaning that the sinning angels are currently restrained while awaiting judgment for their rebellion against God and for leading humanity astray to cause pain, suffering and death.

The third Greek word translated “hell” is *Gehenna* which refers to the “Valley of Hinnom” where human sacrifices were made in idolatrous worship which in Jesus’s time had been made a trash dump where refuse, carcasses of dead animals and criminals were thrown and were consumed by the constantly burning fires. Jesus used this word to tell his listeners that this was the fate of unrepentant sinners.

Jesus’s words in Mark 9:47-48 may cause confusion: “47 And if your eye offends you, pluck it out: it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Some interpret these verses to mean that this refers to ever burning hellfire which is not quenched. Jesus was quoting Isaiah 66:23-24 about what happens to the dead bodies of sinners. Worms or maggots feed on the dead bodies and when the bodies are set on fire which is not quenched, the bodies are completely consumed by the fire. Then the fire dies out.

These are not “immortal” worms. “Where their worm dies not” simply means that the maggots turn into flies which lay eggs and are hatched into maggots again, thus perpetuating the cycle.

When Jesus returns to earth people will fight against Him (Revelation 19:11-15). Their dead bodies are not buried but are consumed by worms or maggots. The burning in the *gehenna* fire takes place when God’s plan of salvation for all mankind is complete and the unrepentant sinners, even after they received their chance for salvation, will then be permanently put to death, called the second death (Revelation 20:7-15). Such sinners will permanently cease to exist, never to live again. They will not be permanently tortured in a hell fire.

*Is Heaven the Reward of the Saved*

King David was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). If a man deserved to go to heaven, surely it would be him. But Peter tells us in Acts 2:29, 34, “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...34 “For David did not ascend into the heavens...”

Then John the apostle writes in John 3:13, “No one [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, David or any of the prophets] has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man [i.e., Jesus Christ]." That means the patriarchs and the prophets are buried like king David. We have already discussed that a person’s soul does not go to heaven on death. Human beings do not have an immortal soul.

Another term that causes misunderstanding is use of the term “kingdom of heaven” by Matthew in his gospel. For example, Matthew 5:3 writes Jesus' words as: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But Luke, in describing the same blessing, writes: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).

The reason is that the third of the Ten Commandments forbids taking God’s name in vain. Matthew probably wrote his gospel for Jewish audiences. Hence due to cultural sensitivity, he used the term “Kingdom of Heaven” whereas the other writers wrote for non-Jewish audiences and used the term “Kingdom of God.” The two terms were used synonymously. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" does not mean the Kingdom is in heaven, but that it is of God, who is in heaven.

The kingdom of God will not be established in heaven but on earth. When Jesus Christ returns to earth to establish God’s kingdom, Zechariah 14:4,9 tell us, “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east...And the LORD shall be King over all the earth."

Speaking about the resurrected saints, Revelation 5:10 tells us: "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (NIV).

After God’s plan of salvation for all mankind is complete, Revelation 21:1-5 tell us that the earth will be renewed and ultimately God the Father and the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, will descend to earth: “1 And 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. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And 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. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”

Thus, ultimately the renewed earth will be the place of God the Father’s throne, and He will dwell forever with mankind glorified as His immortal sons and daughters. But God’s sons and daughters will not be confined to earth. They will inherit all things (Revelation 21:7) as co-heirs with Christ, meaning the universe. Then what God has accomplished on earth, His sons and daughters will accomplish in the entire universe. In fact, God has already allotted the universe to various nations to colonize (Deuteronomy 4:19).

*More Misinterpreted Scriptures*

In Philippians 1:23-24 Paul writes about his future: "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you."

Some interpret this to mean that Paul would join Christ in heaven after death. But now see 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Those who love Christ’s appearing know that it will take place when Jesus Christ returns to earth and they are resurrected and will be with Him forever. Paul knew that when he died, he would be in the grave but will be resurrected to be with Christ at His return.

2 Kings 2:11 records an incident in the lives of Elijah and Elisha the prophets: "Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Some interpret this to mean that Elijah was made immortal and taken to heaven where God the Father lives. However, several years after Elijah was removed by the whirlwind, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat became king over Judah and proved to be a wicked king. A few years into his reign, and several years after Elijah's removal by the whirlwind, Jehoram received a letter from Elijah telling the king his sins and that he would die of diseases in 2 Chronicles 21:12-15, “12 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the Lord God of David your father, Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah... 15 And you shall have great sickness by disease of your bowels, until your bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.”

This letter proves that Elijah was still alive somewhere on earth some years after he was removed by the whirlwind and replaced as a prophet by Elisha. Clearly Ellijah did not go to heaven as John 3:13 says, “no one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man"? Obviously, sometime later Elijah the prophet died and was buried on earth though the Bible does not reveal where.

To understand where Elijah was taken by the whirlwind, we should note that the Bible talks about three heavens. First heaven is the earth’s atmosphere consisting of gases where birds can fly, mentioned in Genesis 7:11-12; Job 35:11; Jeremiah 16:4.

Second heaven is the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere consisting of the moon, planets, comets, asteroids, sun, stars and galaxies. David talked about this heaven in Psalm 8:3 and is also mentioned in Genesis 26:4, Deuteronomy 1:10 and Isaiah 13:10.

The third heaven mentioned in the Bible is where God the Father resides (Hebrews 8:1) with millions of angels. It is referred to as the third heaven by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Heaven is specifically called God's dwelling place (Deuteronomy 26:15).

Elijah was taken by the whirlwind into the heaven that is the earth’s atmosphere and later set down somewhere on earth to live the rest of his life.

Other scriptures used as support for the view that the righteous go to heaven on death concern the life of Enoch. Genesis 5:24 tells us that "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Hebrews 11:5 adds further details: "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken, he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This verse in the KJV is translated: “5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

The Greek word rendered “taken away” or “translated” can also mean “transferred elsewhere,” and the word rendered “so that he did not see death” is better translated “so that he would not see death” as in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and some other translations.

However, what is absolutely clear from other scriptures is that Enoch died on earth. Enoch is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as an example of faith with many others. Then verse 13 confirms: “13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises...” So, Enoch died like all the other heroes of faith. And no one has ascended to heaven except Jesus Christ as confirmed in John 13:3.

Hebrews 11:39 says about all those who received a good report on faith, “39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.” What is the promise they did not receive? It’s the promise of eternal life which Paul hoped for in Titus 1:2, “2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

Therefore, Enoch has not received eternal life in heaven. Hebrews 11:40 tells us all those of faith will receive the promise at the same time, through a resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ: “40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Genesis 5:21-23 tell us some more about Enoch’s life: “21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: 22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.”

Genesis 5 mentions the life spans of some individuals, ranging from the lowest for Enoch at 365 years and longest for his son Methusaleh at 969 years. Most lived above 900 years. But these all died. Enoch lived 365 years and no more. That means he died being 365 years of age.

How then can we explain Genesis 5:24 that "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him,"; and Hebrews 11:5 : "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken, he had this testimony, that he pleased God"? How can we reconcile the statement that “he did not see death, and was not found because God had taken him” with the fact that he died and did not go to heaven?

While the Bible does not provide further details, there are several possible ways to reconcile these statements.

Jude 1:14-15 tell us that Enoch, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) prophesied that Jesus was returning to execute judgment on all the ungodly. Such an unpopular message invited persecution. Enoch would have been killed at a particular time, but God had more work for him to do to warn the ungodly. Therefore, God rescued him at that time, by taking him away as He took Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Philip (Acts 8:39) away. That’s how Enoch did not see death and was not found because God took him away.

Another possibility about Genesis 5:24 is that Enoch was finally martyred for his preaching. That’s why he died prematurely. Genesis 4:23-24 records Lamech’s (a descendant of Cain) boast to his two wives: "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." Certainly, the Bible would identify the young man killed if it would record the boast. The only young man recorded is Enoch. It is reasonable to infer that Lamech killed Enoch for his preaching against the ungodly, Lamech being the most ungodly man of his time who had deified himself and is today known to us as the pagan “god” Zeus.

God allowed Enoch to be martyred. But He would not permit his body to be desecrated or publicly displayed. God physically removed his body, very likely in the sight of his murderers — before they could defile it. That’s how it was publicly known that God took him. God took him and buried him just as He had buried Moses (Deuteronomy 34:6) “so that no one knows his sepulcher to this day.” The statement that he would not see death then is a separate matter and refers to his being resurrected to eternal life. The death he would not see is the permanent second death.

Another scripture commonly misunderstood is Luke 23:43 where Jesus Christ hanging on the cross told one of the convicted criminals being crucified with Him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Many people believe that Jesus assured the man that he would go to heaven with Him that very day.

The problem here is the incorrect placement of the comma after "you" and before "today." In the original Greek and Hebrew texts no punctuation marks were used. To convey the correct understanding the comma should be placed after "today" rather than before: "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

Jesus Christ died and was buried in the grave for three days and was resurrected after three days. Clearly, He did not go to heaven on the day he died. So, Jesus could not have meant that the thief would be with Him in paradise that day that both died.

CHAPTER 28

BELIEF 28 – THE SPIRIT IN MAN AND GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT

God’s Church believes that human beings have a spirit in them that imparts human intellect to their physical brains, creating the human mind that is far superior to animal brain. This spirit in man makes it possible for humans to have a relationship with God which animals cannot have. But human mind is limited to understanding knowledge of the physical universe. To understand and discern the things of God, meaning spiritual things, humans need God’s holy spirit.

The spirit in man that makes humans far superior to animals in intellect was best explained by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:11,14, “ 11 For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man [let’s call it the HUMAN spirit or the ‘spirit in man’] which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God [God’s holy spirit]...14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) explained these concepts in his booklet “*What Science Can’t Discover about the Human Mind.”* He wrote:

“Man is composed wholly of MATTER. God says: "And the ETERNAL God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The SOUL is composed of physical MATTER, not Spirit.

“God's PURPOSE in creating man is to reproduce Himself — with such perfect spiritual CHARACTER as ONLY GOD possesses — who WILL NOT and therefore CANNOT ever SIN! (I John 3:9). Such perfect spiritual and holy character cannot be created by fiat. It must be developed, and that requires TIME and EXPERIENCE.

“Such character is the ability in a single entity to come to comprehend and distinguish the true values from the false, the right way from the wrong, to choose the right and reject the wrong, and, with power of WILL, to DO the right and resist the evil.

“Animals are equipped with BRAIN and instinct. But they do not have power to understand and choose moral and spiritual values or to develop perfect spiritual CHARACTER. Animals have BRAIN, but no intellect — instinct, but no ability to develop HOLY and GODLY CHARACTER. And that pictures the transcendental DIFFERENCE between animal BRAIN and human MIND.

“But WHAT CAUSES that vast difference?

“There is virtually no difference in shape and construction between animal brain and human brain. The brains of elephants, whales, and dolphins are larger than human brain, and the chimp's brain is slightly smaller. Qualitatively the human brain may be very slightly superior, but not enough to remotely account for the difference in output.

What, then, can account for the vast difference?”

“Man, composed wholly of matter, was made in the form and shape of God, to have a special relationship with God — to have the potential of being born into the FAMILY of God. And God is SPIRIT (John 4:24). To make it possible to bridge the gap — or to make the transition of MANKIND, composed wholly of MATTER, into SPIRIT beings in God's Kingdom, then to be composed wholly of Spirit, and at the same time to give MAN a MIND like God's — God put a spirit in each human.

“In Job 32:8, we read, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding. This is a great TRUTH, understood by but very few.

“I call this spirit the HUMAN spirit, for it is IN each human, even though it is SPIRIT ESSENCE and not matter. It is NOT a spirit person or being. It is not the MAN, but spirit essence IN the man. It is NOT a soul — the physical human is a soul. The human spirit imparts the power of INTELLECT to the human brain. The human spirit does not supply human LIFE — the human LIFE is in the physical BLOOD, oxidized by the BREATH of life.

“It is that nonphysical component in the human brain that does not exist in the brain of animals. It is the ingredient that makes possible the transition from human to divine, without changing matter into spirit, at the time of resurrection.”

This helps us explain what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14, “ 11 For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man [or the ‘human spirit in man’] which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God [God’s holy spirit]...14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

No man could have the knowledge a man possesses, except by “the spirit of man which is in him.” In the same way, no man can comprehend the things of God, except by another spirit, the Holy Spirit of God.

So, from birth God gives man the spirit in man which gives us the mind power. That completes the physical creation of man. But spiritual creation of man must follow which requires a second spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. As explained in belief # 5 and 7, a person receives God’s holy spirit on repentance from sin, baptism and laying on of hands by a God’s minister.

Human reproduction pictures spiritual salvation which is God the Father reproducing Himself in the God family for humans to become His literal spirit born immortal sons and daughters.

In human reproduction, the ovum in the mother is impregnated by the sperm from the father. To become a human, each of us was thus begotten by our human father to become a zygote which grows into an embryo. The embryo then grows in the mother and becomes a fetus. The fetus is nourished in the mother and begins to grow during the gestation period; human organs and the brain begin to form taking the form and shape of the human body. When the fetus has become large enough to become a human being, it is then born.

God intended human reproduction to add human children into the human family. In the same way, spiritual salvation adds God’s children into the God family.

Just as the father’s sperm impregnates the ovum in the mother and begets a human life, to be born again of the spirit, we must be begotten of the holy spirit from God the Father. This process is explained in Romans 8:16-17, “The Spirit [of God] itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the [begotten] children of God: and if children, then heirs [not yet inheritors]; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ...”

God’s holy spirit combines with our human spirit in the human mind, begetting the human with divine eternal life to grow and later be born into the God family as a divine being, composed wholly of spirit. The holy spirit also imparts to the human mind the power to comprehend spiritual knowledge, to understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:11). It also imparts God’s divine nature of love, joy, faith and power to overcome sin and Satan.

The spirit-begotten Christian has the presence of God life within him or her. But he is not yet composed wholly of spirit. He is merely like the embryo and later fetus in human reproduction. Just as the fetus must be nourished in the mother and continue to grow and take on the form and shape of the human body, so holy and righteous character of God must begin to take form and grow in the spirit-begotten Christian. In the case of the Christian, God’s Church called Jerusalem above is the spiritual mother of the members (Galatians 4:26).

God has chosen ministers in His Church to feed the flock: “12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 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 fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

In the Church, the spirit-begotten Christian must continue to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) and develop God’s holy righteous character until Christ is fully formed in him (Galatians 4:19) just as the fetus continues to grow in its mother until he is formed into a full human being. Then the spirit-begotten Christian is born as a spirit being as a son or daughter of God at the resurrection just as the human baby is born of his mother as a flesh and blood human being.

Those who develop God’s holy righteous character in themselves will become God’s children. Those who don’t will die the second permanent death and will be as though they had never been (Obadiah 1:16), just as occurs in a human miscarriage. That’s how human reproduction and being born into the human family is an exact parallel of humans being born into the God family.

The spirit in man also functions like a hard drive in a computer to keep a record of all the experiences a human has gone through in his or her life. At death, the spirit in man goes to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7, “7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”) Again, the spirit in man is not a living immortal entity. It is a medium like the hard drive that records all life’s experiences. When that human is resurrected to physical life in the second resurrection, that spirit is put back in him so that he has memory of all his life experiences.

In the same way, a person who has received God’s holy spirit which combined with the spirit in him to produce God life, when he or she is resurrected in the first resurrection, that spirit is given to him or her with the preserved human life experiences.

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